Experiential Themes and Statements

Fishing with family

* Learning young
* Mom taught him how to fish—they would paddle out, pulling 50’ net
* Sisters would help him take logs out of his net
* His grandpa taught him how to tell the weather—if windy, come in.
* Subsistence/traditional harvest as motivator and learning
  + 5:55 “So I’ve been fishing since I was basically five, six years old. But I’ve been in the ocean since I was a baby because that’s where my mom and dad would always take us out for camping or go pick berries.”
* Learning how to drive boat at 6 or 7
* Comfort at young age and learning with family
* Learned as deckhand with family
  + 5:46 “Well my mom owned a permit, my brother owned a permit, and all my uncles owned permits, so somebody always needed a deckhand.”
* Dad teaching the dos and don’ts
  + 41:12 “Like [at] Denbigh, you don’t go right next to the coastline when it’s rough.”
* Teaching his two-year-old nephew about water and dangers
* Young people don’t have the experience and are not being taught by elders because less fish
  + 68:41 “If you ain’t got no fish to catch, you can’t teach nothing.”
* Grandparents raised him and taught to fish
* Helped at young age 6:37 “Kinds want to help”
* Grandma would watch him from shore when she wasn’t fishing to make sure he was okay.
* His permit was passed on to him from his grandpa
* Combining fishing with other harvest activities: berry picking, camping
* Three out of four sons helped him
  + Teaches sons not to go out if it’s too rough.
  + If weather is bad, would leave sons at home
* A family operation
* H. After 20 years, thought it was time to go home. Wife had a herring permit, so he fished as her helper for a while
* H. Bought his own permit, then they fished together with two permits
* H. Family joke: A couple years ago, he wanted to pull the nets in rough weather so fish wouldn’t spoil and wife kept saying, 8:49 “Let’s turn back, let’s go home.”
* H. He got close to the beach and his motor started sputtering; he fixed the problem and went back out.
* H. He wasn’t listening to “let’s turn back, let’s go home” because he was concentrating on driving in bad weather.
  + He finally hollered, “shut up.”
  + Then after they cleaned nets and returned home, drinking coffee, she calmly told him, “I’m done.”
  + H. After all those years, she retired from fishing. After she retired, their granddaughter said, Grandma is not going fishing. I’m not going fishing.” So he lost two crew members that day.
* H. Fished with grandkids and nephews after that
* H. Started training them young
  + H. First lesson was to try to keep them from getting seasick—let them drive boat
  + H. Grandson started at 10, nephew at 11, granddaughter at 8 (but paid at 12 or 13)
  + H. They enjoyed making money
  + H. Kids came to Unalakleet for the summer
  + H. Intention was to train grandkids and nephews how he learned, but not to go out when rough
* H. They made good money as a family
* H. 16-year-old great nephew is trained to operate the motor
  + H. Due to vision problems, he had to teach his great nephew to control the motor
  + W. Kids will spot and call out logs and nets
* H. Trains younger generations only within family because the parents should be involved
* W. 47:22 “Flotation. You have to… Nobody follows it.
* H. “It always depends on the family.”
* Family fishing:
* Grandparents on both sides taught to fish
  + Subsistence
  + Going up river as a family 14:10 “Our grandparents would be camping up there the whole summer.”
  + Taught when to go out and paying attention to wind (don’t go out if blowing more than 15 knots out of north)
  + 15:00 “Pretty much everything I learned about safety, about going out, was from them and my dad.”
* Started commercial around 14 for summer money
* Deckhands for father mostly
* Occasionally goes out with cousins or other permit holders who need temp. help
* Difficult fishing with dad—high expectations
* Cousins and friends chill
* Is planning on teaching son, now 11
  + Compares his son to himself as a child—he didn’t have a choice but to go out when it was rough
  + Wants to teach son work ethic
* Started helping at 5—persistent to help
* Now youngest son is like he was. At three, helped pull net, moved fish, lead line
  + Son helped him subsistence crab 6:19 “He was like, I want to help, and so I told him that he can.”
  + Now he’s 7. Other sons not as adamant about fishing 7:20 “He was always the one that was like me, wanting to keep going and going through the entire process.”
* Taught sons like his father taught him, but doesn’t want to yell
  + Older sons helped in past years, but more in the way than helping
  + Didn’t want to get mad at them, so just sent them home
  + More trust in youngest son with boat
* Nephew helped, not cousin helping. 10:14 “So I kind of like to keep it kind of family oriented.”
* Mentors and teaches younger relatives
  + Equipment, Maydays, emergency procedures
* Would call best buddy for help, not stress out family

Fishing as a lifestyle

* H. Salmon set netting, most go about 15-20 miles up north. 67:23. “So it’s a big move for them, but they know what to do.”
* Boat life: sound and feel of waves, rough water, calm water
* Never had to ask for help
  + Broke down once, but fixed it—water in fuel
  + Learned mechanics
  + Got water filter to prevent water in fuel
* Set nets for pinks, coho, reds, and dogs
* Try to fish away from town for more space from boats
* Enjoys fishing in fleet—competitiveness, but also helping each other find fish
* Growing up cutting and packing wood, hauling ice and water made him strong so he could fish
* Fishing lifestyle
  + 6:34 “Like I said, middle of the winter, it’s nice to have a piece of dried fish or have a steak, bake a salmon.”
