Interview with Charlie Mitchell

Narrator: Charlie Mitchell
Interviewer: Markham Starr
Location: New Bedford, MA
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Project Name: The Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project
Project Description: This project documents the history and culture of the commercial fishing industry and other port trades. The project began in 2004 in conjunction with the Working Waterfront Festival, an annual, educational celebration of commercial fishing culture which takes place in New Bedford, MA. Interviewees have included a wide range of individuals connected to the commercial fishing industry and/or other aspects of the port through work or familial ties. While the majority of interviewees are from the port of New Bedford, the project has also documented numerous individuals from other ports around the country. Folklorist and Festival Director Laura Orleans and Community Scholar and Associate Director Kirsten Bendiksen are project leaders. The original recordings reside at the National Council for the Traditional Arts in Maryland with listening copies housed at the Festival's New Bedford office.
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Abstract
On September 25, 2010, Markham Starr interviewed Charlie Mitchell as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project. Charlie describes his childhood in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, where he developed a love for the water. After attending school, his plans to go to law school were interrupted by the Vietnam War. Charlie chose to join the Navy and gained extensive experience aboard vessels. Following the war, Charlie entered the tug boating business, founding Mitchell Towing and Salvage, in 1973. A significant portion of the interview focuses on the creation of the tugboat *Jaguar*. Reflecting on his work in salvage and rescue operations, Charlie chronicles some of his more memorable experiences, sharing two stories in particular: an operation involving a coastal cruiser that ran aground and faced substantial damage, and vessel on the brink of capsizing due to flooding. He details the collaborative efforts with the Coast Guard, other salvage companies, and divers, as well as the ingenuity needed to help mitigate the damage during disasters.

Markham Starr: I'm Mark Starr and we're here at the New Bedford Waterfront Fishing Festival in 2010 and I'm going to be interviewing Mr. Charlie Mitchell who's a tug boat owner and captain of the Jaguar, a local tug. And if I could just have you state your own name and where and what year you were born.

Charlie Mitchell: Charles G. Mitchell. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1945, March 5th of 1945.

MS: Born in Boston, did you grow up in this area?

CM: Yes. Yeah we moved here in about '47 I believe. So all of my memories are here. Grew up on 36 Main Street in Fairhaven and so I attended local schools the same schools my dad had Rogers Grammar School and the High School. And my kids have now done that and I was, after high school I was a water rat I guess from the age of 6. My brother would then have been 8. We used to go a block and a half down to the waterfront at Kelley's Shipyard or the Wharf or back and forth to Fort Phoenix and such, mostly on the Fairhaven waterfront. And we would play with anything that would float. It could be pushed, pulled, rowed or powered, preferably but there weren't many opportunities to have a powered boat. So from that age I spent as much of my free time as I could on the water. It was just something that I always enjoyed. And Bob did too, but he ended up in the diesel business, ultimately. But after high school I ended up going to University of Massachusetts at Amherst, first as an English major and later as a political science major. And at the conclusion of that I ended up applying to law school and got accepted at three of them and went to Georgetown for a brief stint and I would have been interested in Civil Liberties or Constitutional Law or preferably admiralty law, but we would end up being drafted at the end of that first year of law school because of the Vietnam War. So the deferments would have ended and it turned out that they didn't do Admiralty Law in law school, but you would do that after with a law firm in a city that specialized in that work which I expected would ultimately lead me back here to have a practice, but it seemed pretty circuitous at that point. So I withdrew from law school, passed my physical within seconds, the draft board asked me to have a physical, I passed and they gave me a chance to choose a service or I would go in the Army. I wanted something with boats, the Army had more boats than anybody, but they weren't making promises they were keeping. And I was a little too old for many of the programs that the services offered either enlisted or officer with short periods of active duty time. But the Navy had a three active, three years inactive with ROTC program, so I went to Navy ROTC.

MS: And what did you do? Did you spend any time over in the Vietnam area?

