

## Transcript of sound clip from larger interview with Anne Mosness

Anne Mosness Interview, 1993-04-20

Women in the Commercial Fishing Industry Research Collection

Center for Pacific Northwest Studies

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MOSNESS: So while in this life that I have here – the mom, the community person, and, you know, somewhat of an activist – there is a certain amount that I can do that tests myself, that pushes the limits of my capabilities. I mean, I designed this house and its additions; I do a fair amount of carpentry work; I learned to lay slate hearths and floors. That's challenging and that's rewarding, but being on a boat where your life depends on being creative and being resourceful and having more energy and stamina than you have ever thought possible, or that you have been allowed to develop, or...on your own boat, no one is nudging you out of the way and saying, "Listen, darling, I'll do that for you", or "Don't worry your little head about it."

My life and the lives of the people with me has depended on me learning how things work and making appropriate decisions and having stamina to cross large bodies of water in bad weather and to monitor a lot of different systems. After being on the boat a couple of summers, I realized that this is how men operate in life. When I needed to do something, other people fixed the meals, other people did the cleanup that I have done all my life. Occasionally, I would have a deckhand that didn't realize that I wasn't his mother; his job was to put things away. Or I called up a seaplane once and had a young deckhand taken off the boat because I didn't need someone who would thumb through magazines until he was given a job to do. We women – at least myself and the women that I know well – are always doing things. The saying is true, women's work is never done, and on a boat your work is never done either. I think naturally I just liked that kind of environment, although I knew nothing. It wasn't until I had my own boat for several years that one of the fishermen popped his head in the door one time when I was lying on my belly changing spark plugs or putting a water pump on, or doing something. He said, "You know, I got to hand it to you; you got the tinkering skills of a fourteen-year-old with

his first hotrod.” I had never thought of systems and how they worked; I’d never done any troubleshooting of systems; I had never known that if I thought of something long enough I could come up with a solution. And I had to in that environment. It just seemed like my skills developed in that fisheries in a way that I never would have had them develop in any other part of my life. And the ultimate limit, as we know, is death. That limit seems farther and farther away the more skills I get. I am able to run the boat in Bristol Bay and be responsible for five of us on the boat and feel a certain amount of anxiety, but my senses and my skills and my alertness – I can rely on them. There is something satisfying; it isn’t just doing the same tedious task over and over, which is what running a house is, as far as I am concerned. The laundry and the floors and buying the groceries: a lifetime is spent doing that. You can’t say, “I have accomplished this”, or, “I am operating in the same environment as the boys are allowed to.” They get a sense of satisfaction out of life, and I can see why. They’re not spending their energy doing the same mundane jobs over and over and over.

MORRIS: Does any of it have to do with Alaska?

MOSNESS: It is definitely Alaska, although I would think that any primitive state in the U.S. – you know, Montana, Wyoming, some place where the climate requires you to be aware of nature and weather, and where there are not enough people so that you rely on your own resources. I think that other places could have that, but Alaska is a pretty terrific place, and it’s getting more regulated as time goes on. A lot of it is the fewer regulations.

MORRIS: Do you ever get afraid? Are you ever afraid?

MOSNESS: There are times when we’ve been close enough to death that it has just been probably sheer luck that our boat didn’t go down or something didn’t happen. At those times, I don’t feel fear. After an incident is over...I laid my boat on its side in the breakers going through the channel in the Copper River flats, absolutely covered with water, and I heard this wave coming behind me, and it sounded like a train. I tried to turn my boat around to get the front of my boat into the waves because I had thick plexiglass panels over my front windows. It caught me on the side, and it rolled me over, and I was buried in it. Other boats that saw it figured that I’d gone down. It wasn’t until after it was over, until I had righted and was able to see the direction I wanted to go and to get into an anchorage, then I was – my knees were quivering, and my mouth was dry. It happened a couple of times there in Cordova, running my boat alone both times, that I felt that I was very close to losing the boat. It happened in Puget Sound when my father and I were on a boat and we got hit by a tug. It has happened – oh, other times that I think that I have realized that I am very near to having a disaster on my hands. But I never feel frightened at the time. I feel real clearheaded, and you have to take steps to make sure that you get yourself safely out of something. I’m more concerned having deckhands and my son on the boat than I ever have been for myself. I have to watch more people.

MORRIS: So it shifts more of the responsibility and not so much whatever is happening.

