



## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with  
Gasparo "Spano" Giacalone, 1921-1992

October 29, 1988



[MP3 Audio File](#) [Length: 1:32:57] (42.5 MB)

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### PREFACE

"Spano" Giacalone was a native San Diegan who followed his father into the fishing business. He began his fishing career about 1935 after graduation from Roosevelt Junior High.

Fishing, in the early 1930s, was mostly in local waters. But there were a few boats that would journey south to fish for tuna in Mexican waters. The tuna would be sold to the canneries for \$80 per ton. As canned fish became more popular this price increased to from \$1,000 to \$1200 per ton.

In this interview Mr. Giacalone talks about the changes made in tuna boats - from bait boats to purse seiners. He also goes into changes in the sizes of these ships - from the change-over to existing boats to the development of ten and twelve million dollar purse seiners.

Mr. Giacalone also talks about his years in the Navy; about naval use of fishing ships during World War II; the porpoise problem; locating schools of fish; refrigeration of fish; and much more. This interview is a "must" for anyone interested in, or concerned about the rise and fall of the fishing industry in San Diego.

Thomas E. Walt, Editor  
August 30, 1994

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## **INTERVIEWER'S NOTE**

The date today is October 29, 1988. We are doing an interview with Mr. Spano Giacalone. He was one of the bait boat fishermen back in the 1940s and we will talk about his experiences.

**ROBERT WRIGHT:** Please give me your full name.

**SPANO GIACALONE:** Spano Giacalone. Italian. Spano Giacalone.

**RW:** When were you born, Spano?

**SG:** Nineteen Twenty-one, March. March 11, 1921.

**RW:** Where?

**SG:** San Diego, California.

**RW:** So you're really a native then, aren't you? Was your father a fisherman, too?

**SG:** When he came from Italy he worked on the railroad track. Time went by and then he went into the fishing business.

**RW:** Here in San Diego?

**SG:** San Diego.

**RW:** He came out from Italy way back when?

**SG:** I don't know what year it was. So we started fishing; I started to fish myself. I went to school.

**RW:** What school did you go to?

**SG:** Washington. Washington School. From there I went to junior high school, Roosevelt Junior High School, then graduate ninth grade and got out and start goin' fishing.

**RW:** Never went to San Diego High, or anything?

**SG:** No.

**RW:** So, let's see - that would have made it about 1935, then?

**SG:** (Calculates under his breath before answering) About 1935, yeah.

**RW:** I take it you weren't too interested in school, then?

**SG:** Them days, no.

**RW:** Well, now, 1935 was the middle of the Depression years?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Right.

**RW:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**SG:** Got four, besides me, brothers. And two sisters - three sisters.

**RW:** Want to give me their names, just for the record?

**SG:** There's Theodore Giacalone, Charley Giacalone, Lorenzo, me, and my brother Joe, the younger one.

**RW:** And the sisters?

**SG:** Grace, Angie, and Virginia.

**RW:** Did you go fishing because you really needed the money?

**SG:** Yeah. In them days, you know, everything was - you know, there was no money in them days. Used to go fishing - the price of a ton of sardines was \$3, a ton of mackerel was \$7. Price of fish was low. But, you know, you bought a loaf of bread, them days, you bought a loaf of bread for seven cents, ten cents. So if you made a dollar then, it's like makin' ten dollars a day [now]. 'Cause if you go buy a loaf of bread today, it's a dollar something. So what you're doing there and you're doing today ...

**RW:** Did you start off small? I know you were about 14, 15 years old, but did you go out just on offshore fishing?

**SG:** Yeah - the local fishin'. We used to work the local fishin'. And them days, over there, you know, we're talkin' about years ago. Like they used to be the few tuna boats, you know - the people got interested in the tuna business and they would go down there; you could make a trip with tuna; the tuna was \$80 a ton.

**RW:** You mean, go down to Mexico?

**SG:** Um-hmm, Mexico.

**RW:** Off the Mexican shore?

**SG:** They would come in, they didn't even want the tuna. They would come in with a load of fish; the inspectors'd go down there to the boat, take a look, open up the hatches, look at 'em, say, "Condemn them."

**RW:** Why?

**SG:** They didn't even want 'em. They would just go and dump 'em, that's all - go outside Point Loma and throw 300 ton of fish over the side. A lot of fish was in waste.

**RW:** Was that because the cannery didn't want 'em?

**SG:** Nobody used to know what a can of tuna was, them days. See, when we used to be kids, like I said when we were young, we used to work local fishing. So the cannery used to pack tuna. When they used to pack a tuna, a lot of times, like I said, they want it and they didn't want it. They would cook this thing, put it in trays, and put it outside. They used to cool 'em off in the yards. You could o' went down there and picked up all the tuna you wanted, right in the yards, no guards, no nothing.