CM: No. The ROTC was in Newport and, or the Officers Candidate school I should say. And then I was assigned to a communications school also which was at Newport Navy base and then

I was assigned to a ship which was at first a cargo ship, you know a wartime cargo ship, but then they changed my orders to a destroyer which was based in Newport, the *William R Rush*. And our first orders were to deploy to Vietnam. But at the last moment because the Mediterranean was also hot at that time, this would have been '68, they sent our ship with a task force to the Mediterranean. And we did a 6 months deployment there which included stops in Barcelona, Rota Spain, Naples Italy, Malta, Genoa, Athens, Sfax Tunisia which wasn't a highlight and on the way home we went up through Northern Europe so we stopped in Liverpool England which was great and Oslo Norway, then proceeded back across the Atlantic with a ASW task force and pretty much finished out the first year and a half on that destroyer with US East Coast operations.

My second tour which typically changes after a year and a half was on a cable repair ship, cause I kept putting in for tugboats at every juncture, requesting a tug boat, but by the time I was a Lieutenant JG, the closest they could come was a cable ship which was in the same organizational group, but didn't do exactly the same. And we laid and repaired submarine listening cables that were part of a [socis?] system which was secret at the time unless you read National Geographic. It was all in there. So with that ship we went to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, Bermuda, Antigua, unfortunately we went to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in the winter and Bermuda and Antigua in the summer and also [Louge?] Delaware there was a repair and then we made three trips through the Panama Canal and out to Hawaii once so I got a good deal of sea time and I was on the first ship a communications officer and a watch stander on the bridge and on the second ship I was operations officer and a watch stander on the bridge and by the time I, my hitch was almost up on the cable ship I was the senior watch officer so I stood all the sea detail ODs and general quarters evolutions and it was a great, great chance to be right in the action of course, driving the ship at that time.

MS: And when did you get out, out of the Navy?

CM: Got out in 1971 in San Diego. And I bought a Volkswagen camper van from a doctor and his wife who was selling a nice, fairly new one, it wasn't a hippie van until I got done with it. And I took four months to travel back across the country. Visited with my college roommate and his wife in San Francisco for two months on the way, all the way up the East Coast, uh the West Coast on the coast highway. And from that base I visited other friends from Fairhaven and elsewhere in San Rafael north of San Diego and then we went inland to the parks and Lake Tahoe and such during the two months. And then I continued the trip up to Seattle, across the top of the country and down to Denver, saw two old friends in Denver and then back through Michigan and then up through Canada on the way down to Fairhaven. That route home. So it was a nice little trip. And at that point I started working for my Dad again. He had a need for some assistance in the shop that I could do while I decided what I would do as a career. And it was during that period of time that I decided to try tug boating as a profession as opposed to something I was just always interested in.

MS: So how did you get into tug boating?

CM: Well there were, there was a local legend at Sanchez here in New Bedford. This was 1970 to ’71 I guess. And he offered me some work and Providence Steamboat in Rhode Island had a organized ship docking operation, a union operation, but they had a need for a swing man or a spare man and they called it because they also moved oil barges and they often needed extra hands for the evolutions. So I got on there. There were no requirements really for licenses on tug boats at that time, none at all. For the Captain you needed Z card which was just an entry level type of ID and an AB card was useful and I was able to sit for that with my Navy time. All of my time I guess, but they were less than generous let’s put it that way in assessing my experience which at this point was many, many years, in terms of getting some type of license. But I had enough to get started and then I think it was ’73 they came up with a requirement to have an inspected tow boat operator’s permits. And I was able to very easily do a rules of the road test which grandfathered people in that had already been operating as a tow boat captain or a watch standing mate which was reasonable and that wouldn’t exclude the people that had already been successfully performing out there. At some point Sanchez hired me back from the swing work that I was doing between the two of them and I captained one of his vessels or whichever one was doing a particular job. And we would work ships in the big Cape Cod Canal and assist work in the canal and ship docking in New Bedford and occasional barge tows throughout New England that they picked up on contract.

MS: How big a fleet was Sanchez’s?

CM: He had about 5 boats at that time.

MS: Were they wooden or steel?