* Learned from grandparents who salmon fished
  + 2:12 “They’d take me everywhere they went. [laughs]
* 18’ Lund skiff with 50 horse mercury outboard growing up
* Grandpa and uncle taught him to drive a motor and to watch for weather
* Family fun to fish with because you can pick berries and walk beach
* Crew easier to fish with than family
* Fishes with a deckhand—generally they have a good time
* Taught girlfriend how to maneuver boat and speed in different waves
* Shorter fishing trips now compared to past. Can get back to town now in same day with better equipment.
* Boat life
  + 6:19 “Oh it’s great. [laughs] It’s a lot of fun setting the net.”
* 20 years ago had a lot of King salmon. Now less
  + 45:13 “Now we don’t have very many and they’re a lot smaller.”
* Enjoys fishing alone, working hard
* Fishes with friends every now and then, but people often have other commitments
* Girlfriend helps pull nets in the boat
* Never needed help on the water
* Doesn’t ask for local tips, weather etc.
  + 24:44 “Everybody makes their own choices out there.”
* Never been offered safety training
  + 35:52 “People need to kind of learn it for themselves.”
* 7:36 “I enjoy it. When I’m out there I’m free. I’m my own boss. To me that’s a big thing, being your own boss, doing your own thing.”
* Happy fishing. If he wasn’t, he’d find a different job in town
* Memorable opener with 500 silvers overnight---thought someone cut his net
* Fish slime—7:34 “It’s a dirty job, but somebody’s got to do it.”
* Fishes within 5 miles—sets one net on one side of the river mouth and the other net on the other side.
* H. Started fishing young—12 because enjoyed gillnetting with family and friends
* H. First buyer in Unalakleet was in 1955 or 1957 for salmon (a processing boat)
* H. 1965 went to Bristol Bay with college friend who had a boat
  + Exposure to bigger fishing
* H. Then trolled out of Juneau w/ a different college friend
  + Each had a skiff, jigged for halibut too, paying for college
* H. Sold skiff and returned to Unalakleet; fishing there since 60s and 70s
* H. Japanese boats came for herring run and took a couple years for Unalakleet fishermen to get geared up to fish for herring
* H. After herring season would go to Bristol Bay to crew for friend, then became a captain
* H. Also did crabbing 15-20 miles 70 miles out of Unalakleet
  + Used herring boat first 4-5 years, then bought a 32’ Bristol Bay boat
* H. Was a pilot, so squeezed in fishing, when retired, fished full time
* W. Fished 25 years. Stopped because her knees were bad and couldn’t move fast.
* W. Done all of the fisheries in Unalakleet except crabbing—had own skiff for herring and skiff for salmon
* H. 27:27 “Herring fishing brought out the women.”
  + Many had own permits and boats.
  + Lots of money brought them out. His mother in law fished into her 70s.
* H. When they first got married, they were fishing on one boat.
  + She was constantly on him, 29:15 “it’s time to deliver.” “We might sink is what she’s saying.” He jokes that he fired her.
* W. She said he didn’t fire her, she got her own boat.
* W. Too risky for both of them to be on the boat
* W. His back is bad. Told him to think of retiring (almost 80)
* H. 19:58 “Fishing is a lifestyle and it’s hard for me to put it aside, and that’s where I’m at.”
* Used to fish herring, currently commercial crabs, and salmon set gillnet
* 22’ flat bottom skiff for set net
* V-shaped breaks waves better, but he learned on a flat bottom boat
  + By 4th grade, dad let him take boat out by himself
  + By 6th grade could go wherever he wanted
* Fished salmon gillnet set fishing in Norton Sound for over 35 years—since kid with dad
* Bought own permit in 2017
* Growing up fishing 3:41 “I never saw it as work. It was just something to go out and do.”
* Fished subsistence locally and on Yukon—different fisheries experiences entire life
* Set nets for chum, coho, and pinks
  + Fishes in Unalakleet because it’s home base
  + 26’ Yukon with 175 motor
* Learning young: learned to fish at age 7 with an elderly man
  + Remembers smelly fish and getting seasick
  + Mentored him. He helped with commercial, then they would go up river for subsistence
  + Fished all summer long
  + Elder taught him how to work together, and be cautious. Taught his sons these lessons too.
* Bought a permit from a local fisherman
* Started around 45 years old and fished alone
* Three out of four sons helped him
  + Teaches sons not to go out if it’s too rough.
  + If weather is bad, would leave sons at home

Survival equipment, preparation, and training

* Open skiffs
  + 18’ Lund skiff with 50 horse mercury outboard (growing up)
  + 26’ Yukon with 175 motor
  + 22’ flat bottom skiff for set net
    - V-shaped breaks waves better, but he learned on a flat bottom boat
  + 26’ flat bottom aluminum boat
  + 20’boat, 2 1/5 feet high (in past)
* Preparation: not going out if it’s rough
* Prepare—don’t worry about bad things happening or you’ll manifest it
  + 42:40 “Do what you’re supposed to, everything will go right.”
