Interview with Chris Rodriques

Narrator: Chris Rodriques
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.
Principal Investigator: Laura Bendiksen, Laura Orleans

Abstract
On September 27, 2013, Markham Starr interviewed Chris Rodriques as part of the Working Waterfront Festival Community Documentation Project. Chris recalls her childhood in New Bedford, and her experiences as a fish house worker during the 1970s and 1980, working at Golden Eye and other fish processing plants like J.B. Fillet and Kyler. Some fish houses she worked for, like Sea View, Cape Way, Tichon's, Parisi's, Riello's, and MacLean's, are no longer in existence. She describes various roles she undertook, from trimming fish to packing, weighing, and shipping. Chris offers insights into the challenges and camaraderie within the fish house community, highlighting the predominantly immigrant workforce, especially Cape Verdean and Portuguese women. She also talks about the sense of family and community that developed among coworkers, with company picnics and outings. She discusses the impact of the fish house workers union strike, the resulting changes in the industry, and the eventual decline of the fish houses and union. Chris also reflects on the sense of connection to the ocean and seafood that shaped her life, even after leaving the fish house industry.

Markham Starr: Even though I know your name I'm going to ask you your name and where you were born to begin with.

Chris Rodriques: Ok

MS: I'll just start with, ok so I'm just going to start and I'm going to ask you the same question. Alright, I'm Markham Starr and I'm interviewing Chris Rodrigues who worked in fish houses in New Bedford in the 70s into the mid 80s. Ok so if we can start with what is your name and where were you born?

CR: My name's Chris Rodriques and I was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts

MS: Was your family from New Bedford's?

CR: Yes. My immediate family was here. I have grandparents that migrated from Canada and one grandfather that came from Virginia/North Carolina. He was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island, met up with the French Canadians and married one of 'em. So my father's parents are from Canada and my mother's parents, one is from Canada and one's from down south. None of 'em worked in the fishing industry other than my mother had a small stint in a fish market when she was a teenager selling fish. And she left.

MS: What did your parents do?

CR: My dad, my grandparents owned a grocery store, his parents and he worked there till I was about 14 and then he worked as a pharmacist also before you had to go to pharmaceutical college. It seems funny but, you had to go to college at one point. And then he sold insurance and when we were, when I was 16, I'm the oldest of five, three girls and then two boys. He bought a fruit and vegetable stand so his children didn't run the streets in the summer and we stood out on a corner and sold fruits and vegetables with my grandfather watching us close to the grocery store. He went back to school 'cause he was interrupted due to World War II and he went back to school after I was married to Bristol Aggie, all day with the kids. He was a sophomore as well as my sister being a sophomore, but it two different schools. He went to senior prom, he had my grandmother sign his report cards. He was a character. At that point he worked for the phone company. He was maintenance for Cape and the Islands for I guess it was Ma Bell in those days. In order for him to be a manager he had to go back to school to get a high school diploma. So he went back to Bristol Aggie and the fruit stand was his summer project. He had us as workers. So he was a, he was a character. A very nice guy. And mom worked for the phone company. My sisters, I ended up working for the phone company years later. But I started when my kids were small in the fish house. It was a good paying job at the time and I had kids and my husband and we were trying to buy a house and it seemed the right thing to do at the time.

MS: So how did you, did you decide your job wanted to be in the fish house or how did you go about finding…?

CR: No. My husband worked as a truck driver. And he got a job working for Golden Eye, down in the south end across from the bus garage where they park the buses at night and he heard of an opening and I went in and I started working there 'cause I had been, I had left college 'cause we had got married and had kids and there wasn't a lot of other jobs at the time for people without college educations that were making decent money. I had tried to go into the telephone company but I have polyps on my vocal chords and in those days they were all women that were operators and information and I sounded to deep and I didn't get hired. It was about 1966, '68. Couldn't get a job with them. My sisters all got jobs, my mom, my dad, everybody worked for 'em. Couldn't get a job. So my husband, I worked for Friendly's. I did all kinds of stuff. And finally this was a good job. So I went to work for Golden Eye. It was an experience. From a small Catholic school, you know French-Canadian family to go work. I mean the first day I got knocked off the bench because some big Cape Verdean lady went to pull the fish down the table and she just stuck her arm out and I was like a hundred and five pounds in those days. She just knocked me right off the bench. That was when I worked, you had stand up for yourself and make your own room in there. I worked for Golden Eye for I would say maybe a year. It was eye opening.