CM: They were all steel except one older wooden boat which they had sort of put on the side because it was not of enough power any longer for the work that they were doing. That boat was called the *Smilynne* which was named after his two kids Smitty and Lynne and I ended up buying that boat from him in 1973 and started operating my own boat first on a part time basis while working for him and then shortly after it became important to answer what calls I could with the tug boat because it would make more money with my boat than as a day worker on his tugs. So from ’73 on I was operating Mitchell Towing and Salvage Company working throughout New England with a old boat which I had renamed *Fort Phoenix*. I initially changed the electrical system, put in one of my father’s and brother’s generators, an AC generator and changed the DC system to a AC with battery backup and operated it that way at that time it had two 671 Gray marine engines, war surplus engines driving through a Morse chain drive which sat in the forward part of the engine room and put this power into one single shaft which ran that

back between the two engines to the propeller, single propeller. It was just like a huge bicycle chain goin' around and I swear it took half the power just to move the chain through the oil. The original boats had Buddah diesels which were not practical. They were military stuff and they weren't really practical in the outside world so they had been changed. But I operated it like that until 1975 and I bought a brand new 1271, a GM and changed the rig around. I was able to use the inboard engine beds of each 671 as the outboard of the 1271. I cut the shaft off at the appropriate place and about all I had to do was make new mounts for the reduction gear, brand new reduction gear. We were operating with that and that operated just wonderfully for a long time after I sold it.

MS: When did you sell it?

CM: I sold that in 1978 after I ultimately got the *Jaguar* going. And it ran so well it came back to haunt me under several owners, till it finally was allowed to sink up in Boston harbor, nothing to do with the engine or...just happened to be neglected long enough. In 1976 I was thinking about building a new steel hull to take the machinery that I then had quite new machinery and improvements in the old *Fort Phoenix* and I couldn't swing, I went by Gladding Hearn Shipbuilding in Somerset, Mass where ultimately I built the *Jaguar*, but they were a great builder of repute then. I wasn't able to afford a single screw hull. But I saw a little push boat there they had built stock 25'11" which got it under the tow boat operator rule which didn't matter to me if I was running it, but I guess it would have if I had somebody else run it. So I purchased that and I purchased a 471 from David Kelly and put that engine in myself. I had the boat trucked back this way and put the engine in. And I used that in conjunction with the *Fort Phoenix* for small jobs and it turned out to be actually a very good ice breaking boat because of its curved bow shape it could ride up on the ice and break it. It was built as a dredge tender, but we also used it for little tows across to Cuttyhunk and such and marine construction projects it would actually travel to the marine construction projects and work on that. By 1978 I was able to go back to Gladding Hearn and ask about prices and they gave me an excellent, excellent price. So it actually would have been '77 when I was back there asking. They had a hole in their production schedule, they didn't want to lay off people and so they in spite of their preference not to do this, they were willing to build me a hull without machinery and without finish work and call it a Gladding Hearn boat. So that worked to my advantage as well.

So we originally decided to make it single screw, do that single screw transfer and then I was talked out of it by a good friend, Russel Tripp who ended up founding Baystate Towing later to go twin screw and all new and sell the old boat as a working boat which turned out to be great advice. So we redesigned the hull a little bit. Gladding did all the, their principal at the yard, a naval architect did all the building plans and pretty much from the waterline up it was stuff that I spec'ed out from my experiences, measurements and heights and artistic preferences, I guess you'd call them. But it was simply designed and it was a wonderful process for he and I because

he didn't very often get to work with somebody that was the operator and the procurer and we were able to communicate so we had a very good time bouncing ideas off each other and coming up with a great plan which he already had produced plenty of them, but this was even more special I think.

MS: Could you describe just briefly what the *Jaguar* turned out to be, length and...?

CM: Yup she was 63 feet overall, 58 inch, uh 58 feet waterline length, registered length, 8 foot draft and also 8 foot depth, 19 foot 6 inch beam, twin screw with a I guess you'd call it a deck and a half house. There's a trunk over the engine room and then the wheelhouse on the forward part of that stands up a ways gives you 11 foot height of eye so it's not particularly high for that style of boat, but it makes it very seaworthy and not top heavy. The decks are very uncluttered. I tried to put all the vents inside the piping inside and then just have them exit somewhere where they wouldn't be in the way and they wouldn't be an eyesore. I did what I could with materials, galvanized in many places. But I wasn't able to put stainless steel to keep down future maintenance. But we did some of that and it paid off. It ended up a very, very good working boat. They delivered it to me with the twin rudders in it, just locked in place and shafts and wheels, Aquamet shafts 3 and a half inch, 58 inch bronze wheels and those were secured inside the boat, but there were no engine beds or engine mounts. There were foundations but no mounts for engines or gears.

