

Interview: Barbara Stevens (BS)

Interviewer: Patricia Wejr (PW), Natasha Fairweather (NF)

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Transcription: Patricia Wejr

PW [00:00:05] So today is June 26th, 2024, and we are conducting an interview via Zoom. On this call is Barbara Stevens, who we're going to interview, Natasha Fairweather, who's the Project Coordinator at the B.C. Labour Heritage Center. And I'm Patricia Wejr, and I'm a volunteer at the Labour Heritage Center. So first of all, Barbara, we'd like to do a little bit of background personal information. Could you please tell us when and where you were born?

BS [00:00:37] Yeah, I grew up. I was born in Port Guichon, which is now considered part of Ladner, on the Fraser River just south of Vancouver, in 1956.

PW [00:00:50] And so now, we all know that you have a very famous father. And I'm just wondering—in the fishing industry—I'm just wondering if you could, tell us a bit about, what it was like. I imagine he was pretty busy, but, did he introduce you to fishing and basically trade unionism?

BS [00:01:15] Well, I guess he was a part of that, but really, it was where I grew up, my community, my mum, my aunts and uncles and cousins that lived there, that introduced it to me. It was right in my front door, across the river. We lived across the street from the Fraser River. So I was, you know, from my kitchen window I could see all the boats out there... and we lived in a community of immigrants, a lot of them from what is now Croatia. At the time, it was the Austro-Hungarian Empire when they came to Canada, and Greeks and First Nations, who were involved in the industry and occupied that area of the stretch of the river. So that was my community, and I felt very much a part of it. I mean, I grew up with my cousins who lived next door and yeah, and their parents were also involved in the fishing industry. So that was really my introduction to it. And, I guess my dad's—I gained more of a political insight, you know, when my dad went to jail, and things like that, different events that happened, different campaigns that caught my attention.

PW [00:02:48] And did you have siblings?

BS [00:02:51] Yeah. I had three older brothers and they all went fishing before I could. I kind of followed, like, I eventually went fishing as well with my oldest brother, Bruce. But they had already started fishing when I was in school, so, that was part of it. And I was always very curious about what went on because I'd hear all the stories. You know, they'd sit around with their friends and they'd all talk about what happened that summer and what all the skippers were like and things like that. And I'd just pick up on those conversations and think, wow, I want to see that for myself.

PW [00:03:33] So did Bruce have his own boat?

BS [00:03:35] He ran a boat, not his own, but for another guy that had a couple boats. So, yeah, he was running a boat for, he had a couple of different ones that he ran that I worked on. So, yeah, he was able to hire me for a little while.

PW [00:03:56] And how old were you when you first went out on the boat?

BS [00:04:02] Probably around 19 or so. So I'd already done a few other jobs and I'd gone out fishing with my dad, actually, when he retired and did a couple years gillnetting with him and did a year trolling with somebody up in Port Hardy and, yeah. So I finally was lucky enough to get my brother to hire me because he had an opening on his boat.

PW [00:04:35] And was that a gillnetter?

BS [00:04:37] That was a seiner, he ran a seiner. Yeah. So they had a larger crew.

PW [00:04:45] So what was your job on that seine boat?

BS [00:04:48] Well, the first job I had was cook/engineer. It was a small boat. So there was instead of a five person crew, it was only four. So I had two jobs: cook and engineer. So that meant I cooked, but it also meant I was on deck, running the drum, you know, that brings in the net. So, yeah, it was on the go 20 hours a day.

PW [00:05:17] Wow. And did your brother teach you how to run the drum?

BS [00:05:22] Oh, yeah. I mean, I learned that, yeah, pretty quick. And he was on deck too. So it was, like I said, it was a small boat. He was instructing me, you know, how to bring it in according to the tide and stuff like that. So, he had to teach me how to yell loud enough so he could hear me. The first time that we were getting a backlash when I was on the boat, which means the net gets caught up and it doesn't flow freely as they're letting it out. And I was trying to tell him, I was like, Bruce, and he was like, no, you have to yell, I can't hear you.

PW [00:06:00] And did you ever find it, like, was it physically challenging?

BS [00:06:06] It was long days, but I was young, and I had a lot of energy. It's not that it wasn't physically demanding, but, you know, some days more than others. But I found that I was able to meet that challenge, so. Yeah.