**RW:** Well, I don't understand it - I thought when you can 'em, you cook 'em; you clean 'em, cook 'em, put 'em in a can, seal the can, and that's the end of the tuna.

**SG:** No, you gotta cool these cans off, now. They got a big - racks, big trays, you know, with - what do you call these things, with the wheels, you know. And they would wheel 'em outside in the yard and let 'em cool off.

**RW:** Seems like that'd spoil 'em.

**SG:** No, they're in cans already!

**RW:** Oh, the cans.

**SG:** The cans, already.

**RW:** Oh, the cans are sealed?

**SG:** The cans are all sealed. They let 'em cool off, and then they, you know, they put the labels on. But they would just lay out there and nobody would even know - you know, we were kids; we used to go over there and get a couple of cans, just open 'em up and eat 'em like that.

**RW:** But you said the canneries didn't want tuna.

**SG:** They didn't want none. Because, I'm saying, they took tuna Don't get me wrong, but a lot of times they wouldn't even want 'em. You know what I mean? You'd be packin' 'em; you would come in; the inspectors would go down there, take a look at 'em. Just like a fruit inspector, well, if it's got white flies on there or something, you know, got a little spot on it, condemn the whole truckload, you know. That's what they were doing with the fishing business. The guy'd be gone three months, come in, get an expensive trip, you know. Take it out to Point Loma and dump it.

**RW:** Is it also because there was no market for it?

**SG:** No market. This is something, you know. People didn't even know what a can of fish was!

**RW:** Well, see, this was before my time of knowing too much about that. In other words, people bought fish fresh most of the time in those days?

**SG:** In fact, there wasn't even no market for fresh fish! Not too much, you know. Fish, you know, it wasn't a great seller.

**RW:** Well, when do you think canned fish came into being?

**SG:** Canned fish came into being real popular with the weight watchers.

**RW:** You mean relatively lately?

**SG:** Lately. And then everything went crazy. I mean, you know. Really crazy. People on diets. They pack it in water; before they never have no water-packed tuna. Never had water-packed tuna. Now people all really, you know, watching the business and all that, they are scared to gain an ounce, so they're going into water pack.

**RW:** Excuse me, what were they packed in back in the 1930s and 1940s?

**SG:** All oil.

**RW:** What kind of oil was that? olive oil, or ...?

**SG:** No, that soybean oil.

**RW:** Yeah.

**SG:** The olive oil used to come in when they used to bring it in from Italy. But that was the three-ounce cans from Italy. So, like I said, this tuna business started picking up real good at the end - I mean, you know, started getting a little popular. But when the weight watchers come in the picture, everything crazy.

**RW:** Yeah, but in the meantime everything's offshore, isn't it?

**SG:** Um-hmm.

**RW:** Down in Mexico, Tahiti, or some other places?

**SG:** Yeah, I mean this fishing business is really fouled up, you know what I mean. Now, they put the fishermen on a quota. You had to catch so many ton of fish, say 100,000 ton of fish inside the 200 mile limit. So now this fishing business started getting big. I mean the seiners started goin', you know, bigger and bigger and bigger. They started getting big. So when they got this quota, 100,000 ton of quota inside the 200 mile limit, these seiners ... now the quota was up and they stop you. So they say, "Okay." Say, "You guys are making limit." You know, because everybody starts squawking saying, "What are we gonna do with these boats?" You know? "We got a 12 million dollar boat, 10 million dollar boats; what we gonna do

with 'em?" So the government, the law, Fish and Game, or whatever, started. Said, "Go outside the thousand mile limit." So they start sending these boats outside. Nobody ever been out that far! So they went outside the thousand mile limit and they found more fish than in the inside. More porpoise on the outside than there was inside. So they start demolishing everything up there. That's when everything went crazy.

**RW:** How about foreign fishing? Japanese, Russian, whatever. I understand they take everything.

**SG:** They take everything. They don't throw nothing away - nothing. Now these superseiners, when you set on a fish, you know, you get a lot of "junk fish." You know, I mean a lot of stuff you gotta throw 'em overboard. But the Japanese don't and the Russians don't, like the mahi mahi.

**RW:** Yeah, that's good eatin'.

**SG:** They're good eatin'. But what we gonna do with 'em? You had the fisherman - there's no market for 'em over here.

**RW:** There is now.

**SG:** Now there is. But you can't get a superseiner to go out there when you've got all these fish in 'em, because you're after the tuna. Now, if you bring in, say - well, say during a trip you accumulate maybe a hundred ton of mahi mahi. You know, when you're set. What would you do with 'em? Who's gonna buy 'em in San Diego? There's no market for 'em here. Nobody would take a hundred ton of mahi mahi here.