MOSNESS: Well, I need to know where they are all the time. I have even told my own father that he couldn't go on the deck without putting on his flotation vest. I am always watchful because I don't want someone to slip overboard. That to me would be probably the worst thing that could happen. So I myself wear a flotation vest all the time. I wear a Mustang vest; I think they're still made here in Bellingham. I wouldn't go on a boat without one. I have five of them, in fact, in different sizes that I keep on the boat, so that my son and my father, everyone of all sizes has a flotation vest. Plus I have these suspenders that are inflatable, and I have a couple pairs of those, and we have flotation coats, plus nine \_\_\_\_\_ [unclear] suits in the family. I think taking preparation like that is really crucial. I have no desire to be seen as macho and not wear flotation gear.

MORRIS: Why don't you talk about getting ready for a season, what that entails?

MOSNESS: Now in the past, when I was fishing Cordova, we would run the boat a couple of years. We would get ready before May and start running around the first of May and be fishing by the fifteenth of May. And then after the season, we would come home, run the boat down again, and start fishing Puget Sound. I did that for two years with my father. When I had my own boat, I bought the boat in Washington State and had to barge it up. I actually had the engine rebuilt and had the boat rewired, did a lot of upgrading of the boat down here and then shipped it up. The day it arrived, May 14, I had the engine tuned up and started fishing, started running the boat at 3 o'clock the very next morning. The only thing that hadn't been rebuilt was the transmission, and it went out. (Laughs) We were just literally exhausted from the pace we had been keeping anyway, so we just threw the anchor out and read books until we could get it towed back to town and have a new transmission put in.

I did my nets, I hung my nets, I did all my grocery shopping, I basically did the cooking, I ran the boat, I did just about everything because that year was the first year that I ran the boat. I had a legal secretary; she didn't know anything (laughs). Even the next four years was like that; I did everything on my boat including repair of hydraulics and things that I had asked my partner for help with. His solution for that was to bring an ice cream maker to the boat while I assembled my hydraulics. So basically I did all my own mechanical work and repair work. Now that I fish in Bristol Bay, we fish out of a cannery. Before, I was fishing for a cannery that didn't have an engineer or a mechanic. Then I was a charter member of the Copper River Fishermen's Coop, and we didn't have any shore side facilities. So basically I did my own work on my boat. In Bristol Bay, we have always been with a company that had an engineer or port mechanic, so when we needed to have things repaired, they would come and do the repair. My father either hangs the nets or our deckhands, who are Vietnamese men, they hang our gear. I have carpal tunnel syndrome in my wrists, so that jerking on the hanging twine was real repetitive and that gives me a lot of problems with my hands. So I just choose not to hang the nets. I could do it if I had to, and I have a hanging bench. I know how to do repair, but I just don't do it. There are other people who are far better than I. This season we have already shipped up groceries on our tender. We buy groceries down here, and our Vietnamese men – we pay for their food so

they bring up whatever they want to eat too. We have sent that up. Tomorrow, April 22, I am going to Seattle, and I am going to look at exhaust systems for the boat. I have been in contact with our port engineer, and he is measuring for a new exhaust and a flying bridge and controls. So it is possible that I will go up earlier in June and help get these new things done to the boat and then my son and my father will come up closer to when we start fishing. MORRIS: One thing I think that is really unique about living here and fishing in Alaska is the expense of even getting up there, of getting your gear set up, and how much pressure that puts on you to have a good season; insurance...

MOSNESS: I wish I knew the cost. I have to admit, I don't know the costs since I'm not – I am basically taking a crew's share out of this business. My father pays the boat share. He gets fifty percent. I get twenty-five percent. When I had my own boat I figured I spent a third of what I made in Alaska during the season, so it is very expensive. But in Cordova we didn't have cannery facilities, so whenever we wanted to stay somewhere besides the boat we would have to rent a hotel room. It was just too convenient to walk uptown and have dinner. We were in Cordova quite a bit. Where I am now, in Egegik, there is no place to go, except you can eat at the mess halls that are with the canneries. Those tend to be fairly expensive meals, seven or eight dollars for breakfast, eight or nine for lunch, and ten or so for dinner. That's a lot of meat, that's a lot of starchy foods, so I send up a lot of groceries. I take up a lot of brown rice. I take seventy-pound duffel bags absolutely stuffed and weighed. Each one of us is allowed two, plus whatever we can carry on. Sometimes I have gone through airlines with three duffel bags, so we are each taking nearly two hundred pounds of stuff with us. A lot of it is food, a forty-pound box of apples, forty pounds of oranges, onions, different kinds of garlic, brown rice, whatever food I want to have for the next six weeks or so.

MORRIS: Do you fly into Naknek?

MOSNESS: We fly into King Salmon and out of King Salmon to Egegik. But we have a van up in Naknek. We fished out of Pearson Point and so we have a forty-foot storage van in Naknek, and we sometimes go up to Naknek, but our boat is now in Egegik which is another forty or so miles away. MORRIS: What cannery do you fish for? MOSNESS: Woodbine. Used to be Diamond E and before that APA.

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