And I had designed a hatch into the engine room trunk behind the stack so that we could put engines and mufflers and gears and generators in through that without a lot of burning and welding and clean-up work. So I was able to tow home a vessel of that description, all painted it looked pretty much like a working boat except it didn't have a mast and running lights and it didn't have any woodwork or wiring inside at that point. They started work in November of '77 and delivered it on May 1st of 1978 so it was at that point that I towed it home with the old *Fort Phoenix*, came down the Sakonnet River to Fairhaven and I bought the two new engines from Kelly's again, 1271s with four and a half to one reduction gears, twin disc gears. That had all been figured out or specified I guess beforehand. It turned out to be an excellent, excellent package and in my subsequent re-powering in 1989 I ended up redoing the same thing. I've had now two sets of main engines and three sets of mufflers and four sets of generators in keeping up with it, but it we're still not actually finished with all the woodwork, but it's always operated very, very well. And whatever the squeaky wheel was to make it operate, got the grease and we're still waiting to have a little time to do the finish work. But we're very happy with the product. It's been just fabulous for us to do the wide range of things that we have been doing.

MS: I'd like to jump a little bit forward. And you had told me a couple stories before that I'd like to have recorded. One was a small liner ocean liner or a tourist type liner that had bumped over a reef.

CM: Yup

MS: Could you describe I know the Jaguar does salvage work and if you could describe that…

CM: Yup, that was an exciting day. The vessel in question was called the *Pilgrim Bell* which was built as a coastal cruise vessel and on this particular one I think they had a hundred folks of every time and age on board along with a crew and stewards and staff. And they were on a voyage from probably Vineyard Haven, somewhere that way over toward Newport which brought them along in the vicinity of Sow and Pigs Reef and they went right along over the reef and got a tremendous amount of damage on the bottom but did not stick on the reef, they continued over and then dropped the anchor and had made as it turned out a huge gash in the compartment underneath the crews quarters which was a major compartment on the vessel and just forward of the engine room. And that immediately flooded to the waterline level. And they also forced the port rudder or port propeller to slide back against the port rudder. It pulled itself out of its coupling up inside the vessel dashing the coupling back into the stuffing box and causing a leak in a compartment under the salon which was a minor compartment, I'm sorry that was another major compartment, as the naval architects figure. And when it slid back, it tore the rudder boss away from the hull. So you ended up with two semi-circular holes on either side of that. It didn't make it drop out completely, but it was making a lot of leak. So that was the major amount of damage as it turns out when it was all analyzed. But what it did do was make it so it was very, very likely to capsize almost immediately because of the fast flooding of that one compartment. Ultimately if the second major compartment flooded that would have made the vessel capsize. And a vessel could survive according to the naval architect the flooding of one major compartment and one minor compartment, which would have been the lazarettes long as the rest were dry. But it was a fairly top heavy looking vessel and that was making everybody very nervous of course. They called a mayday and the Coast Guard responded sending first probably a 41 or a 44 from Menemsha. And that person ended up being the officer in charge or the person in charge. I forget how they designated it at the time, but on scene commander I guess. And even those subsequent Coast Guard efforts included ships and aircraft and pretty much everything the Coast Guard owned in the district, proceeding to help, he remained in charge on board. And I got wind of it on the marine radio listening to the traffic and prepared to get underway and at the same time, well just shortly after the insurance company representative, the loss representative for the insurance company at the time contacted us to get us underway. And actually a third avenue of our being engaged, the owners of the vessel which was Scutter in Hyannis made calls and asked around and they were told that we were the ones to call so we ended up speaking with their representative over the phone and over the marine operator as we were already responding which we did very, very quickly. My response included three other colleagues in the business, not business partners, but people we did work with from time to time. One Cuttyhunk Marine was somebody that we always tried to partner up with on jobs, Don Lynch and his son Dwayne were on this job and are very, very competent and another fellow

from Martha's Vineyard Lynn Murphy who has a, had a Brownell boat, bass boat, but he used it for marine salvage and he had a diver, two divers with him. I guess he was a diver as well. So he had proceeded to the scene and I asked him to join our team, which he did. And then another fellow from Fairhaven had gotten underway on his own, just behind us as we went out and I asked him to join and that was Mark Lexon and his brother John on their little tug boat *Bay Mariner* that Mark had built. So that was the team of four vessels.