* Constantly watching the weather—be aware and observant
  + 4:34 “It switches really fast sometimes.”
* Watching for Besboro island to change shape
* Ask friends and other fishermen about wind direction and speed
* Prep: Cleaning, straightening net, anchor lines, gas, groceries
* Safety equipment from fish plant (takes it off fish ticket)
  + Required: flares/signals and PFDs
* Safety classes not needed for set netting, but took it for crewing on tender. Included CPR
* Mom used to like helping with food
* Better equipment and boats bigger and faster, less stuff to get caught on
* Can use cell phone for help: tender or nearby fishing boat most likely to help you.
* Could get help in 1 ½ hours or more if 20-30 miles away
* People bring PFDs, but get too hot and take them off
* Wear PFDs when conditions are rough and underway
  + 32:06 “I’m pretty sure a lot of them don’t use them when they’re fishing by their nets, but I’m pretty sure there’s quite a bit of them that do when they’re actually driving their boats.”
* Started bringing life jackets in the 80s—required
  + But felt safe without life jacket—knew how to operate boat
* Out on your own
* Life jackets next to him, but does not wear when checking nets—entanglement
  + 11:34 “I don’t want to get tangled in the net. You don’t wear PFDs when you’re checking net.”
* Can get safety equipment at the cannery
* No safety training offered in Unalakleet
* 23:09 “No, pretty much all on your own out here. Yeah, and all those years never had any safety training. All the training we learned ourselves.”
* 30:38 “Fishermen pretty much know everything [laughs]. Everybody try to be safe as they can out there.” (can’t share lessons)
* PFDs: Start off wearing because required by CG, but they all end up taking them off
* PFDs: Wears when it’s really rough. 23:37 “If there’s a chance that I might go over. But I’ll have two or three in the boat. It’s hot and it’s bulky.”
* No safety training offered
* Would need to order any safety equipment beyond PFD. Can get EPIRB from fish plant
* Asks around where to fish
  + Strategize with dad’s family—make a plan together
* Don’t wear PFDs because too hot and uncomfortable, but would wear inflatable if had one
* May wear Stormline bibs in colder season
* Mom makes sandwiches and preps food in case they get stuck
  + 99% of time, don’t need extra food, water, snacks
* Tries to get knowledge from experienced fishermen
  + Having coffee, chat on streets or fish plant
* H. Bought an aluminum boat from brother-in-law still fishing on
* H. 16:43 “It’s a safe boat out there, so I’m really happy with it. I operate within reason though. So when I see the forecast is going to get rough water, I’m always going out to pull out my gear.”
* Driving a skiff safely in the ocean is major safety factor
  + 22:29 “And there’s a lot of skill that’s involved with safety in the ocean, especially driving a skiff.”
* W. 24:07 “I think there’s an untaught safety about the wind and the tide that takes years to develop. So that you know what to do when it gets rough and where you can go for safety if you can’t make it into a harbor.”
* W. There are reefs and shallow rocks that should be marked on charts and with buoys but are not
* W. 47:22 “Flotation. You have to… Nobody follows it.
* H. “It always depends on the family.”
  + H. Makes everyone wear floatation—wears a flotation jacket, but has to take off when hot
  + H. Grandchildren can’t get in boat without one
* H. Inflatables are hard because cartridges have to be replaced regularly, you can’t carry them on a plane, and you have to pay hazmat charges for shipping them
* W. 33:40 “I would investigate the marine injuries that happen and what can be done.”
  + Heavy lifting
  + Injuries from equipment
  + Woman falling in fish bin and hurting back
* W. NSEDC sends out safety info and placards. NSSP offers first aid and CPR 20:38 “But I think that Fish and Game could do something a little bit of that and the NSSP could do better.” [with trainings]
* H. Safety equipment required for crabbing is expensive, but can save money if properly maintain gear
* H. Took training from the Coast Guard and his boat always passed exam with flying colors
* H. Should have some sort of communication (i.e., inreach). Especially younger generation.
* H. Younger generation uses GPS more
  + W. Training is needed in use of GPS devices and navigation (not as much for salmon fishing)
  + W. Story of son using an Etrex GPS for hunting group to get through snow storm
  + H. Useful for crabbing
  + W. Inreach saves him when he gets pinned under snow machine
  + W. Her fishing partner gets safely guided out of shallow water in Kuskokwim by calling his wife who was able to see his inreach location
* H. 65:56 “I should be able to drive myself home without any problems as long as I don’t have a motor problem”
* W. Equipment you should have: an oar, spare anchor, enough gas, a little water
* Does Unalakleet have enough safety resources?
