

Terry Perensovich Skiff Fisherman Sitka  
Interviewed by Josh Wisniewski 03/25/2022  
American Folklife Center

- 00:00-05:00 Born in 1960 in Juneau, Family moved to Alaska in late 1950s Dad worked in canneries and as a stream guard. Worked for Forest Service after statehood. Family lived in Juneau until 1973, moved to Sitka. Brought boat. Parked at Crescent Harbor, exploring Southeast Alaska with skiff. Being new kid in school and solace in the outdoors., trapping during high school. Start halibut fishing the year graduated from high school.
- 05:00-10:00 Expanding participation in halibut fishing, increasing price, fleet diversification, Japanese long liners anchored off shore. New markets, passage of the Magnuson Stevens Act. Participation in Black cod fishery grows. First halibut trip, salvaged old gear from dumpster. Using fixed gear, setting from skiff, baiting hooks while setting. Camping in Peril Strait. Selling to Buying Scow, Meeting Mike Litman. Seven-day opener, 700 lbs of fish. Friends encourage to keep fishing. Silver Bay Pulp Mill.
- 10:00-15:00 Self employed, good halibut prices, fishing smarter and learning how to set up boat smarter. Learning from Sitka shipwrights. Built first boat at 13 years old. Intimidated by professional boat builders. Going to boat shops and watching builders. Japonski Island Boat Shop Bob Mondrell, Witnessing cusp of change, from wooden boats to fiberglass and aluminum as primary mediums for building. Boat shops on Katilan Street. Tlingit builder Harry Jimmy as mentor. Build boat in warehouse. Taking wood t boatshop to use tools.
- 15:00-20:00 Grid system to pull boats into shop. Building boat *Peril Strait*. Didn't notice difference between different cultural and ethnic groups as a kid. Howards family boatshop. Jim Stephen shop. Katlian good beach for working on boats. Working water front, small boats, pre charter fleet. Trollers were small boats. Sitka not attractive town during says of the pulp mill
- 20:00-25:00 Trollers 26-36 feet, converted Bristol Bay double enders. Buying scows spread out in different areas, Hand trollers camp near scows. Bigger boats fishing the whole coast. Making metal hand gurdys for hand trolling in high school metal shop class. High school boat building program cut the year before could participate. Baileys Hardware by harbor, Sitka Cold Storage.
- 25:00-30:00 Looking for boatbuilding vocational school. Help friend take boat to Seattle. Going to Landing Boat school in Maine. Maritime history. Coastal fishing communities, boat shops and multi-generational small boat fishing families.
- 30:00-35:00 Dan Falvey fishing boat *Sea Boy*. Fishy boat, safe, classic boat. Halibut fishing in early 1980s. 4-5 day openers. Stocks build up in-between openers. Trip limits

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on fall openers. Fished halibut openers while working as a shipwright. Low tech skiff fishing.

- 35:00-40:00 Using hydraulics on outboard, going back to hand lining, learning currents and new areas. Derby fishing, never wasting time, being innovative, competitive fishing, good luck, bad luck, sharing stories. 3000 lbs quota after implementation of IFQ program, more time to fish, new boat, easier fishing, less labor intensive.
- 40:00-45:00 Buying halibut quota, harvest levels cut fishing more, getting older. Starting Sitka Shipwrights Co-op. Shipwrights working on their own, working together to have shared space for stationary power tools. Successful boats reinvesting in their fishing platforms, making boats safer. Modeled on Port Townsend Shipwright Co-op. Fisherman begin to upgrade to bigger boats, decline in need for wood work.
- 45:00-50:00 Other boat shops in Petersburg and Wrangell. Decline in work, building a house to sell to keep Co-op going. Winding down better to loose income than carry the stress.
- 50:00-55:00 Building own home, balancing relationships while business is failing. Happiness as definition of success. Continuing to fish, crewing on different boats. Trapping hunting, and the challenge of letting go of what one is familiar with. Learning through trial and error, figuring out what works. Current skiff as a lifestyle boat built for individual needs, safety efficiency, simplicity.
- 55:00-60:00 Work boats designed to go somewhere to do something, functionality of current boat. Simplicity of skiff fishing, not wanting to be tied down to always keeping a boat working. Keeping life simple winding down career "What do I want to do when I grow up". Keeping life diverse. Using boat to house site in Hood Bay. Changes in the environment. More boats in the harbors, more pressure on the wilderness. Climate change. Concentrated and more extreme storms, wind and rain events, micro bursts of weather. Wind falls and timber blow downs in hunting areas.
- 1:00-105:00 Winter trapping in Peril Strait. Fall fishing lots of deer on the beach, deer hunting. More people, expanded sport recreation fleet puts increased pressure on fish stocks and the commercial fleet. Challenges for getting into fishing today. Limited entry opportunities, and high price of IFQ quota. Crewing as a way to enter fishery. Learning as a deckhand, deciding a career path. Fishing community helps each other. Lots of skill sets in the harbor, harbor life, culture in Sitka.

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1:05-110:00 Uniqueness in fishing life, coastal Alaska Harbors. Amazing to have boat, make fishing gear go fishing and sell fish to have money in life. Learning by making mistake, story of life and how we build character.

1:09:36 End of Interview.