PW [00:06:30] And where mainly did you fish on that boat?

BS [00:06:34] We fished—back in those days, we could fish pretty much the whole coast. So we would start the season out in the Alberni Channel and fish out of Port Alberni. And then we headed up the coast and fished out of Prince Rupert and then came down again. And, by the middle of the summer, we were fishing, around Texada and yeah, the lower straits.

PW [00:07:06] And, I'm always, I know with the whole fishing industry sometimes it was quite dangerous, especially when boats got overloaded. Were you ever concerned about things like that?

BS [00:07:21] At that point, that wasn't as big an issue, although, you know, there were incidents where we were, you know, a couple times, once with my brother, we hit a log running at night and, fortunately, it was in the middle of the night. I was asleep in my bunk. Something woke me up. The engine didn't sound right or something, and, sure enough, there was water coming in. So I woke him up, and the guy that was on the wheel didn't realize he'd hit a log. And so there was a small leak, and we were able to, you know, manage it and get the boat in for repairs, you know, get the pumps going. Another similar

incident with my other brother. I went out gillnetting with him and, going through some big waves and, yeah. So there was damage done to the trunk cabin, sort of and water was coming in. So those kinds of moments happened, definitely. I think a lot of the other safety issues generally on boats I became aware of later on, when I started—I actually worked for the Fishermen's Benefit Fund, later on and got involved in safety from that perspective.

PW [00:08:50] So how long did you stay working with Bruce on his boat?

BS [00:08:55] That was just a couple of seasons I did with him, so probably, you know, I probably did about five or six seasons all together fishing. Not just for him, but like I said, I fished with my dad and, did some trolling and gillnetting as well.

PW [00:09:12] And then your other brother too.

BS [00:09:13] Yeah. My other brother, John.

PW [00:09:19] So then did you do any shore working after that?

BS [00:09:25] Yeah. My first job was actually as a shoreworker, so, like, right out of high school, good paying job. My cousin was working there, and she got me a job. And, first day on the job, I just about passed out. That was on herring. The smell was something terrible, but I got used to it.

PW [00:09:48] Was that right in Ladner area?

BS [00:09:51] In Ladner, yeah. And it was a small independent, I think it was called Harbour Fisheries. And they were bringing in frozen herring from the States. Yeah, it was kind of a weird setup. So yeah, I did probably a couple of months there on the herring, my first job.

PW [00:10:17] So it was not just for the roe then?

BS [00:10:22] It was for the roe.

PW [00:10:24] Oh, but it was frozen. Interesting.

BS [00:10:25] But I didn't know where they were... They were freezing it and bringing it up and then thawing it. And then we were working on it as it thawed. And for the most part it wasn't too bad, but it was very cold, like really cold. And, yeah, like, especially at the end, they were really pushing us to get the last of it done, and it wasn't really well thawed. And I remember just, you know, coming home every day and my hands would just be numb.

PW [00:10:53] I bet. And was that a unionized job?

BS [00:10:57] No, we tried to organize that place. Helen O'Shaughnessy was the shoreworkers' organizer then, and my brother Bruce at that time was involved in helping to organize but there was a lot of immigrant women there, and they were worried about being deported if they got involved. And so we weren't successful that time.

PW [00:11:24] Okay. So that was right out of high school. Then you did fishing for a while. And then, after you were off the fishing boats for a while, what did you do?

BS [00:11:37] Well, I actually left fishing to raise a family. So, I got married to Mark Warrior, and we had two children, and I took some office administration courses, and I figured, well, I'm not going to go out fishing. So, there was a job posting to work for the Rigby Manor. They had a seniors housing project there. So I applied for that job, and I got it. And I did that for a while. And then a year or so later, Bert Ogden, who was the safety director, was retiring, and there was going to be an opening in the benefit fund. So I applied for that and was successful getting a job as the Assistant Director for the benefit funds.

PW [00:12:33] Right. And that was in the Maritime Labour Center, is that where the office was at the time?

BS [00:12:38] Yeah, so I worked with Morris Anderson, became the Director, and I was his assistant.

PW [00:12:46] And can you tell us a bit about what that job entailed?