  + Lacking in training and knowing importance of using a PFD
* Wears PFD when it’s really rough out—not when calm (too hot)
  + 25-40% fishermen wear consistently
  + 50-55% when rough
  + They don’t wear because they feel comfortable with their skills and boat in the ocean
* People rely on boating strategies to increase safety, not PFDs (i.e., navigating boat, closer to shore, etc)
* Tries to wear PFDs when with sons—they ridicule him when he doesn’t put on
  + 48:18 “It’s just like it’s just second nature for them to put their PFD on.”
* Type III vest is too hot and bulky
* People may be more likely to wear and keep on inflatables
* Safety equipment onboard—PFDs, bilge pump, flares, signal mirror
* Never had to ask for help—but if he did, he would use cell phone
  + Service is 15 miles south and 4 miles out, 10-20 miles north, and 10 miles straight out
* People can get safety equipment from the plant easily
* Teaching sons how to read the waves, have all the things they could need for situations,
  + Sons wear PFDs all the time
* Instead of yelling, likes to discuss safety
  + 54:28 “I’ll sit there and I’ll talk to them about safety issues and even with my nephew, I would sit there and I’d show him what to look for.”
* Having a working motor
* Carry extra gear on boat: line, tarp, ore, life ring, PFDs
* Preparation: no water in gas
  + 46:37 “You don’t want to be dead in the water out in the ocean.”
* Float plan
  + 47:07 “I always let somebody know, family, where we’re at, how long it’s going to take us to get there and come back.”
* Safety classes available, importance of first aid (your choice to go to them or not)
  + Kodiak, Anchorage, and Seward
* Feels safe on the water (from growing up on water young, safety training, and experience)
* 24:03 “I grew up on the ocean…I’m not scared of water”
* Does not wear a PFD, except float coat when not too hot
* Tells passengers to wear PFD, but he doesn’t wear unless very bad conditions
  + 38:27 “Well I feel safer if I don’t have to worry about it…If I gotta wear it, I’m getting into situations that I shouldn’t be in.”

Wellness

* Last year deckhand had medical issues and couldn’t fish. Hard to find a new deckhand
* Long term physical effects:
  + 42:20 “Physically, it’s kind of exhausting because of all the wave action, waves, muscles get sore, body starts aching”
* Only injury was from climbing a hill to look for fish for herring
* 6 hours is least amount of sleep
* To stay awake: drink coffee and soda
* Strategies to relax:
  + Music
  + Sit down and take a break
  + Tie up to a buoy
  + Talk/tell stories
* Pray for safety once in a while when out there alone
* Doesn’t get tired—8 hours of sleep
* Sore muscles
* 22:22 “I’ve never felt really run down…You can either choose to set your net or choose not to set your net.”
* “I’m almost 60. Keeps me in good shape.”
* Prep—lifts weights, conditions back. 25:43 “Try to get my body in shape and get ready for the big challenge.”
* Alludes to other fishermen who have experienced psychological trauma fishing, but luckily he has not.
* Stress of pulling out net when it’s rough—you can tell Fish and Game, but people will talk
* Relief returning to land after rough weather
* Fall colder temps—avoids getting wet
* Physical challenges and strategies:
* Fishing puts pressure on a past back injury
  + 26:23 “Long term, it’s getting tougher and tougher as you get older.”
* Hasn’t gotten any injuries while fishing—careful
* When it’s slow and the ocean is calm, can take a nap on the beach, snack and relax
* When it’s rough and need a break, stop and tie up to net to take a break, catch breath
* Has helper which makes it a lot easier than alone
* Rests and snacks when get home to reenergize
* Relief returning after rough weather
* Gets 8 hours of sleep
* Stay with the net if fish are hitting, go home a few hours if slow
* Family/friends help get net in and out of boat
* Physical effects of commercial fishing
* Hands cramping
* Hands get locked from picking fish
* Can’t grab anymore
* Joints ache: elbow and knee joints
  + 42:23 “You’re always rocking, so it’s really tough on the body…trying to keep up right”
* Subsistence is good, but commercial is too hard on body
  + 58:20 “And then pull in the nets, use every one of your muscles and when it gets dropped out, just trying to hold onto the nets, you literally stretch your joints. I would recommend don’t do it.”
* Health challenges
* Longest trip was 18 hours
  + Had to wait for tide to come into river mouth and deliver fish
  + Stayed with boat and watched others’ boats overnight
  + Had to go back out next day without sleep
* Looks back on missing fishing periods after partying night before—dad threatened to replace him
* Getting back to land is a relief
* Eat and relax, no energy to play out, go on rides
* Mostly 2, 48-hour openers/week—sometimes three or only 1.
* 1 opener is hard financially
  + When not enough fish, keep believing that next period will be better
  + Emotional long-term stress
  + Financial stress—going to make enough money next year?
  + Loan causes stress
  + 27:51 “It’s sad when you’re not catching any fish and making any money. That’s the bad part of it.”
* Doesn’t get enough sleep during season—3am-7am typical
  + Going out the night before sometimes
  + Too bright during summer
  + Doesn’t feel rested
  + Splashes water on face, drinks energy drinks, and stretches
  + Catches up on sleep in winter
* Long-term effect physically
  + Arthritis in hands
  + Wear and tear in arms and hands
  + Get strong if doing it right—good physical shape
* Strategies to be healthy—eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, don’t party too much
* Keeps him in shape
* Need to stretch
* 51:54 “I do make sure I stretch…I can see my dad and how he has, he calls it a back issue, back problem, but I know for a fact that it’s him not stretching.”