Our first order of business was to help rescue the old folks on the boat or anybody that needed to, should get off or could get off without being needed on board. So Don Lynch from Cuttyhunk Marine was first to do that and the operation was helped admirably by passing fishing vessels and other vessels fishing out there on that particular day, private vessels and the ship's boats which took the people and they ferried them to either directly to Cuttyhunk itself or to the fishing boat which dropped them in Cuttyhunk. And Don Lynch busied himself until those folks were all safe and the non-essential personnel on the *Pilgrim Bell* were off. At the same time the Coast Guard was trying to put pumps aboard, the little 2 inch gasoline pumps and subsequently other styles of pumps that they brought. And as soon as Don finished with the passengers, he was put aboard the *Pilgrim Bell* to become the salvage master for our operation and communicated to us by phone, but VHF radio what his needs were. And we were able to supply from *Jaguar's* stock in particular many Du Winch pumps and one three in pump, one inch and a half pump from the *Bay Mariner* and I think 2 two inch pumps from Lynn Murphy's boat which were brought to bear at different points in the job. The Coast Guard — [end of tape 1]

CM: …effort ended up making not much progress. Their pumps didn't seem to be adequate to pump water from the distance, the head distance down and particularly the lengths from where they could access it to where they could discharge overboard because the vessel was essentially closed in except for a few hatches here and there at the deck level. It was also made vastly more difficult by debris floating in each of the compartments, most notably in the lazaretto where the liquor was stored and the swizzle sticks and napkins and t-shirts and all kinds of stuff that was all floatin' around and clogging the strainers in the pumps. And they had to constantly be cleaned. The Coast Guard pumps when they would do that would end up taking quite a long time to get the prime back, if at all.

MS: You had or one your crew had a solution rather ingenious solution to the problem?

CM: Yes he did.

MS: Of hoses.

CM: Yup. He did. At some point, the Coast Guard problem made them very willing to turn it over to commercial assistance which is not something they usually do happily, but they guy said, "This one's so hard it might need two commercial guys," which isn't really a solution. But we replaced them with our stuff and one of my guys was an ex-Coast Guard guy, Dave De Oliveira, intensely practical guy, very direct. And he took the three inch pump and that area in the minor compartment or in the second major compartment under the salon was very unreachable with a normal pump hose set up because it was all closed in and they had tables and windows at the edge of the table, but anywhere you tried to go around and out a door, you had to go an awful long way. So he took the suction hose and put it in the bottom of the compartment and set the pump on the table and took a fire extinguisher, knocked the window out, which might have horrified anybody if it wasn't actually gonna save the vessel. And it occurred to him that that would be a good idea and it was. So he was able to immediately start that pump and pump it full capacity of the three inch pump which was significantly more than everybody else's two in pumps, and pump that compartment right down. He then got down with wedges and shingles that we had in our stock and was able to patch that leak which took a lot of pressure off the tendency for the vessel to capsize. We were then able, we had quickly determined that the water in the first major compartment was not gonna respond to pumping by setting up a number of our pumps and it made no change whatsoever in the level which just meant that the hole was quite huge which it ultimately was really huge. So the solution was to leave that compartment flooded and make sure that we dried everything else out.