BS [00:12:51] Well, basically it was doing, you know, processing the claims and stuff, running the benefit funds for shoreworkers and for fishermen. And also doing, at that time we were doing safety as well because that came under the heading. And at that time, we didn't have a Safety Director when I first started working there, that was one of our campaigns was to get a safety director. And so, one of the things I was doing was WCB appeals and so I had to do a lot of training for that kind of thing.

PW [00:13:37] So I'm just trying to place that in time. Approximately what year did you start doing that?

BS [00:13:47] Ah, geez...

PW [00:13:49] I'm just interested because I'm trying to figure out what benefits would have been. I know that there were many long struggles to get good benefits, so I don't know...

BS [00:14:00] That would have been, I guess, let's see, probably around 1990 to about '96. So the union had already established benefits and for a lot of, like for wage indemnity, dental, extended health, those kind of things. And it was a little bit different for shoreworkers than it was for fishermen. And so one of the things that was accomplished while I was there was getting a shoreworker's pension, which was a big thing. And I remember, you know, sitting in on a lot of those meetings and trying to establish what was required. We tried to do the same thing for fishermen, but it wasn't as easy in those days, to establish that for fishermen. One of the reasons being is that they fish for different companies and to get them to sign up for it because, unlike with other wage workers, where once they were in the union, they were automatically signed up every year. They had to go out, our organizers had to get them to pay their dues every year, like, it wasn't automatically taken off. So it was, to establish a pension was very difficult. Not all members wanted to sign up. And you'd have to renew their dues and everything every year. So it was a lot different just the way the industry worked. So that was one of the things we did eventually also get a Safety Director. That was one of the things that was agreed to with the Fisheries Association that we were negotiating with, which was a big accomplishment. We did work on, at that time, the government was reviewing the fishing industry safety and we put forward a presentation to request safety regulations for fishermen because we had already, the union had already won coverage for fishermen. That happened, gosh, I think back in the '70s, and I remember that when I was a kid

because, you know, there was the Women's Auxiliary was out campaigning, you know, on behalf of the union and on their own behalf to protect themselves and their families, for compensation for fishermen because they weren't covered under the Compensation Act. So at that time we won coverage for them, if they were injured at sea, but there were still no safety regulations. So, when we got a Safety Director, Alanna Lantela, I think, was the first one that we hired. She and I did that presentation to the WCB to get regulations implemented, and so that kind of got the ball rolling. They finally agreed to that. And eventually, it became what is the Fish Safe program that they have now.

PW [00:17:35] That was a huge accomplishment.

BS [00:17:37] Yeah. It was. I mean, we did manage to make some progress. And it was interesting at the time because when you were asking about safety at sea, we looked at it. I mean, we knew that there were a lot of injuries because I worked in the benefit fund and I would see the claims that came in of what happened, like a lot of injuries like, from running the equipment on deck. And, what had happened up until then is when there was something that happened at sea, you know, ship went down or something, it was always investigated. And if there was a death at sea, but it was always done from the point of the Marine Transport Board, looking at the ship itself and how it was run. But there was nothing that really governed the running of equipment and the work. You know, handling fish on board the ship. And so what we found was a lot of the injuries that were happening to our members was related to that, you know, like running the drum. Like I was saying how things can get, you know, bringing the net up on the drum. A lot of injuries were getting caught in that net as it's pulling something up and, you know, crushing injuries, that kind of thing. People getting their hair caught in gurneys and stuff on trollers. Those—a lot of them women, not a lot, but a higher percentage because they're inexperienced, not well-trained. It was surprising how many injuries we realized that were related to those kinds of activities, running that equipment without any training. Right? And that was one of my first experiences getting on a seine boat. Before I worked for my brother, I worked on another boat and the crew was mostly green. I had some experience and there was an older guy there, but there was a couple of younger guys, and they had no, absolutely no training. And I found myself talking to them about the dangers of, you know, like, cause we were seining and when you're pulling the net around, there's a lot of strain on that line holding the other end of the—holding the end of the net to the boat. And you know, you don't stand in the bite of that line. You know, if it breaks, you don't want to be hit by it. And so explaining to them things like that (laughing).

PW [00:20:13] And what about that? Did they take that advice from you. Was there any issues about you being a woman on a boat, were you listened to, the same way or?