MS: What was the actual job that you did? Could you describe what…?

CR: I trimmed fish. Fish would come off a conveyer belt from the lady that skinned it. It was the machine that skinned it and then it would come through, go off a conveyer belt, go into a brine tank, and you know what a brine tank is, full of water and salt, and then go up another conveyer belt and plop down on this big table and you would pack it. Sometimes it was just a matter of picking it up and putting it in. Other times you had to sort according to sizes or you know what they were looking for. That was the first thing and you packed. After, I apologize, after the skinners, it went to the trimmers. They trimmed what we call fenders. It's where, I guess it's the cartilage or the tougher meat that connect the fins to the fish. And there's one on each side of the flounders or the yellow tails or the sand dabs and you'd pull 'em off and you'd throw it in the tank and then that goes to the conveyer belt that goes to the packers. From the packers, once you fill up your thing called "cookies", plastic white bins, they're either round or they're square, some of them are ten pounds, those are the square small ones, uh rectangular small ones. The round ones are 20 and the big rectangular ones are 30 pounds. We packed everything from scallops to every kind of fish you could imagine. Also at Golden Eye, they were tr, they brought in a gentleman from Iceland. And they started packing underutilized fish with those vacuum wraps. You put like fish in a tray and then you put the plastic and there's a heat pad and you shrink wrap and we were doing whiting and butterfish and pogies and those would go out without being filleting. They went out heads and tails. You made 'em nice in the tray and then just...But I left there and I went to, it was called J.B. Fillet at the time. And that was up in the north end near the Kilburn Mills and I worked there for a gentleman named Buddy Parker. He was the manager there. But I believe the company was owned by Ronnie Nanfelt at the time. And there I did freezer racks for a while where you pack in long white cardboard boxes and their fifteen pounds and you put a layer of fish and then you put a layer of cellophane, a layer of fish, another layer of cellophane, a layer of fish, one last layer of cellophane. Put a white cover on it and they went into these metal trays and you put two of them, cardboard boxes into each metal tray. You slid 'em on a rack and those racks got taken to the freezer. They would blast 'em and they would freeze those and then we