We were in contact with John Gilbert, the designer and the marine architect responsible for the boat by phone and told him what, where the waterlines were and he advised us on that. Ultimately when he got, when the vessel got back to the dock, and he observed the waterline levels he said, "Oh boy, if I'd known this I would have told you to get off 'cause it was very close to going." But we were luckily able to probably, probably if we had moved some of that water out of it by the time the other one got up to a certain mark so it, but it was probably touch and go. It was no safe job for the people inside the boat. The lazarette proved quite tricky again because of the debris in there and the types of pumps that people were using. We use...uh the Coast Guard had deployed these P-250 fire pumps which pump a lot of water, but down through a u-shaped device called an e-ductor which they use to remove water from a debris laden environment, but they don't work real well and sometimes they put more water in the boat than they take out if everything isn't running beautifully. In addition to that they make a lot of noise and a lot of smoke and in a closed environment you can't work that way. So that was a huge factor in lack of success in that compartment. But Dave De Oliveira and the other guys moved their attention back there, set up our three inch pump. We made strainers out of trash cans, plastic trash cans and five gallon cans and put them inside of each other and put the pump strainer inside of that and it made for a lot longer cycles of pumping as compared with cleaning. Plus our pumps did pick up the prime faster. After this was well over, several weeks after, the National Transportation Safety Board asked if they could come down and talk to us about our

pumps and why our pumps worked even though they were very similar in description to the Coast Guard pumps, but our pumps worked much better.

And we were able to give them some insights on that which probably led to changes in the Coast Guard methodology. In particular soft discharge hoses would often make it very difficult for the pumps to pick the prime up again where they have to go around corners and sharp objects and our still discharge hoses weren't that, never mind what David figured out not to even use a discharge hose, very cleverly. The lazarette, even the engine power, generator power was still on at this point which made the lazarette a very dangerous place to work with electricity available in there. But they were able to persevere and get the level down some. The divers were able to float mattresses and pillows up to their hole and to get it to at least slow down a bit which allowed that to be exposed and then David and the others put wedges and shingles in those, two semi-circles of shattered steel and stopped the leak. So that left us with a vessel with one major flooded compartment. We then made up, had the vessel raise the anchor. They still had power to the anchor winch and raised it and the *Jaguar* towed it into Fairhaven. And the *Bay Mariner* made up alongside to help us steer it if need be at my direction. We delivered the vessel to Kelly's Shipyard in Fairhaven at the time and they made a dock space available at the end of the dock. I engaged Dick Searles tremendous marine foreman also a diver, salvage man, tug boat man, marlboat man, pretty much of a Renaissance man who was luckily for me out of direct work at the time to come down and take over the security of the vessel and the pumping set up for the night. And then in the morning we arranged for patching stuff. And what was done then, the big hole under the major compartment was determined by the divers, was measured by the divers, it was a long gash with uh, leaving the bottom in an uneven fashion, but mostly pressed in, rather than out. So a four by eight sheet of plywood would cover it. So we made toggles and strong backs and we took two, three quarter inch pieces of plywood back to back to make it inch and a half strong piece of plywood and we weighted that so it would have a neutral buoyancy. The divers took it down and positioned it over the hole and we started the pumps on order and that sucked that up into position.

And they were able to also toggle it at that point by working from the outside and making the toggles grab the jagged steel on the inside. We were then able to pump it down. It turns out that it had also fractured the sewage tank which had flooded into this area so it made everything less than pleasant, but do-able. So we pumped her down and then went down inside, put a major steel beam across to hold it up inside and we used an air drill and drilled down from the inside on the four corners of the plywood and the divers outside were waiting with carriage bolts and as soon as that drill came down through they pushed the carriage bolt back up inside and drove it home. It was nutted washer and nutted from the inside and that made that really secure and when the vessel was ultimately delivered to Derecktor's Shipyard they took the toggles off and the strong back beam off and they just couldn't figure out why they couldn't peel that plywood off that boat, but they hadn't noticed the four carriage bolts in it. Ultimately they had to do that

rather than tear the wood apart with a crowbar. That was the destination asked for by the owners and the underwriters so we took it to Derecktor's and it was kept afloat and watched until the dry dock was ready and floated on. And then our job was done.

MS: Now, you also besides salvage work, you mostly or your other primary job is towing. You've towed quite a variety of vessels?