* Enjoys fishing—meditative and relaxing by himself or with good crew
  + But stressful if deckhand is not consistent
  + Doesn’t like yelling, so he just doesn’t take them back out if he feels like he wants to yell
* Physical effects:
  + H. 33:21 “For me it was very healthy. I think it was a healthy activity.”
  + W. “Except the wear on his back.”
* Long term physical—arthritis, bones rubbing against each other, back give out from working hard
* Get enough sleep
  + 32:14 “I made sure of that. Because you don’t want to go out there tired. If you go out there tired, your mind is not all there. And you do stupid things. Once you start doing stupid things that’s the end of it. End of your life.”
* Make sure to drink water and eat
  + 31:33 “Eating just clears your mind, makes you feel at ease, makes you sleep.”
  + When tired, stopped, cooked a little meal, took a 10 to 15-minute nap, drank coffee
* Seasick crew member gave a cup of seawater to drink. Learned trick from grandparents and worked
* Aging: started aging, got a crew member to help

Respect/awareness of ocean

* Respect for ocean
  + 71:04 “You respect it. Learn to get off when it’s time.”
* Salmon set net more dangerous than his other fisheries
  + 16:21 But salmon fishing is a whole ‘nother story. Because if it’s rough out well, do you really want to go out? Is your life worth $100 a fish?”
* Rougher weather in fall (during salmon set netting)
  + 43:03 “Fall time is usually storm after a storm coming in”
* Following known rules of weather conditions (i.e., what to do in north wind versus south)
* Being aware of weather (i.e., which way a storm will come from)
* Being aware of where you are (i.e., especially if fog comes)
  + 31:18 “You got to know where you’re going”
* Navigating with the sun and wind direction
  + 31:28 “The best one for me is what my uncle told me. The sun always rises in the east and sets in the west. Can’t go wrong there…And that’s basically what saved me a few times.”
* Rough weather
  + 12:22 “Boy, they can get rough at times. I’ve been out in Norton Sound where I’ve seen 25, 30 foot waves.”
* Don’t take too many chances
* Grandparents taught him:
  + 14:46 “Don’t take too many chances. You keep taking chances, sooner or later you’re going to take the wrong one and go and die.”
* Used to fish 15 miles north or farther, but got a flat bottom boat and don’t go out as far
  + 26’ flat bottom aluminum boat
* Dangerous when it’s rough
* Motor could stop or you set too close to the beach and waves push you onto beach when pulling net
* Watch out for southwest wind
* Really watch wind—anything over 20-25, come back in
* Dangerous when weight is shifting or too much load on one side
* Most people wait for low tide with smaller waves to check the net
* Wait until it’s calm to pull your net.
  + 36:35 “You can replace the net, but you can’t replace a life.”
* Can pull boat on shore when it gets rough
* Cell phone for help if needed—would call the fish plant and they would find someone
  + 37:51 Every fisherman is different. Yeah, we all make choices. You got to live with them or not.”
* The ocean’s the boss
* Unalakleet—the weather can get really bad and everybody is fishing on a skiff
* Dangers—make sure the motor is running right
* Dangers—rough weather
* Day that felt dangerous
  + Getting thrown around boat, called it quits and pulled net early 14:54 “The ocean’s the boss, it’s the boss.”
  + Physically and mentally difficult trying to not let waves swamp boat
* Teaching sons when it’s too rough to go out (4’ waves and wind blowing)
* Always come back same day
* Keep an eye on the ocean, keep senses up
* Increased awareness needed and extra hands when it’s rough
* Don’t ever panic
* Ask others about weather conditions in areas might fish
* If need help, call a family member who would find someone who can go now—locate by place names
* 28:07 “I just try to be really thankful. It keeps me safe out there. Don’t try to override nature.”
* Pay attention
* Dad taught him 11:22 “Just to pay attention to the weather is the biggest thing. It’s paying attention to the weather and knowing what you can handle and what your boat can handle.”
* Grandpa taught him pay attention so you don’t get lost
  + GPS in head
  + Pay attention to local features, surroundings, current, boat, waves
* Tells story when he gets into fog with father and knows exactly where the boat will be when out of fog
  + 14:38 “And that goes back from like training of being out in the waters and out in the country my whole life. And just taking that one small advice from my grandpa to just pay attention to everywhere you go.”
* Look at surroundings for weather
  + 16:04 “Things in the land that you can sit there and look, out at Besboro [island] and use that as a weather indicator. Like, if you look at it the night before and you see that it has this mirage and it looks like it’s floating, you don’t want to go out in the ocean. It’s going to be a north wind, and the waves are going to be too big.”
* Traditional ways he was taught—looking at the clouds, sun (i.e., a cloud hovering over Besboro island indicates east wind coming)
* Observing
* Elders taught
  + 20:48 “They’d tell me what to look for. Tell me what to try to observe. Always look at the water, they said.”
