



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview, June 9, 2017

Herrera, Rosa ~ Oral History Interview

Corinn Williams

Herrera, Rosa. Interview by Corinn Williams *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. June 9, 2017.

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New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center
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Interview with Rosa Herrera, June 9, 2017.

Background

Name of Person Interviewed: Rosa Herrera

Facts about this Person:

Age	55
Sex	Female
Occupation	Fish Cleaner
Residence	New Bedford
Ethnic Background	El Salvador

Interviewer: Corinn Williams [CW]

Transcriber: Pricilla Gamboa [PG]

Interview location: New Bedford

Date of Interview: June 9, 2017

Key Words

El Salvador, New Bedford, Fish cleaning, scallops, cod, calamari, squid

Abstract

Rosa emigrated to America from El Salvador and works cleaning fish at a seafood processing plant. Rosa discusses her job training, work with scallops and fish cleaning on the night shift.

[00:00] Introductions. Originally from San Sebastian in El Salvador. Many Salvadorans who live in the New Bedford area work in the fishing industry. Life in El Salvador is very hard. As a single mother she decided to come to America. She left her three small daughters behind.

[09:26] First job in America was in the fishing industry, it was a very different change from working in El Salvador and had to adapt to the working environment. Now 13 years later she has adapted her whole life to America and does not wish to return to El Salvador.

[15:00] Began working in scallops, separating them by sizes and packaging them to be sold. She prefers working with scallops than fish. After this job she spent a while unemployed. A while later she worked at a small company that was also a scallop company where she had the same job in sorting scallops. She now works at a different company with cleaning fish for 6 years.

[19:15] She now works cleaning cod fish. They use machines to clean the fish, the she uses a knife and her hands to clean the rest of the fish. She works the night shift that is focused on cod. During the day the company processes other kinds of fish. She works in a work crew that ranges from 35 to 40 persons.

[25:00] To learn the skills needed it took her some time. She was taught by her supervisor at work. In the beginning the job is hard to learn but afterwards it becomes easier. The supervisor was very patient with new employees. The only thing is you must meet your requirements; if you are slow they will let you know. You have to be fast and thorough with your work.

[32:35] At work sometimes there is a competitive environment, trying to see who cleans and finishes more fish during a time to meet quota even though they are paid by hour not by production. The most interesting part of the job is everything because she has learned the skills needed she is very comfortable with the job. She does wish to work during the day instead of the night time.

[38:15] During the spring there is usually more work, the work week increases to 50 hours a week. Work week can go as low as 10 hours weekly when production is not needed. During the summer the company also does calamari production. They separate the calamari by sizes aiming to get the smaller ones. Squids tentacles are not cut, they only cleaned similar to crab legs. This summer she has not processed any squid yet.

[42:35] Discusses different wages between employees. Talks about gender differences in the work area. Men are usually given more hours than the women. Talks about diversity of cultures in work environment.

[52:51] Views on changes in the fishing industry throughout her years working. Advice shared for anyone considering joining the fishing industry. Wishes to continue working in the same seafood company for years to come. Family members tell her to change jobs because of her age but she likes her job. Closing remarks.

[01:00:39] End of recording