

Jeff Farvor, Fisherman, Troller

Sitka, Alaska

Interviewed By Josh Wisniewski and Marissa Wilson 03/24/2021

American Folk Life Center

- 0:00-05:00 Born 1969, grew up in Tacoma, Washington. Finished high school, started community college, family friend offered him deckhand position on a tug boat in Alaska. Told skipper he could cook, buys cook book, offered job. Learning duties, other deckhands impatient. Servicing remote logging camps, moving logs to mill. Leaving boat, returning to school, New opportunity to long line for cod through family friend.
- 05:00-10:00 Getting fishing job as processor on boat, using j hooks, auto baiter system. Learning about boat work. Starts fishing, with black cod survey. No crew contacts. Wanting to transition from processing to being a fisherman.
- 10:00-15:00 Fishing in the Bring Sea. 18-26 days between deliveries. Bad weather, fishing four days away from Dutch Harbor, International Date Line. Hearing Russian boats on the radio. FV *Ocean Prowler*. Learning how to fish after 16-hour long processing shifts. Delivering to Japanese ship, trading for Japanese whiskey. Multi-cultural crew, running out of ice cream. 24 hour leave when delivering.
- 15:00-20:00 Spending whole year on boat, no crew contract or rotation for time off. Working to become full share fisherman. Taking time off, travel, unable to get job back.
- 20:00-25:00 Offered job on salmon seiner, learning to see something that needs to be done and doing it. Salmon prices low, fishing on leased boat, lower crew share. Fishing the next season, not making money. Falling in love with Southeast Alaska. Decides to move to Alaska, Didn't like idea of living in one fishing in another area and leaving, Moving to Sitka with girlfriend, Boat building school in Tacoma when not seining. Side jobs while going to school. Looking for boat work in Sitka. Wooden boat fishing fleet. Sitka Shipwrights Co-op. Looking for boat work.
- 25:00-30:00 Working for old Norwegian fisherman. The challenge of working for others, asking to get paid, quitting/getting fired. Tries to rehire. Fisherman sends all of his earnings to support family in Norway. Getting membership in shipwright co-op. Fishing supporting shipwright work. Part time fishing, part time shipwright work.
- 30:00-35:00 Fishing salmon in Bristol Bay, halibut fishing after IFQ program implemented. Fishing halibut in spring, salmon in summers. Fairweather Grounds, selling fish in Haines. Cutting finger on table saw, worried about missing fishing time.

Jeff Farvor, Fisherman, Troller

Sitka, Alaska

Interviewed By Josh Wisniewski and Marissa Wilson 03/24/2021

American Folk Life Center

- 35:00-40:00 Suggests doctor cut his finger off, flying to Seattle for surgery. Going seining with hurt hand. Figuring out which fishery to get boat to participate in.
- 40:00-45:00 Getting job on new halibut boat, making a huge set. Tough fishing getting sick, working hard. Long term position on boat. 15 Years on new boat. Fishing snap on gear. Fishing for black cod in Chatham Strait. Groomed to take over the operation. Agreement falls through. Exploring other options. Buying Canadian troller and trolling permit. Fishing king salmon solo, selling black cod quota. Developing right trolling mind-set.
- 45:00-50:00 Friends help getting started fishing, have a rough second year, learning to troll effectively, needing a bigger boat, looking for new boat and avoiding debt. Finding new boat located at the "Hobbit Hole". Seller wants to sell to "right person". Agree to sell point fly to Hobbit Hole with niece to get boat Hobbit Hole as former hippy hand troller hang out. Taking boat back to Sitka.
- 50:00-55:00 Replacing troll gear, boat catches fish. Shipwright Co-op closes in 2004. No places left to work on boats, watching loss of working waterfront. Boat fishes really good. Having the right voltage. Boat voltage changes. Stops fishing as good. Re learning to make the boat fishy. Learning about base line voltage data. Black boxes, controlling voltage.
- 55:00-60:00 Nuances to what makes a boat fish well. Meeting original of boat, asks where bow poles are. Early on boat was good at catching coho, mystery as to what makes a boat work. Scratch boats and clatter boats, learning to troll.
- 1:00-1:05:00 Fun competing with friends, keeping extra gear on boat. Keeping extra gear on the boat, avoiding returning to town, friend offers to work as deckhand. Falling and cracking chin open.
- 1:05-1:10 What makes fishy, fishy. Cross Sound mix of clear and Glacial water. Temperature gradients. More time spent fishing, know less about fishing, always learning. Studying water temperature, and fish movement. Trolling minimal technology change, better communication and electronics, still fishing hook and line. Technological change in seine boats, different nets, more powerful skiffs. *Cloud Nine* (Moe Johnson) less fancy boat and less fancy technology and catches more fish. "The fish whisperer". Fishermen relying more on technology than on human intuition. Navigation software so advanced people forget to look outside.
- 1:10-1:15 Off shore, watching for logs and kelp. Dangerous boats, crew just looking at screens not watching what is going on around in the world. Changes in

Jeff Farvor, Fisherman, Troller

Sitka, Alaska

Interviewed By Josh Wisniewski and Marissa Wilson 03/24/2021

American Folk Life Center

opportunities for fishermen. Less competition. Owner operator boats own quota and crew paid percentage. Changes, walk on quota owners, don't fish, retain bulk of profit. Less young people interested in coming up to Alaska, working in canneries and trying to get on boat.

1:15-1:20 Shift in how people think about work, so much information and technology coming at us, hard to disconnect. People think fishing is cute but not "real" that virtual online world is the real world. Fishing is in the world and responsive to it, very real. Being in moment, time on the water, getting in tune with natural rhythms. Drifting off shore at night listening to whales. Seeing magic natural displays. Fishing supports the lifestyle of fishing. Increasing costs, climate change, war, recession, recycle and repurpose materials.

1:20-1:25 Responding to climate change, working with NOAA researcher, believing in science and climate change. Salmon adapt and are varied. Some salmon need warmer water. Salmon can only take so much ecological change. Being optimistic as fisherman, even if sound like a pessimist. Stocks of concern in Southeast Alaska. Reducing small boat fishing doesn't address major change. Advice to young would be fishermen-Go for it get on best safe boat, learn as much as possible. Fishing is second after boat and safety

1:25-1:34 Finding the right fishery no one solves your problems. Historic fishing communities compete tourism, fish reallocated away from commercial fishing. Hope for future, do best you can, hope for the best. Things can fall apart. Learning, seeing war erupt in Ukraine. Over exploitation of the planet. Inspiration from movie "Dumb and Dumber" always a chance. Fishing romantic to people who don't fish. After spending time on the water hooked on the work and life style, working to to keep doing it. Taking care of things on boat, relationship with boat, fishermen as social misfits. Fishing, different head space.