* Learned from experience and watching weather, observing what’s going on
* Learning to watch for signs of bad weather approaching
  + Noticed a phenomenon of 10’ cyclone in the water meaning atmospheric pressure was changing and bad weather was coming
* Been studying Mother Nature all his life
  + Changes in weather
  + Learning to tell if fish is good or bad. Bad if organs stick to blood line. Permafrost thawing is causing this
* 32:47 “You don’t play with Mother Nature. You live with it.”
  + Clear your mind, then tune yourself in to your surroundings
* Learned from great grandpa: listening, looking, observing 34:55 “And that’s a rare gift.”
* Taught oldest grandson and now youngest 39:09 “how to distinguish what’s good and what’s bad as to fishing.” Farm fish not safe to eat—observe fish insides
* Didn’t ask for knowledge—learned by observing what was going on around him

One mistake can lead to death

* One mistake can lead to death
  + 25:51 “All it takes is one goof up and anybody could be done. I’ve seen it happen in our [river] mouth many of times.”
* Familiarity with people drowning
  + 34:49 “I lost quite a bit of friends to the ocean, but that’s just the way life is”
* Overloaded herring boats capsizing—avoidable
  + 32:43 “Well, I’ve seen where people loaded their herring boats too much and literally take one wave and the boat sinks.”
  + 33:32 “They got a little greedy.”
* Moving water is dangerous
  + There’s no pool that kids can swim in, only dangerous water with current
* Had to jump off a boat while crabbing so he didn’t get crushed (no PFD)
  + 12:33 [scared the captain who never fished again] “He just was never the same.”
* Son drowns and he reflects that he should have made him more comfortable with water
* Diver on purse seiner drowns trying to loosen a net stuck on the rocks
* Experience doesn’t always help because accidents still happen
  + 70:23 “I guess I’ve been lucky because like I said, I had a good teacher, mom and dad, and I’m still here.”
* Don’t overload boat
* Strategies for handling big waves in a small boat
* Driving the boat and not wanting anyone else to drive (too dangerous)
* Small boats, big weather
* End of August tells scary event—big weather that time of season
* Unique challenges in Norton Sound—lots of wind builds from open land
* Crabbing boat is bigger than set netting boat, so less danger of big waves
* Lessons—don’t think that just because other boats are fishing, that you should too
* Watch other boats around you—if they start to leave, you probably should too
* Set net boat scary when filled with fish and bad weather
* Watching weather and driving a [small] boat in big waves was the main safety lesson taught by grandpa and uncle.
* Near miss—trip when boat full of fish, then weather turned fast, big waves broad side, water coming into boat (able to drain)
* Would have cancelled before wind and current got to strong
* Can let Fish and Game know you can’t get net before closure and they are understanding.
* Avoiding dangers
* Pay attention and don’t push limits
  + 51:13 “Just keep your eyes open and listen to whoever’s your captain and don’t push yourself to the limits where it gets too dangerous to be out there.”
* Stability—placing people to balance weight
* Stability—don’t put both lead lines on same side of boat unless can balance the weight
* Don’t want to get lines tangled in placement on deck
  + Need quick access to anchor in case motor stops
* Stability—keeping water out of boat so fish won’t move
* Danger to set netting—entanglement in net or anchor line going out of boat
* Danger—anchor dragging and getting dragged into other nearby nets
* Keep an eye on buoy, anchor, or boat rope
  + 49:20 “Watch where you place all your gear or equipment and that’s mostly the danger with those is entanglement.”
* Local fatalities:
  + W. H. Neighbor was on his way home from subsistence fishing and hit a reef
    - Going fast and boat instantly turns 90 degrees.
    - He falls into rail of boat and other passenger stabbed by anchor
    - He practiced safety all those years and was Fish and Game employee
  + W. Need more markers for reefs and other hazards, but buoys wash away in storms
  + H. Remembers in 70s three young fishermen overloaded their boat in big swells, boat swamped and they drowned (not wearing flotation).
  + State got stricter after that time period
  + H. Most recent fatality was a local guy and his girlfriend coming home from Koyuk
    - H. Not paying attention to the weather and wind forecast
    - W. North wind at Cape Denbigh with high, dangerous waves
    - W. He tried to call his grandmother
    - W. Everybody searched for 10 days and couldn’t find him
    - H. Helicopter found girlfriend in PFD (died of hypothermia)
    - H. Console may have come loose when they hit a wave. Wasn’t secured to boat
    - H. When going with waves, that type of boat tends to turn immediately to its side when hit on side with a wave
    - W. Thought maybe the waiters pulled him down
* Was pulling net in by hand when large wave hits, almost pulling him out of boat with it
  + Weather was bad and only a couple boats out—they still forgot PFDs
    - Should have had them on
  + Started pulling net and boat turns broadside to waves 26:36 “My dad’s like, ‘Well if anything happens, it’s too late now.”
  + Hand caught in net and only a couple feet before he would have been out of the boat.