CM: Yup a little bit of everything. Some of our favorite things is the tall ships and the *Mayflower* for instance almost every time she's moved in the last 32 years it's been by us — tow barges, fishing boats, lot of fishin' boats, yachts, and we help dock ships and help dock large tug barge combinations, so a little bit of everything. We've done some oceanographic work and some cable repair work where we tend the barges and do what's necessary logistically, which my Navy experience helped a little bit with that, and just seamanship type stuff. We've been lucky to do that. And we stay flexible to tow almost anything that needs towin' or riding.

MS: Has the amount of towing you do for the fishing industry changed over the years?

CM: Oh yes. It's diminished quite a bit, right along with the amount of fishing effort, I think you'd probably peg it to that, which in the old days the guys were fishing tremendous hours, back breaking work, as much as the guys could stand in order for the boats to make money. And now with the new regulations, the days have been cut back and with the cutback the scallopers are actually doing well financially because it's a sustainable level of harvest that they're doing and the price stays up, the market doesn't get flooded. So even with 90 days a year, they gross a decent amount of money in order, and certainly enough to keep the boat up well. And it's imperative for them that they keep the boat up so that they don't lose a day at sea with a breakdown, certainly not for any silly reasons, which happened in the past, they'd fish until they were out of fuel sometimes or whatever. Or just take a chance on something. Where it doesn't didn't pay in today's economy. And there were buyout programs that slimmed down the number of boats. And so even draggers now don't break down as much as they used to because again the days are precious and they do a little bit more self-help in that field than they used to. Although I'm not sure how they handle the lost time if they're doin' towin'. But ultimately it means less call from the fishing fleet for us. You know also because the guys aren't quite so tired, they don't make the fall asleep type errors that they used to make when they'd typically fall asleep in benign conditions coming home just 'cause they were so tired. There was a bit of that in the past that we would help with.

MS: And maybe one last thing, you had talked about why you do what you do.

CM: Yup. In the book [*Voices from the Waterfront* published by the Working Waterfront Festival] I said it was 'cause I finally figured out it was the practice of seamanship that I do. It

really is what drives me. I still enjoy it. I enjoy the work, the challenge, the environment, the people, the color... And there is certainly danger many times and there are hard jobs which you still can meet. We had one job recently where we went 54 hours down to where Ambrose Tower used to be off New York to see if we could help save a 68 foot fiberglass fishin' boat which had t-boned a boat carrier and taken the bow out of it so it was now floating on the bulkhead between the engine room and the [inaudible] which just meant they'd had the engine room and the fish hold and the lazaretto to keep it afloat and the bow was ripped wide open. The insurance company — one man was hurt in the incident trying to get out of the vessel, but then the crew was alright and off the vessel and a Coast Guard ship was standing by it. It was in shipping lanes by definition almost from where the accident had happened, but drifting around so it would have been a problem. And it was best to save it, but it wasn't at all clear that that would happen. But we were dispatched down with a team and a team, a boarding team to ride it with equipment trying to foresee every possible way to save it. And we were able to get there and the Coast Guard didn't want us to board it until dawn so we arranged out time to do that and surveyed the vessel. Set it up, set up pumps and the equipment over to it and the ship's generator was still working so we were able to augment that as necessary. But we quickly determined that the only way it could move safely at all was to tow it stern first which we did at five and a half knots for a hundred and fifty miles to the designated shipyard in Providence. And we made it ok so the vessel wasn't lost and the fuel wasn't lost. So I think the decision whether to repair it or not is still up in the air, but it's certainly possible to actually fiberglass a new bow on it or if it can go... So we can still do those kinds of jobs and then three days later, strangely enough we had another dragger run aground in Woods Hole and we were able to rally and go down and do that and that turned into an all-nighter just because of the need to tow it home in bad weather through Quick's and then wait while they unloaded so they could then haul out the next morning. And we were able to do that and that doesn't happen; usually we don't have something back to back of that nature, but any reason or longer and we were able to rally that week and do both of those you know, that feels good at this point.

MS: Great. Well thank you very much. We appreciate your taking the time to come in and get some of this onto a cleaner recording than what we had before.

CM: Yeah. Well good. It's my pleasure.

MS: Great, thank you.

CM: Turn that…

----------End of Interview----------

Reviewed by Nicole Zador, 1/08/2025