

Brad Landvardt. Fisherman, Hunter, McDonald Spit
Interviewed By Josh Wisniewski for American Folklife Center
Date 02/03/2022

Brad was born in 1951 and came to Alaska at age 17 in 1969. He immediately began to work for hunting guides in remote sections of Alaska eventually becoming the youngest professional guide in Alaska operating his own business. Concurrently he became a commercial halibut fisherman and eventually a charter guide operating out of Homer on the waters of Kachemak Bay. He is a commercial set net and halibut fisherman who lives on the south side of Kachemak Bay. A central theme for Brad is a concept often heard throughout rural Alaska called "Old Alaska". This refers to the willingness of individuals and small family-owned business to operate on credit and to support people making a living fishing, hunting. This willingness to share freely and to support people starting out is often viewed by the older generation of Alaska as something that has been lost as populations increase and rural self-sufficient lifestyles are slowly replaced though gentrification of rural communities.

- 01:00-05:00 Upon graduation from high school was given a one-way ticket to Alaska. Passion was hunting and fishing. He learned about Alaska through hunting and Sportsman magazines. Traveled to Alaska with a backpack, fishing pole and rifle. In that period of time, one could travel with rifle through the airport and hand to Stewardess when boarding plane and retrieve upon exiting the plane. Offered a job with a hunting guide the day he arrived, and began a career in hunting "A great lifestyle" Lived in remote wild country starting in Tarketna mountains and moving to the White River Country near the Yukon Border and the Wrangell Mountains taking care of horses used to guide in the backcountry. Received assistant guide license at 18.
- 05:00-10:00 Became the youngest registered guide in the state of Alaska at age 21. "Old Alaska" Guide start up costs high. Old Alaska mentality was to give up and coming people a chance. Store owners, put people on tab, wait for payment at the end of the hunting season. Kept records on index cards and that was only way one could get started outfitting. Fuel companies also put expenses on a card. If one couldn't pay off in full and businesses would keep on the tab until the next year. Businesses were owned by an older generation. When those people retired or were bought out, and new businesses didn't operate on older credit system. Businesses that had been established in territorial days prior to statehood. Arrived on Kachemak Bay in early 1970s to fish halibut and crab.
- 10:00-15:00 Dabbled in charter fishing in Homer. Friends started commercial halibut fishing with a skiff. Spring and fall guiding, summers free, started commercial halibut fishing. Halibut skiff fishing fleet out of Homer. Hand line pulling out of tub gear. Fishing off Yukon Island and Sadie Cove, and off Sadie Cove. Good memories skiff fishing. Fished soft line with J hooks. Hand hauling, making multiple single skate (1200 ft) sets. \$2.00 a

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pound, good money in early 1970's no ice, deliver to processor and receive check in same day. Primarily small boats and skiffs fishing halibut in Kachemak Bay. Larger scale boats fishing crab and shrimp in the Bay

- 15:00-20:00 Commercial shrimp, pot and trawl fishery. Memorable skiff fishing experience. Lost in the fog off Seldovia, heading to Homer. Halibut season with *Jago* two-week fishing openers, 3-4 full two-week periods. Rapid decline to shorter and shorter periods leading to short 1-2 day derby fishing periods. Homer based small boat halibut fleet.
- 20:00-25:00 Looking for fishing job and first boat. Couldn't get deckhand job, so bought a 28 ft wooden boat. No experience looking at boats. Marine surveyor recommended, easy to get bank loan. Needed to find fishing gear, started fishing with snap on gear and J hooks. Hauled with small hydraulic line hauler, faster to haul by hand, no coiler. First deckhand was green.
- 25:00-30:00 Memorable sets off McDonald Spit and off Seldovia Bay. Bad weather fishing off Port Graham. Sets only soaked an hour. *Jago* comfortable to live on during fishing season. After fishing seasons shrunk shifted to charter fishing out of Deep Creek. Built a wooden boat to set net for salmon near home in Kasitsna Bay. Wooden skiff part of Kachemak Bay set net fishing traditions. Strong Kachemak Bay skiff building tradition inspired building own wooden skiff.
- 30:00-35:00 Inspired by Dick Dunn, Dave Seaman and Mike Balough, and Kodiak Ophiem skiffs. Built an east coast designed sea skiff, high transom and motor well. Considered trolling in Southeast Alaska. Set nets sites available outside home on McDonald Spit. Community based fishery. First season, huge learning curve. *Richmond Star*, halibut boat. Wanted a traditional larger wooden fishing boat.
- 35:00-40:00 Found *Richmond Star* for sale on Vancouver Island. Convert a Canadian registered boat to fishing in Alaskan waters. Spent a week to visit it. Brought boat up in April, rough weather the whole trip up. Took a month to bring the boat up. Anchor winch nicknamed "Man-killer". First night bring boat up the anchor wouldn't work.
- 40:00-45:00 Bought halibut IFQ. Learned how to set up for halibut fishing. First trip two deckhands struggled to find fish. Slow but efficient boat to fish. *Richmond Star* 1977 Wahl built boat, last of Wahl wooden boats. Now based in Oregon building metal boats. Wahl boat lines recognized. *Richmond Star* one of the last two working wooden boats based out of

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Homer and Seldovia. Same commercial fishing and hunting opportunities may not exist today for younger generations. Children loved sport subsistence and charter fishing. Outdoor opportunities less interesting to a younger generation more interested mobile devices.

45:00-52:57

Parents let Brad experience life and challenges on his own and struggle and go through life. Same chance given to his kids to learn things on their own. Embrace of traditional coastal Alaska lifestyle. People ask "what do you do?" There is no answer. It is just a whole life. Motto is to "live big". Environmental change, crab and shrimp decline, historically larger snow years, Seldovia population grows and contracts. Homer use to be fisherman and unemployed carpenters, now carpenters and unemployed fishermen. Advice to a younger version of himself, or other people interested in subsistence and fishing lifestyle is need to be tough, mentally tough. Younger generation less willing to take risks and endure physical discomfort. How grew up shaped perseverance and adventurous. Struggle and pushing self is part of experience. Final comments, don't live with regrets. Have to make things and make the life one wants work.

52:57

End Interview