BS [00:20:25] Not the same way. No, they'd always kind of raise their eyebrows at me, and then I'd have to call in the other old guy. And I'd say tell them, you know. 'Okay, yeah'. But I always found that, yeah, I didn't always get the same response that as I think a lot of males would get. I didn't—I was lucky that the people I fished with were very accepting of me and what I was doing. That wasn't widespread on the coast, but it was my colleagues and coworkers, in the Fishermen's Union that got me the jobs. Some of them were my brothers, but, you know, not all of them. That would, you know, 'hey, she's looking for a work'. You know, they'd go to their skippers and they'd say, tell them that I was looking for work and they'd get me jobs. So I always really appreciated those people. And, you know, those were the union members that I had met through the union, right? That had my back.

PW [00:21:41] So you went—were you ever a steward or you went directly into working in the benefits?

BS [00:21:50] No, I hadn't really. I worked, or been involved in a couple of the different locals. Like, I lived on Vancouver Island for a while and I was in the Campbell River local and, you know, worked that way, through those locals. But eventually, when I got the job, it was sort of directly, you know, that job that I was hired for. So I'd kind of been around the union for a long time. As in one of the things that we did, I guess, when I was a shoreworker, and I did eventually—I worked that first season for a non-union company. But I did eventually get work in a union company on herring and on salmon. So I was a member of the union, before I started going out on the boats, as a shoreworker. And one of the campaigns that the union started, I think it was George Hewison actually, was the Unemployment Action Center that we started. So Kim Zander and I were called into George's office, I think, with a couple of other shoreworkers that were, you know, active. Just volunteering really is what we did around the union hall and any campaigns that were going on we'd help out with, and brought up this idea of an unemployment center. There was some funding available, through the unions that the union was able to get to run—I don't really know all of the details of how it was run, but we were asked to organize it, and so we did. We opened up the Unemployment Action Center at the Fisherman's Hall when it was on Cordova. That was before they moved to the Maritime Labour Center. And so we invited other—mostly through the Vancouver and District Labour Council. We invited other unemployed workers because we were unemployed for a large portion of the year. So that's why we were getting this going. And there was a lot of unemployment at the time. That would have been in the '80s, I guess. Early. Yeah. Late '70s, early '80s.

BS [00:24:24] And so we helped organize that. And that was really exciting times. I remember that was just when, I guess the first food bank was getting going in Vancouver, and we kind of touched base with them and start making different contacts in the community and, you know, ways of helping support people. And not just people in our industry or in the organized labour movement. But, you know, we invited anybody that was unemployed and we really acted more as advocates for them. So, especially if they were having any issues with getting their unemployment because at that time, that was one of the issues. People were complaining that they weren't being treated fairly. So we were acting as their advocates and we studied, you know, the act and what people were entitled to. And we would actually have—we set up with the unemployment centers. I guess it was Manpower back then or something like that (laughing).

PW [00:25:37] Yeah, I think so.

BS [00:25:39] We'd contact them, you know, there was somebody there who would take our calls and help us sort it out, find out who the agent was that was dealing with it, determine whether it was something valid or not, and help get whatever needed to be done, done and help people get their benefits. So. Yeah, that was an interesting time.

PW [00:26:02] Yeah. And I think that I mean, I know that George was heavily involved during Operation Solidarity, and that's when it really cemented some of the working, more broadly in the community as well. Can you remember those times?

BS [00:26:19] Unfortunately, I was away that time, we were fishing during Operation Solidarity. And it was. Yeah. I missed out on a lot of it because I was tuna fishing.

PW [00:26:37] Tuna fishing. Wow.

BS [00:26:38] Yeah, we were off the coast of I guess Oregon, you know, Washington, Northern California. Yeah. So all of this was going on, and we hardly knew anything about it 'till we got back.

PW [00:26:53] So on the tuna, for tuna fishing, what type of boat was that?

BS [00:26:58] Well, it was a seine boat. It was Canadian. And it was set up to troll. And so there was a few—well, sorry—it was set up to seine or use a net, but because where we were fishing, there wasn't enough tuna, they weren't schooling up. So we set out trolling poles. And one of the things—that time they did actually listen to me—they wanted to know how to troll. And I was the only one on board that knew how to do it and had done it before so I helped them, explained how to set up the lines. But, yeah. So that was just that one fall we went because it was kind of—the salmon season was finished up here and it looked like the tuna were going to be, it was going to be a good year. So we went down there. But it didn't turn out to be a great year, but we did manage to—we canned a lot of what we caught just for ourselves and our families so had some really good tuna for a long time.