would take them out in the dead of winter when you couldn't catch a lot of fish and they would soak 'em in brine tanks and then they would bring 'em back to the packers and those fish were just terrible. They were [laughing] just terrible. Oh it was like, I can't even describe. Somebody says rubber, but it's not, it's just weird. They just hold their shape. You could throw 'em and they'd stick on the wall. That's what I remembered most. And I would say, "I can't believe we're selling fish like this to people in Chicago. I can't believe these people think this is fresh fish." And always, I wouldn't have given that to my cat. Because we grew up eating fresh fish. That was another great thing about the fish house. When times were tough and your bills were mounting, you could always go to a supervisor and ask for a couple of fillets for the supper for that night and stretch your budget. Especially around the holidays. That was the best. 'Cause you could stretch. When I got to J.B., then he bought the plant across the street which was Kyler and at Kyler it was a big, huge place. I mean we had over, I would have to say there had to be forty cutters. In those days, they were mostly men. Very few women were cutting fish. But there were some. Women did most of the skinning, trimming, packing of the fish. In fact there were even men that did the, at the end of the line was the weigher and after you weighed, they went into wooden boxes or big wax cardboard boxes and they would hold either 80 or a hun--, from 80 to 120 pounds of fish. And they would put like two of 'em on the bottom, fill it with ice, put two more, fill it with ice and then either a wooden or cardboard box cover wood go on top. If it was wooden they would nail it down. They'd put another box on top, start it over until they got to four boxes high. Then you would hand truck into the coolers and then from there it would go out to wherever it was going to Boston and they would meet trucks in Boston and they would transfer loads from say the Kyler or the Golden Eye truck onto a truck that was goin' to Buffalo or onto a truck that was goin' to New York or Philadelphia or bring it to Logan and it would get on a plane and go off to wherever. At Coastal I ended up becoming a weigher. So I ended up doing a job that a guy started to do. So I started weighing, I had, because of my experience with my father, I had a good sense of weight. So I could pick up a fish and know that it weighed three ounces or five ounces and that's what I needed to make twenty. Instead of trying to cut up the fish so I ended up being on the scale. And after I was on the scale then I started loading up the boxes and i started to learn how to hook the boxes so that they, when the guys would pull back it would be easier for them and then I started hand trucking. When there was no one around, if somebody could hook it, I would run the hand truck. From there they had, at Kyler they had a lot of stuff that went out to Atlantic Fish, Pathmark, Safeway and they would take 'em in those twenty pound containers, cookies, and we'd put 'em each in an individual box and we'd put 'em on a pallet and it would be 72, nine on each level and you had to stencil the outside of the box. We packed scallops, codfish, everything, yellowtails, haddock, everything went out. And they let me run that for awhile. And we did that and uh, you have to use the pallet master, use a pallet jack to jack 'em up and move 'em back into the freezer or the cooler or whatever. it was a great job. I stayed in shape, tremendously because it was physical work, met a lot of interesting people, but the strike came. And the strike changed everything. I had started at Golden Eye for like $5.20 and hour, after the strike, I went and I, when it went on strike on had three weeks paid vacation, I had medical, I had sick days, and I had a pay that was around $8-9 dollars an hour. And in the early, well not early, but in the mid, the late 70s, that was a good pay. And we were getting closer and closer to ten dollars an hour. Cutters were making good money. We belonged to a union at Kyler and Coast, uh JB Fillet. Golden Eye was not a Union Shop. After the union was broken and it was, these are my opinions, we had a work force in my shop of mostly women 'cause by the time the strike came along, Mr. Nanfelt had

removed a lot of the cutters and put in machines that cut fish. So one machine, I don't know if it was six to eight men or women that cut fish, that replaced them. So if he had six machines, and they replaced 40 or 50 people cutting and it was mostly the men. So when we went on strike we were a striking picket line of mostly women and mostly immigrant women. There are not a lot of, I don't know how to put this, but Caucasian or regular American speaking, there was a lot of Cape Verdean ladies and a lot of Portuguese ladies when I worked there. There were no Guatemalans like there were today, there were no Puerto Ricans or Hispanics or anything like that. It was strictly Cape Verdean and a lot of them were family. You would work with two or three sisters. Oh my brother works the floor, I'm a packer. But what I remember most from the Portuguese and the Cape Verdean, they tried to make sure that their kids did better. Even though that was one of the best paying jobs in the area. 'Cause textiles were moved out so this was it. When the strike happened, we went back to work, after months, I mean the union was busted. There was no settlement, we just ended up leaving the picket line and going back to work and I went back for five dollars an hour, no vacation, no medical, no sick days. In fact it was altogether different, and I started to look around. And I started to see that the older Cape Verdean and Portuguese ladies that had worked there, they were all stooped over, hunchbacked because if they skinned they were bent over all day. If they packed their knuckles were like three times the size, they were full of arthritis. Their bodies were full of arthritis from being cold or having your hands in cold water and then to get the feeling back you'd stick 'em in hot, hot water. So you'd be in ice water packing and then stick 'em in cold [hot] water to get the feeling back in 'em. But it was good in the fact that you didn't have to dress up every morning. You went in with your grungiest clothes. If you did not be in a good mood, you looked at the people around you and you said, "I'm not talking today, I'm not in a good mood and leave me alone." And that was it. It was also rough. 'Cause if there were disagreements, knives would fly. You had to be on your guard. But like I said, once I looked at that and I decided I had to make a move and I left Coastal and I went to work for MacLean's in Fairhaven and when I went over there it was my old boss Mr. Parker and he treated us like family. He had four sons, three of 'em cut fish, one of 'em worked the floor and we were his, entire he never had any daughters so he watched out for all the girls. What was interesting about MacLean's in Fairhaven is it's over the water. So all of our water that we used to clean the fish and run the machines ran out holes in the floor. Well in the winter time, those holes freeze up and it freezes the floor so you would come into work and there would be an inch of ice that you would have to hold on the tables to get to your place to work because it was a skating rink. It was a skating rink and I remember one time they filmed a Budweiser commercial and they filmed it at MacLean's in Fairhaven and they were taking actors and they were dressing 'em in our aprons that we'd rinse off at the end of the day and we'd hang on and he'd say, "oh we don't want 'em all in yellow, here's a blue one put somebody in blue and here's a white one, put somebody in white." It was hilarious, we sat out there and watched them, you know, they were like trying to make a film, a commercial of working people drinking Budweiser and stuff and they went to the local bar, filmed in there. That was a highlight. But it was a good paying job at the time. It was beneficial 'cause we ate good food. It was a great pay. We didn't you didn't have to worry about your wardrobe. You mind your own business. There was a lot of characters. I mean, I used to kid and say that when I left there I was gonna write a soap opera called "Another Fish" instead of Another World which was a soap opera at the time, or "As the Fish Turns." It was just, it was so many characters. People that had a different names. There was a lady I worked with, here name was Mommy. I still don't know why they called her mommy, 'cause I believe her name was

