

Dave Kubiak, Commercial Fisherman, Kodiak Alaska
Interviewed by Josh Wisniewski and Marissa Wilson 05/01/2022
American Folklife Center

- 0:00-05:00 Born 1948 in Wisconsin, Dad worked at tire repair shop, joins Coast Guard, stationed in Great Lakes, working at lighthouse. Learning to tie knots and splice lines. Big storm on lake, storm surge, Coast Guard lifeboats, dad blamed for lifeboat sinking. Transferred to Maryland, then to Alaska
- 05:00-10:00 Driving up Alcan, camping in Homer, picking berries with brother. Lessons about how expectations shape experiences. Arriving in Kodiak, exploring intertidal zone, raking up king crab off beaches.
- 10:00-15:00 Arriving in Kodiak after the earthquake, processing plants impacted by earthquake. Star of Kodiak processing ship turns into a plant. Fisheries in Kodiak 1960s. Salmon was down crab was most lucrative fishery. Crab industry changing. Diversity of boats used for crabbing. Other boats. Jitneys, Chignik seiners. Post-earthquake, lots of new fishing boats. Government funding to rebuild accelerates change on Kodiak.
- 15:00-20:00 Shrimp fishing, getting a job at processing school during day, working at processing plant at night. Sees sexism in work place, advancement only for men. Getting promoted. Buying motorcycle and guitar
- 20:00-25:00 Injustice in work place, building a herring pound with Norm and Oliver Holm. Selling herring to Seattle based halibut schooner fleet. Halibut schooners fill float professional fishermen, halibut fisherman hat, bow caps and frisco jeans. Lashing hooks to gangions. Delivering fish in Seattle.
- 25:00-30:00 Finish high school, go to college in Fairbanks, not knowing how to study, flunking out. Vietnam, trying to join coast guard, rejected for wearing glasses, rejected from army, moving back to Kodiak. No skills, housekeeping at early warning radar station. Working for Alaska Department of Fish and Game "sneak crew" watching for fishermen fishing for salmon illegally.
- 30:00-35:00 Jacques Cousteau camped at Fish and Game cabin, meeting heroes. Gets job fishing on *Sogn*, fishing for king and tanner crab off Cape Douglas with Calvin Colberg from Seldovia.
- 35:00-40:00 Gambling on boat, crabbing in winter, different styles of crab pots youngest person on boat, taken advantage of while tendering in Cook Inlet, quitting boat. Kid rescues man from boat that explodes on Kenai River.

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- 40:00-45:00 Fishing with son Eric, son too tired to keep working, dad sends him to cabin to rest. Son cooks for the whole crew. Fishing teaching values, developing character, lessons on how to endure “staying power”.
- 45:00-50:00 College in California, went fishing, didn’t make money. Staking land on Whale Island, Opheim skiffs, move to Ouzinkie , get job on the *Kalakala*. Return to college, working at gas station in Sacramento.
- 50:00-55:00 Called back to fishing, salaried job, resentment among employees, assaulted. working as a janitor for school district. Finishing school, with degree in English and teaching certificate. Return to Kodiak.
- 55:00-60:00 Getting a teaching job on Kodiak, 20-year teaching career. Started by living in travel trailer in another teacher’s yard. Building a dory for fishing.
- 1:00-1:05:00 Halibut fishing in skiff prior to halibut derbies. Brother learned to build from Ed Opheim. Brothers build boats when younger. Saint Pierre dories, other Kodiak builders.
- 1:05:-1:10:00 Building dory from local spruce. Building his own boat only way to get into fishing. Learning about using the local materials where you live. Pesterkoff built in a shed, built a dory a week with no power tools. Spruce Island, getting dory knees. Using a natural knee for a davit.
- 1:10-1:15:00 fishing halibut with dory, longer season, travelling around the Island. Skiff fishing, finding reefs, pinnacles and rock piles. Snap on gear with J hooks.
- 1:15-1:20:00 Buys *Phoenix* from Oliver Holm, 10% down payment and 10% annually until paid off (Looking at old pictures) old permit cards, Dungeness crab fishing and halibut fishing. Son talks into going salmon seining. Fishing with Oliver. 6-year-old daughter running the hydraulics. Buying salmon seining permit. Small net full purse, catching lots of pink salmon.
- 1:20-1:25:00 Fishing for Oly Harder as a kid. .25 cents per pink salmon, \$1.05 per red salmon. Good set netting site, wiped out by storm. *Phoenix* 32’ long, 10’ wide (Looking at pictures)
- 1:25-1:30:00 Started fishing small. Starting small and with nothing, hard fishing in a gale with hand made fishing gear. Push back on people who think successful fishermen didn’t have to work hard to advance themselves. Fishermen can still start out small by making due, making things work, and exploring new fishing opportunities. Phoenix made with no power tools, loaded with 12,000 pounds of halibut.

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- 1:30-1:35:00 Creating oneself, what one can do, or envision. Luke Lester caught 2,000 tons of herring. (Looking at pictures) Karluk dories for beach seining at Karluk, brother builds a 32 ft dory. Owning the *Phoenix* 1982-1986.
- 1:35-1:40:00 King crab crash, 24-hour halibut derbies, expansion of participation in halibut fishery by crab fleet. Excessive fishing by big boats, huge harvests of halibut, poor fish handling, not gutting fish. Boats fishing, for fish history to get IFQ. Kodiak halibut association forms, tries to block implementation of rationalization. Fishing for history catalyst for excessive fishery.
- 1:40-1:45:00 (Looking at pictures) *Irene H*, huge halibut delivery. 1989 oil spill, took place while teaching. Using seine nets to keep oil out of bays and away from salmon hatcheries. Huge influx of money as part of clean up effort. Driggers dominate oil spill clean-up charters. Small boats can't fish and can't get charter contracts. Cleaning up oil, Clean-up crews were not allowed on beaches, only to scoop tarballs out of the water. Seeing deer on beach with oil on their legs.
- 1:45-1:50:00 Concern over people raiding archeological sites during oil spill clean-up, controversy over cleaning up bags of oil off the beach. Didn't hire people around Kodiak to clean up oil until four months after the spill. Herring gillnetting, good opportunity for new entrants into Kodiak area fisheries.
- 1:50-1:55 Starting out, innovation, starting with cod jigging. Fishing as high adventure, learning different trades. Loving the life, fishing as high adventure, even while sick, wouldn't miss it. Fascination that it is even possible to catch fish. True wealth in fishing, metaphysical aspects of fishing, wealth as joy in seeing fish and crab.
- 1:55-2:00:00 Resentful of emphasis on money. Fish are not money, marvelous bounty of beautiful, wild natural creatures. Focus on money is low way to think about fishing. Advice to new fishermen, get on good boat, work hard, stay away from drugs and alcohol, save money. Encourage people to start small. Biggest challenge facing fisheries is climate change. Mismanagement of fisheries, declining stocks that should be abundant.
- 2:00-2:05:00 Trying to work within federal fisheries management, dominated by corporate fisheries. Managers and decision makers don't listen to small scale fishermen Hoping climate change won't impact Kodiak Island. Pessimistic about future, though encouraged by human potential to manifest change when driven.
- 2:05-2:07:24 Concern that Americans lack the motivation to make hard adjustments to changes to protect the environment, or respond to climate change.

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2:07:24 End.