PW [00:28:08] Could I just take you back for a minute—when you said that you had worked one job was with salmon. Was it a cannery, or did you actually, what did you do with the salmon when you were shoreworking?

BS [00:28:26] Oh, yeah, when I worked on shoreworking, it was seasonal. So there was usually the salmon season, which was basically I guess from June 'til September and sometimes later and then the herring season. So I had worked both seasons, but I wasn't steady anywhere. So I was sort of working different places at different times. It was on a call-out basis. I was just casual. So I worked one summer in Port Hardy on the salmon.. The other times I worked were on the herring season in Richmond. So it was Steveston and I worked at BC Packers and then I worked at Cassiar as well for herring.

PW [00:29:31] And so, I'm just curious too, about, was it difficult to, like your childcare or did you take time out until your children were old enough that you didn't have to worry about working and childcare?

BS [00:29:48] Well, at that time, I didn't have children. That was when I was right out of high school, and I didn't have to worry about that. But it was a concern later when I worked for the union. In fact, that's one of the reasons that I had to leave because my kids were getting older and there wasn't the kind of after school when they went into school. Like it was okay when they were younger and you can get them into daycare and it wasn't such a problem. But when they went into school and then trying to get them after school care, that became really difficult to find appropriate after school care for them. And my commute to work into Vancouver because I still lived in Ladner, you know, it was an hour commute. So I couldn't just check in on things or if something went wrong or whatever. So, yeah, it made, you know, working for the union very difficult that way to maintain my family life and do as much as I wanted to for the union.

PW [00:31:18] Yeah. That is ever the case with working for a union. And basically it's not 9 to 5.

BS [00:31:25] Yeah, and I didn't there wasn't really any solution for that for me at the time.

PW [00:31:34] So, can you remember approximately when you stopped working for the union then?

BS [00:31:42] I think it was 1996.

PW [00:31:46] And so was that the end of your involvement with the union then?

BS [00:31:52] Well, I did end up—I moved to Lasqueti Island. But at that time, the union had set up a community fisheries program, which was transitioning people out of the industry. And so I did end up working in the Nanaimo office of the Community Fisheries Development Corporation, I think it was called. So I did a few years there and got into—it was mostly just working in the office there. And we also had contracts with Fisheries Renewal BC at that time when the NDP was in. And they had programs like that going. So I did some work in that as well, mostly, you know, administration and looking after that end of it.

PW [00:32:51] I wonder if we could go back for just a minute. What can you remember when your dad was actually in jail? Because you know, when I look at the other the other jail sentences, like a year was such a long time.

BS [00:33:08] Oh, yeah. No, I remember, I mean being that I grew up in a, like I said, a fishing community, it was like everybody knew what was going on. And, yeah, I didn't really want to pay attention to it. I didn't really think it would happen, but it did. And, yeah, I remember we used to go to visit him monthly. We only had monthly visits. I'm thinking that when Audrey was talking about visiting him every day, that must have been when he was in Oakalla, because he was in Oakalla first and then he was sent to Chilliwack. And that was a bit of a trip. So, yeah, that was like a whole day trip for all of us to go up there and visit him. So I remember going into the courtroom when he was sentenced, we were all asked to go in there and like, just I tell you, I did not think nice things about the judge. But it definitely cemented my feelings about, you know, the union and the role of the union and the importance of the union and the importance of workers' rights. Yeah. It cemented all of that for me.

PW [00:34:32] And he was re-elected as president while he was in jail, wasn't he?

BS [00:34:39] Yeah. He was. I mean, what I remember as a child was just like, I would think I was, I don't know, 12 or 13 and wasn't really so much aware of what was going on in the news or, in the union itself. But within my community, I was just amazed at all of the sort of unexpected things that happened, like at Christmas time, you know, we would get all these gifts given to us. And I didn't even know these people, you know. And just everywhere within my community, not the broader community, but people expressing, you know, their belief that what he was doing was the right thing and how much they appreciated it. And they hoped that we were okay. And if we wanted anything, just let them know. And yeah, that kind of really hit home, too, just how supportive people really were.