Geraldine. But they called her mommy. Another lady, I do know, they called her Mary Needle. She was a lady that cut fish. And she would have a needle in her stocking knit cap with a thread that hung down. And every time that they would put, she would put a nick in her glove, she would take the glove off and sew the hole up in her glove because she didn't want to spend money for a new glove every day. And guys would come over, "Mary, I need your needle." And she was known as Mary Needle.

There were all kinds of characters, people that I mean, Portuguese ladies that walked to work in the snow. If you tried to give 'em a ride home they wouldn't take a ride home. One time I did get one in a blizzard to take a ride home from me and she got into my Volkswagen and I said to her "What's in the bag?" and she said, "Bacalau" I says, "Codfish?" I says, "You got the head?" She says, "Yes, good for soup." She was gonna make codfish head soup out of that. I was, like, we don't waste anything do we? But her and her sons worked there, but like I said, once the union got busted it was a different place and I needed to make a change. Fortunately for me, [sound interference] Mr.
Nanfelt had automated his workforce to half and because of that I got to be re-trained by the federal government. So I had heard about this program. I went to the Office of Job Partnership up at the old Voc on William Street, I think it is, I'm not sure, Willis Street maybe, Hillman, that's it, Hillman. And I said to the guy, I want to get trained in something that will take me 'till I retire. And he said go into computers. And that's what I did. And I ended up gettin' retrained right in New Bedford at the Kenyon Campbell and funny as it may seem, I went to work for the phone company that wouldn't hire me in the 60s. I went back as a data processor, data input person and worked my way up to be installing software for them and do automation on billing systems. And that took me away from here for 17 years. I went to a place called Alpharetta, Georgia outside of Atlanta, and I did computer work for them. And then, I got downsized [laughs]. It's 23 years and I got downsized. So we came back here because we never sold our house here and we, this is the area, this is home. So we came back here for awhile and we've been here now since 2005. We don't go far from the fishing industry. I live across the street, my neighbors are fishing boats. I live right on the harbor in Fairhaven and my neighbor is the Fairhaven Shipyard north, that's my neighbor and all those fishing boats.

My son, my husband has dragged, been on draggers, he did scalloping, he trucked fish, and worked in the fish house. My son had been a sword fisherman and a tuna, he as gone out scalloping, he has gone out lobstering; he loves boats. We can't get away from the waterfront. it's just part of us. Some people, even though you have no history with it, once it's in your blood it's there. You can't get away from salt water. I can't live away from salt water. But like I said there were, what struck me most about the fish house was the families. There were sisters and brothers or cousins and stuff, there was another one with a nickname, a gentleman named Frankie and they called him "two cousins" because he was related to this guy on his mother's side and that guy on his father's side. So he was two cousins and they said he was, he was a large young man, and they said he was big enough to be two cousins. So that's one. And he, we would all have break together. We used to call 'em Roach Coaches or Mug Up Trucks. And they would come a couple of times a day and you'd get your breakfast or your lunch or your afternoon break and pile all into somebody's car and there'd be drinking going on. There was always drinking going on. If you had a McDonald's cup and a cover, there was probably alcohol at your bench when you were cutting fish. But it was a great place to work. I loved the