  + 5-7’ swells, so if he went over, most likely wouldn’t have been recovered
  + 24:43 “Those kind of things like make you ‘all right, you know, maybe I do have to suffer in a lifejacket. [laughs] But yeah, once I’m getting to a point where my dad’s age, that’s when I’ll have a life jacket on every day, but now it’s just like too hot, don’t need it.”
  + Looks back in how much danger he was in
    - 24:16 “I didn’t really think like, I almost died, I could’ve almost died. Holy cow, I almost fell in. In my head I was thinking I would have been able to get myself out, but come to think of it, that was a whole lot more dangerous than I thought about it at the time.”
* Finding out how to be safe
* 20’boat, 2 1/5 feet high
* 5:27 “I found out that you got to be ocean wise to go out there when it’s rough because when you hit a wave, you’re most likely gonna flip over.”
* 12:52 “There’s a lot of ways to find out how you could be safe out there.”
* Learned how to maneuver in big waves
  + Go down wave slow and turn wheel to go alongside wave and slowly get down to bottom
* To get to shore in big waves—come in with wave as it’s coming in
* When returning home in rough weather,
  + Go far out where waves are swells until ready to come in to shore, then zig zag in with waves
  + Find a breaker and travel right behind it all the way in, then speed up when it gets shallow, surfing wave
  + 15:56 “People used to wonder how I manage.”
* Learned to adapt to rougher weather as climate changed
  + Come in as fast as possible
  + Pull net in, fish and all to get in quicker and increase stability (fish can’t move)
* If current is flowing and little waves start, turn around and go home
* Observed white squall (looks like white fog and that’s a north wind coming) 20 miles down coast
* Used strategies he learned to make it in safely
* Getting caught in huge waves, had to go slow, working way out deep
  + Coming in, partner had to bail water with bucket because boat couldn’t drain fast enough,
  + Boat sunk when they made it in, but able to drain it in low tide
* Lessons:
* Watch weather. If it’s rough don’t go
  + There’ll be logs and may break your motor
* If you lose your engine power, try to come in with the waves
  + Carry a bucket tied to a 50’ line and tie to bow to keep boat into waves so you can come in with waves slowly
* 49:51 “Learn to stay positive and everything will fall into place.”
* Put your net over and around sides of fish to increase stability
* Don’t fill your boat too full because waves will flip you
* When rough, get to net, tie rope to net long enough to get to shore, anchor on land, then pull net in fish and all. Leave anchor on land to come back for (less weight)
* Don’t set neer shore unless you know it’s going to stay calm
* Risky situations:
* Scary opener—4,000 pinks in his 22’ skiff
  + Nephew sitting on wrong side of boat and waves are coming in
  + Too many fish and only 6” freeboard
  + Had to tell nephew to move or boat might have capsized
* Risky situation because they wanted to get done earlier
* Waited til returned to shore before telling nephew his actions were dangerous—being unobservant of situation
* Wishes he would have listened to his own instincts and concerns
  + Should have pushed boat off sandbar, but consulted his nephew who wanted to get the job done and said it should be fine
  + Boat could have sunk
* Dangers—waves
* Dangers—determination to make money when prices get higher
* 28:59 “I know that fishermen are more to put themselves at risk in going out. And then in the past, when I first started, if it was rough out, people wouldn’t go out. That’s the biggest danger that we have here for the fishermen is the determination to make money over safety.”
* Bad experience helping cousin crab.
  + Told cousin it was too rough, but he was headstrong. At least 12’ swells in 30’ boat
  + Males cousin turn around and go back
* Remoteness on water
* Remote in event of danger
  + 14:51 “I mean, you’re the only boat out there. You don’t see anybody else…Other days you might see the whole fleet out there.”
* Safer with crew
  + 17:19 “You can’t do it by yourself. You fall over well, there ain’t nobody to save you.”
* Keeping an eye out for other boats who may need help
* Cell phones for communication
  + 49:52 “But that will reach out 26 miles.”
* Coast guard flight is 6 hours out of Kodiak
* Need to rely on self and crew
  + 50:31 “Sometimes you just got to learn to don’t rely on nobody and just learn to rely on yourself because you’re the only one that’s out there.”
* H. Herring dangers (lasted 10-20 years)
  + Rough water (marginally) with west wind or south wind in spring
  + Remembers when huge person fell overboard and needed to be lifted by a tender with hydraulics
    - Must have been wearing a PFD
    - 31:40 “Like I say, that herring, it was a driver.