PW [00:35:45] And just thinking back, was there any strike that is in your mind that you were part of?

BS [00:35:56] Yeah, there were a few strikes. I guess one of the memorable ones was, I guess, in the '80s. That was on the herring. And I was packing that herring season. And we were on Vancouver Island, we tied up in Tofino, but the season was basically called off. We missed the herring. They don't last very long. And then going to Victoria, there was

a lot going on there to try and keep our jobs in Canada, right, instead of just sending everything across the line. And, you know we had what we called a flying picket squad based out of Nanaimo, where we were just basically gathering information. There wasn't really a whole lot going on. But we knew that there were some operations going on in some of the non-union plants, and we were just trying to, you know, like I said, gather information. So we thought, well, I wonder what they're doing with some of their effluent. Maybe we should check out one of the facilities, the municipal facility for, I guess, processing effluent or whatever, anyways. So me and a couple of other union members decided to go down there and just check it out, right. And so we had a couple of picket signs with us and driving my little Rambler, so not a big car. Anyways, so we're outside of this place, and we're just sitting in the car playing cards, waiting to see what was going to happen. And there was a big truck that pulled in at the end of the street and we could see it was coming towards us. And we thought, well, let's take a look. So we got out the car. There's three of us. None of them are any taller than I am. I'm like 5'8, so none of us is over six feet. So we're just standing there looking at them, and the truck stopped and then just backed out and left. Well, that was weird. Okay, so then we hear on the radio that night that there were a bunch of thugs waiting for them and made them turn back when they were delivering some of this effluent or whatever. And I just thought, well, nobody's ever called me that before (laughter).

PW [00:38:44] And nobody from the media bothered to fact check either obviously.

BS [00:38:51] Absolutely not. No. There was so much misinformation going on at that time about who was doing what, you know, and like I said, spreading those kind of rumors that there was, you know, union thugs. Like, come on. But we knew, one thing we did know is what we did find out was that one of the truck drivers that we had run into a few times just by chance, driving up and down the highway was somebody from Texas. And, you know, when he saw us on the street, he was basically threatening us, you know, to stay out of his way kind of thing, and just being really tough. And I guess he thought because I was a woman that, you know... Yeah, but, we kind of realized who's hiring the thugs.

PW [00:39:41] Yeah, exactly.

BS [00:39:43] But, yeah, lots of misinformation that goes on in the media, that's for sure.

PW [00:39:49] Yes. And, when you're talking about the jobs, I know that, UFAWU was very active campaigning against NAFTA as well.

BS [00:39:58] Yeah. No, I mean, I think you know, ultimately we changed the whole set up of the processing part of the industry at least. At that time, a lot of the friends that I met who, you know, lived in Tofino and places like that, they were fighting to keep their jobs there and, you know, eventually had to move to Vancouver. And then those jobs as well have left. So yeah, it was very, very—it's difficult and like I said, very difficult to influence the media. And I mean, from my experience in doing different campaigns that the union had. When you asked me about my childhood, I mean, what introduced me to the politics of the union was the Women's Auxiliary. Because my mum was a member and they used to have meetings in our house and I don't know, I guess it's not normal for kids, but I used to like to sit in those meetings, partly because they served really good cookies, but also because I learned so much. And a lot of the campaigns that they were involved in, some of them were, you know, political, like at that time when I was a kid, it wasn't about NAFTA, but a lot of it was about safety. Like I mentioned, coverage, you know, from Worker's Compensation, but also about environmental stuff, like the Moran Dam, when they wanted

to dam the river, the Fraser River, and things like that. And I would learn about those things. And I became an environmentalist at a very young age. And the Women's Auxiliary was taking on a lot of these things and the way they would campaign was really to go out to the organizations in their community, whether it was the church groups or other women's groups. You know, the Chamber of Commerce, whoever, and asked to speak to their meetings and explain to them about these issues. And they were part of the core group and it wasn't just the union, it was the Women's Auxiliary as well that did a lot of that legwork and did a lot of that organizing. And, you know, that's how people learned. And, you know, at that time, they were able to make a difference because even though there was some media bias, you know, against the union, mostly they weren't focused on these issues. Right? And so when they talked to people face-to-face like that, then they were able to, you know, put forward the union's positions and explain why it was important not to build a dam on the Fraser River or other things that, at that time, I guess it was the Social Credit, was talking about. One more super project, you know.