job. Other than when we had to go back and swallow. I mean then you couldn't make a pay. And you know when you have small kids they grow out of clothes faster than they wear 'em out. So and they always have dentist or doctors and that was a good paying job and in those days, to me, fish and that, that smells like money. That doesn't, people go, "ooh the smell" smells like money to me. It's unfortunate that everything that we worked for in the 70s and the early 80s and then got busted up by the union and then they worked back again, now unfortunately with the influx of Guatemalans and the other nationalities that are coming in, it's just the same thing. They prey on the immigrants. If we, if these people, some of 'em don't have cards, so if they get a job, they wanna work. And they'll work as hard as they can because it's worse where they came from. And unfortunately, it hurts the people that are here. That's the other thing I noticed. Now I'm back here, I'm not doing computers, I work for a car rental company, at the airport. There's two of 'em. And my boss owns both of 'em. But we rent cars. And I see the guys that come up here and fish from Cape May New Jersey, Norfolk, Virginia, South Carolina, and I think about all the guys that live here that can't make a living fishing and we have these boats that come up here and they, I know the ocean belongs to everybody and quotas are quotas, but when they fish and there a quota, they you don't see as many local young men and women getting in the fishing industry. I rent to mostly foreigners that come from Virginia Beach and North Carolina and Cape May, New Jersey. They're either Vietnamese or Mexican or Cambodian or...but it's not American. Vietnamese a lot. I have one gentleman that comes in and he's so cute, but they're making great money if they're scalloping, they're making good money. 'Cause he always tells me he makes good money. But I don't know what else to tell you.

I did, like I said I did everything, I trimmed fish, I packed fish, I skimmed fish, I weighed, I shipped it out. It was interesting. You learned a lot. I still to this day you can put a piece of cod and a piece of haddock and I still can tell the difference without having the skin on it. There is a difference. When I lived in Georgia, people would be like let's go to Red Lobster and I'd be cringing. I'd be like, "Yeah, I'll have some chicken at Red Lobster and their cheese biscuits, 'cause I'm not doin' Red Lobster". I'm very critical about my seafood. I didn't eat seafood till I worked in the fish house. I hated fish. I used to, my mother and father would serve fish or scallops every Friday. I hated it. I'd have a grilled cheese. Went to the fish house because you see it, you know it's fresh. You come home and you experiment, it was good. Fed my family for years. My kids love the white side of sand dabs. The worst thing in the world to skin because it's so thin, they slide down the conveyer belt because there a thin layer of water. As you're putting 'em on, they're sliding back down the conveyer belt, but once they hit it, and if you put those into just a little egg wash and Italian bread crumbs and you pan fry that, it's like the skin on chicken. And you put three or four of those on a hamburger bun and that is a great little snack or supper for the kids. They loved it because we gotta have the fish that tastes like skin on chicken, sand dabs. Sand dabs. The other side is quite thick. It's amazing. I can tell you that one time we went down to Hatteras North Carolina, I have a cousin that lives down in Virginia Beach and he has a house there and we went down there and my husband, they have these piers that shoot off into the water where people fish off of. And my husband and my son and my cousin's kids went down there and nobody was catching fish so they went back home and they got their poles and they went out there and they fished and they gave fish away to everybody plus brought fish back for us. Because it's just in your blood. And then one day we went over to Ocracoke Island, it's a little island off Hatteras and there was a fish, a fish processing plant and there were boats, little, I guess day boats or couple of day boats. They don't go