  + Boats all following a tender breaking ice when a huge sheet of ice raises high out of water, lifting boats with it until they slide back into water
  + Tendency to overload boats to make more money
* Onshore survival: Up river he was stuck because of the tide and 50’s and raining
  + Elders taught him as a kid to stay dry by using an alder canopy to build a bed under, using branches and leaves
  + This kept him dry (clothing kept him warm) and he survived to wait for tide
* If needed help, would call 911 or VHF if out of cell signal—word of mouth or social media would get help as fast as possible safely
* Greatest dangers
  + Checking net in rough weather
  + Falling overboard
  + Lack of awareness
* Compares dangers in Bristol Bay versus Unalakleet—Bay boats better in bigger weather, but small Unalakleet boats can get in and out of river mouth in different tides
* Went to get wood with dad when anchor gets caught on bottom and boat swamps, then capsizes
  + Calls cousin with water logged cell phone before it dies
  + 30’ swim to land, then 50-60’ swim back to get jacket with cell phone
  + Bears and no gun (only planning on being out 1 hour)
  + 30 miles from town due to mudslide, but SAR meets them after 15-20 miles of walking

Changes

* Early fishing: boats low and fill with water quickly
  + As time went on his dad built bigger boats
  + He kept smaller boat because younger and could swim to shore easier if capsized
* Climate change brought rougher weather
* 4:01 “And back then we had small boats, really low, because we never had no rough water. It was always calm.” [during summer]
* White people fishing depleted the fish and caused need for permit system
  + First, only residents had permits, but after death, state took them back
  + White people bought permits from natives in winter who wanted money to drink and sold permits cheap
  + They didn’t follow rules (i.e., fisherman sets net directly over his net)
* Permafrost and farmed fish are bad—organs stuck to blood lines, don’t bite hook when they should.
* Fishing in the past was easy
  + 60:04 You stop and anchor your boat and you could see. The water used to be clear. [before so rough and windy] You find out what they’re [fish] doing.”
  + 62:06 “Look at this weather. Always windy. It’s always windy today. When the kings really start hitting, our winds will shift to the west and southwest and be rough all the time.”
* Less fish because of trawlers
* Less fish now than in the past
  + 60:06 Well now we have no fish. 20 years ago we had a little bit of fish. 40 years ago we had abundance of fish.”
* Frustration and concern over trawlers, starting in the 90s
* Lost permit because mother and brother did not make enough points
* Feeling helpless and angry about greed and money over what’s right
  + 21:13 “All the communities live by rivers that produce salmon. And if we can’t even catch a salmon because somebody else is killing them and throwing them overboard, what’s the point of even catching fish?”
* Less fish now because too many permits (double than past) consolidated out of Unalakleet.
* Boats are bigger now and can go farther
* In the past, with slower motors, they’d stay out longer instead of running back into town.
* Changes in populations and species—pinks have increased, kings decreased, Coho fluctuates
* Fish crashed after 2019 because of high temps, lack of rain, and too many pinks in river depleting oxygen
  + High mortality of salmon in river past few years
* 2017-2018 record numbers of Coho, then 4 years ago, price went up
* Kings and Coho are spending only a few months out in the ocean instead of a few years and are getting smaller
* Weather is changing greatly from what grandpa, father, and uncles tell him
  + Storms frequent in fall
  + Inconsistent, long stretches of rain or sun for a month at a time
* Wind directions changing
* Used to be east winds dominate in summer (not dangerous)
* Now west winds (bigger waves)
* The earth axis changing is changing observation strategies
  + Sundog when sun is closer to east in sky means stronger east wind
  + Sundog at sunset indicates north wind 3-4 days.
* W. 34:22 “We have seen enough over the years to know that global warming has affected the mass.”
* W. Used to have over two weeks of herring coming in and now gone in 3 or 4 days
* W. Pacific cod migrating north because Bering Sea getting too warm
  + W. Unalakleet fisheries moving north
* W. 4 years ago, first time they saw pinks drifting down dead because river was too warm
  + Sad to see all the humpies float by
* W. Over last 15 years have also seen birds die off and populations change
* W. 36:48 Yukon closed subsistence and commercial chum and king
  + W. Worried they will be next because they think their fish feed in the same area as Yukon fish
* Unalakleet fishermen used to be able to make a good living when she first started fishing in 1960-1964.
  + She used to see 100lb kings.
  + 38:09 “You never see that anymore.”
* W. 38:35 “I think that regardless of what is happening, the high seas fishery doesn’t report as much by-catch as they should. And I think the fish are also not coming back because they don’t have the feed that they used to have.”
* Wonders if young people are going to be able to make a living off fishing anymore
  + Wonders if salmon are going to die off because of global warming
* H. Silvers and chum were $0 in their books last year
* H. Next year there’ll be no pinks
  + H. Took a ride up river and no fingerlings (normally see many)
  + W. Maybe global warming causing increase in precipitation in fall and river is overfilled, causing eggs to wash out
  + W. Someone should monitor how much water in river systems and if it’s killing salmon
* Fishermen used to make $40,000-100,000 off salmon.
  + Last 5 years after Yukon and Northern Stone Salmon Disasters, fishermen are hurting economically
  + Some fishermen not even making $1,000 last year
* H. Last year, pinks did well and good prices (used to not be worth anything)
* H. People are selling their permits like when herring died off
* H. Bristol Bay doing well, maybe because they have Lake Clark and Lake Iliamna—cold and deep
* Snow in mountains north of Dillingham
* H. Climate change in Norton Sound is more dramatic
  + no snow and water temp zooms up as soon as snow is gone
* More fish in the past
* Same amount of fish as past, but more permits