PW [00:43:19] Yeah. So thinking back over your career, what do you think was the favorite thing for you to do.

BS [00:43:29] Well, I have to say, when I worked, I loved seining. I really did. That was, what I loved most about it, not just seining, but any of the jobs on the boat was navigating. I loved running the boat at night and just. Yeah, I mean I loved going up and down the coast, revisiting all those little villages that I'd never been to before. And some of them at that time were even being abandoned. But, you know, Namu and places like that at that time were still running, still operating, you know, and the sort of the social aspect of it. You know, fishermen that would, you know, my dad would always introduce me to them and you'd meet them, I'd meet them later in the union hall or whatever. So that social aspect I really enjoyed and later on in my career, working for the benefit fund. I just really liked giving cheques to people that needed it. I always found that gratifying.

PW [00:44:42] Yeah, just returning a bit to navigating. So navigating, I imagine the time that you're talking about it was a little bit different. The technology wasn't—did they have Loran?

BS [00:44:59] No, we had a radar though.

PW [00:45:01] Radar.

BS [00:45:01] Yeah. And it was pretty I mean, the thing about the radar, I mean it was pretty accurate. And the way I was trained was that you also use your eyes, you know, like. So, just learning how to read a chart and know where you were on that and how things... And in those days, too, it wasn't as difficult because there weren't so many other ships out. So if you saw a light, you could assume that, you know, there wasn't so many that you had to kind of figure out what's what. Nowadays, when you go out on the water at night, there's lights everywhere, traveling at night. But the serenity of working out on the water was really what drew me to it. You know, and I mean the whole thing about being out fishing. People always say, why do you want to do that? You're a girl, blah blah blah. Like, well, why do you do it right? It's like it's just to be able to work on the water. Yeah. I just really loved that, the serenity of it.

PW [00:46:20] So, what do you do to keep busy on Lasqueti these days?

BS [00:46:24] Oh, well, I'm not there anymore. I'm retired now.

PW [00:46:29] So where do you live now?

BS [00:46:31] I live on Gabriola. So I farmed for a few years, and then I retired. Did some office work, but I retired since then, and my brothers still fish. Two of them. So later today, I gotta go and meet them and pick up some fish. They're bringing it back from Port Alberni.

PW [00:46:56] And so, what type of boats do they have?

BS [00:47:00] They're still gillnetting.

PW [00:47:01] Gillnetting.

BS [00:47:04] So yeah, they're still doing that, although it's always more challenging. You know, the season is a lot shorter for them and well, my one brother, he worked for a while for the ferries, like when they went through that transitioning period, he took a job with the ferries, but he was able to get time off during the summer so he could still go fishing. So he's retired from the ferries now, but he's still fishing. And my brother John is still fishing. He's always worked at that as his basic occupation.

PW [00:47:47] And what about your children? Did they go in the industry or?

BS [00:47:52] No. They went out with their uncle, and they went out with their grandpa for a while, but they decided it wasn't for them. So, yeah, now they're doing other things.

PW [00:48:07] Is there anything else you think of it, that you wanted to add?

BS [00:48:18] I can't really think of anything offhand. I guess just that things have changed a whole lot for the industry and I guess for the labour movement as well. I mean, on the one hand, it's good to see that Indigenous people are having more of a voice and able—like I just saw the announcement yesterday about the Great Bear Agreement,—and you know what that means to those First Nations. And to see that kind of thing happening because there were a lot of Indigenous people in the fishermen's union, and they did have a voice to some degree. But I think their ability to really get involved in everything, you know, in the same way was... Well, I'll just say that they weren't as involved for whatever reason, right. And so it's good to see that that's happening. On the other hand, what's happening to the industry as a whole and what a struggle it's been just to keep the salmon alive, to keep them going. And, you know, so, a lot of habitat that's been lost is not going to come back to us. But at least some gains are being made in saving what habitat there is. The potential for the industry still remains. So hopefully, it will continue to be a sustainable industry.

PW [00:50:12] Natasha, did you have any questions you'd like to ask?

NF [00:50:16] I didn't, I just wanted to really thank you for this interview. It's been really fascinating.