out too far and they were, what we call black backs, flounders. And they had the doors open, and I could see the guys cutting. And I walked over and I'm looking and they're making a big V in back of the head and goin' towards the gills. And I'm shakin' my head and I'm talkin' to my cousin whose a great big guy. And he says, "What's wrong?" I says, "Oh my boss would have such a fit 'cause they're not cutting for quota. They're not cutting they're losing all this meat around the head. He would be spastic." I said, "He'd be pulling out the skeletons off the belt and going, "Look at all this meat!" And he says, and you know I'm telling him, "You gotta cut like that and go around and then you come back down," Not knowing the guy that owned the fish plant was standing not too far from us. He says, "You seem to know a lot about cuttin' fish." He says, "Where do you come from?" And I happened to mention I came from New Bedford, Mass. It was like I said I came from Heaven. This guy says, "You must know how to cut fish, you come from New Bedford, best port on the East Coast." And I says, "Well, yeah. I worked in a fish house." "You did?" So he got an apron for me and he had a guy sharpen a knife and he had me get up on a bench and I never, I wasn't a fish cutter, cause I didn't cut percentage, but I knew how to cut my own fish.

And I showed them how we cut. And he had his men watch. And I cut like ten fish, twenty fillets. And he wrapped 'em up in a bag and told me, take 'em home for your family that night. It was a nice gesture. But it was like, when I said New Bedford, I didn't realize up to that point how big a name New Bedford had. But he was like, "You come from New Bedford, you need to show these guys how to cut fish." And I was like, I didn't do that, but show 'em what you know. And I got up on the bench and he gave me twenty flounder fillets and we went home and we had supper. But it's amazing the reputation that New England has. 'Cause when I lived in Atlanta, I had to pack in one suitcase, no matter how long we were gonna be coming up here, we had to pack my husband and my clothes in one suitcase 'cause the food took that we brought back took off the other three. I would bring back thirty pounds of scallops, bag 'em up, I would bring back forty stuffed quahogs in another box and in the third box would be yellow tail flounder and haddock.

So I'd have scallops, yellow tails, cod, haddock and stuffed quahogs and I could sell that for good money down there, that and coffee syrup. Coffee syrup, once you introduce them to it, it's like almost like cocaine. They can't get enough of it. And they'd say you have any more of that coffee syrup? But it was interesting. I learnt a lot. You get that salt in you and that's why we go every third Friday of the month to the Dock-u-mentaries series. We've been going there for a couple of years and I always ask questions and that's how I met Laura and she said would you, how do you know? What did you do? And I told her I worked in the fish house. It was good pay. It was great for women that were single mothers cause you could actually support your family. And like I said, it was fun work. I made lots of friends, some that I still have to this day from the fish house. Others that just seemed to go, you know. But I don't know what else to tell you, it was just a great opportunity. And it led me, you know different, every little turn in your life leads to another thing. If I hadn't worked there, I probably never would have went to Atlanta, never, you know. So I, I got to see another part of the country. I got to go down to the coast in Florida and see the shrimp boats and I've been on those and learned about grouper and all of that 'cause wherever we go, we try to. The only thing is that we found in all our travels, this is the place that has the best seafood. We went to Monterey California, we went to San Francisco, and I, they said, "Alaskan Codfish." It looked like chicken fingers. It come out in the shape of chicken fingers. And I said to

the girl, it doesn't look like a fish, and she says, "Well no, it's frozen," and I'm like, "You're on an ocean. Why are you serving frozen fish?" Same thing happened in Long Island. We went to Long Island and we stopped and I got fish and chips. Chicken fingers again. I'm like, I don't understand the concept of this. If you're on an ocean why are you serving frozen stuff? So I'm really, I don't eat seafood other than here unless I'm down south, then I'll eat shrimp and grouper. Down there I won't eat anything else. It's funny but you get to know, I mean if it's smells like fish, you just don't wanna eat it. It's not good. And like I said, I'm spoiled because I had the fish house and then my son does it now. So if it comes off the boat we're eating it that night. So. I don't' know what else that you might wanna know.

MS: No, that's great. Actually. Maybe just one question on that. When you were working in the fish houses, what was your typical hours per day? Was it eight hour days or longer?

CR: No, they were all different. You would work seven in the morning to whenever the fish was done. So some days you would work, say till three or four. Other days you would work till one or two. Sometimes it would be later. It depended on what was going on at the time. If there was, when, when they caught a lot of fish and it had to be frozen in the freezer trays you worked longer. When the winter came in and the weather wasn't as good, then you didn't work as much, you would have partial weeks, you would go down to unemployment and file for a partial week. That was mostly in the winter. Very few times in the summer did you get time off. If you did you might have got out at 2:30 or 3:00 instead of 4:00. But most of the time it was a forty hour week. You, they didn't like to pay a lot of overtime. What did happen is somebody had a big order and they had to work on a Saturday, a lot of times, certain, people didn't want to work over time. So they would call and they would say, "We have, we're working from seven to 1:30 on Saturday at Parisis or Riellos or Pilgrim Fish or Capeway and we need some people" So my boss would come out, anybody that wants to work down at Parisi's tomorrow? They're paying cash. In those days, you could get paid cash. So we would go work on a Saturday for cash and stuff like that. That's another thing, all the fish houses I know are no longer there. They're different names. There's no more Sea View there's no more Cape Way.

There's no more Tichon's. There's not more Parisi's or Riello's. There's no MacLean's. Every fish company that I worked for is no longer in existence. I don't know if the owners became older, there son's didn't get involved or they had daughters. I don't know, but my husband and I drove down not too long ago and I'm like that's where Sea View was, that was Tichon, that was ... The only ones that are still there are really Mr. Nanfelt in the North End and I think New Bedford Coop is still down on the south terminal area. But all the others that I worked for are not there anymore. Golden Eye is there but I believe it's now called Carlos Seafood. So they were very...there was as very large amount of fish houses, but those that are there now are not the same ones I wouldn't even know who owned 'em, except for Bergies, that's the only one that I know and then Mr. Nanfelt. But that's about it. But it was a great paying job at the time. My kids? My kids got so used to eating fish, that one time I said we're having seafood for supper and my daughter who must have been about ten, she goes, please let it be scallops or lobster because fish is like hamburg, we have it all the time. I don't like it anymore. She says unless you're gonna bring home clams or scallops or lobster, don't bring home

anymore. [laughs]. So they got used to eating it and they just didn't like it anymore. Well not that they didn't like it, but they were sick of it. It was like eatin' hamburger all the time. But it, you know, a lot of drinking in the fish house, you could tell. When I first started in Nanfelts, they paid us on Wednesday. Thursday there would be a lot of people out. So then they moved the pay day to Friday so that they didn't...and the minute you got paid, you got paid a noontime on Friday, the bars cashed your checks. So we would go to the, it's now call the End Zone, but it was called the Stadium Cafe and we would go there for lunch and I don't know how many times we would go back to work and we'd leave a bunch of people in the bar and they just weren't going back, so once you gave 'em that pay, they weren't coming back. And if you gave, if they had a good enough pay, on Thursday, when we got paid on Wednesday, on Wednesday night and they went out, they weren't there on Thursday or if they were, it was sad [laughs]. And naturally like I said there was a lot of immigrants in this, in the fish houses, there was also a large lesbian community and some of those girls cut fish, some of those girls were packers and trimmers. You knew where to put yourself. You didn't go and spend too much time with one as opposed to the other because that would cause quarrels and disagreements and knives would go flying so you knew what to, you weren't, you learnt a lot. I grew up a lot. 'Cause I got married at like 18 and had my first child at 19 so I was a kid having a kid. Once I got into the fish house, I grew up fast. You learned how to keep your nose out of other people's business, do your work, and don't start trouble. And you were fine. But there were characters. Oh yeah. There was a guy that was, he was either deaf or hard of hearing, and they would play jokes on him. They would try, he read lips, so they would put their hand in front of their mouth so that, you know they'd say, "Hey Tony" and then they'd talk and he would get so upset, you know. It was good having fun, but it was at his expense, unfortunately. But they were, you know, we'd get together, they had a boat out here that, the Schamonchi that used to do what we called "booze cruises." You'd go out and then they'd have a DJ and bar. They'd have functions from Golden Eye. He'd rent the boat. We'd go out and the whole workforce. It became a family. They would have picnics and stuff. So it was good. But when they brought in the cutting machines, and those came from Iceland and Germany, and we had gentlemen that came from Iceland and Germany that showed these gentlemen or women how to run these cutting machines and, yeah it was interesting.

MS: Well we're gonna have to stop.

CR: That's alright.

MS: It was great. Thank you very much.

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

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