**RW:** You mean, then?

**SG:** Now!

**RW:** You go to a restaurant, you pay ten bucks a dinner for a mahi mahi dinner.

**SG:** Right. I understand that, but these things are comin' from the . They're sendin' 'em up from down below, from Mexico they're sendin' 'em up here. Because there ain't that much ... If you brought 'em down here, a hundred ton of fish to these markets, you better take 'em home and pack 'em on fertilizer, because they won't take 'em. That's too much fish. They'll take maybe a few from Mexico and that's it.

**RW:** Is that to keep the price up?

**SG:** No. I mean, the mahi mahi is all over the ocean; I mean you can get a lot of 'em, but ...

**RW:** What I'm saying is that's a gourmet dinner type of thing to have a dinner with these things, because I know ... I've been to restaurants that have 'em, like Anthony's and so forth ... And it seems to me that they're good eatin'.

**SG:** They are. Delicious. Us, the crew members, when we get 'em - you know, so many of 'em, we clean 'em and put 'em in the freezer, and take 'em home. But you're after the tuna.

**RW:** The tuna's the dollars. Right. Let's get back to the 1930s. I assume you went out on a boat with your dad. What was the name of the boat you were on?

**SG:** First boat I worked on when I was a kid was with my uncle. I never went with my dad. Very few times I went with my dad.

**RW:** What was your uncle's name?

**SG:** Jasper DeLeon. And he had an old boat, the Azuma. It was an old one. See, he had a little half-ring on, a little purse seine net on it.

**RW:** It wasn't a Monterey, was it?

**SG:** No, no, no. It was about a 45-foot boat. So we started working with that one. Then we were working for Del Monte cannery, for sardines. Quarter sardines, they were packed a quarter sardines. In them days we were gettin' \$20 a ton, which was very good. In them days it was very good. That's one of the high-priced fish for us because we would have .a contract to work with this Del Monte cannery - only wanted seven boats and we got in one of them seven boats. So they were paying \$20 a ton for quarter sardines. Puttin' 'em in, you know, these sardine cans, little cans. Now, the other canneries were usin' 'em for fertilizer. Like, the Westgate cannery - the boats, the rest of the boats were workin' for these big sardines.

**RW:** The larger sardines?

**SG:** The largest sardines - good fertilizer, for three and a half dollars a ton. And they were using 'em for fertilizer.

**RW:** How about dog and cat food?

**SG:** Naw, they wasn't even such a thing as dog and cat food then. They didn't even know what a dog was, I guess. (Laughter) No, everything went into fertilizer. Then everything started goin' - lately, then they started makin' it for the cat and dog food, you know.

**RW:** I guess you got the sardines just literally off Point Loma, : didn't you?

**SG:** Yeah, right there in the Coronado Hotel. All the sardines : you want are right there in them days - all the sardines you wanted outside Point Loma, La Jolla, all up and down Del Mar, all the way to Coronado Island, the ocean used to be full of sardines.

**RW:** They still there?

**SG:** Now they're comin' back - they wiped 'em out. See, and then as time went, they kept building purse seiners. Buildin' 'em because there was a lot of sardines, lot of sardines. So Monterey started in San Francisco - "Bigger seiners, bigger seiners!" Now, you're talkin' about 150ton seiners with sardines. Day in, day out, day in, day out, year in, year out. (He beats with his hand for emphasis on the pounding rhythm of the words) And they're finally - they disappeared. They said they cleaned 'em out - you know, the environmentalists and Fish and Game said, you know, "Well, you guys cleaned 'em all out." As years went, the sardines disappeared.

**RW:** Think that's true?

**SG:** Well, I was talkin' to this Count Fitch (?), Fish and Game, and they do a lot of dredging, you know, dragging the bottom. He says they go back years, so he says there'd be a scale of anchovies, when they drag they used to bring up the mud, and later on, you know, the years pass and there'd be scales of sardines on top of that. Lots of, you know, scales. And then the anchovies would die off and he would say they'd die off and there'd be scales of anchovies. Scales of sardines. He figured they would die off. But these people say they wiped 'em out, you know.

**RW:** Blame you guys for fishin' 'em out, then?

**SG:** That's what they say. Well, you know, they were out there every night, every night, every night, they bring in a load of sardines.

**RW:** Well, there's something to it, in other words. There's something to it.

**SG:** Well, I can see that.

**RW:** Now you were using - with your uncle, you probably were using a net, weren't you?

**SG:** Right, net.

**RW:** Like a small purse seiner?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Small purse seine nets. We were delivering to Del Monte.

**RW:** I understand these canneries were less than honorable. In other words, you'd go out with the idea you'd get \$20 a ton; you come in and they say, "Well, part of your load is spoiled; here, we'll give you \$10 a ton."

**SG:** Well, I tell you the truth, the boats I been on, they never done that. You got a certain price at the cannery. But you're talkin' about the fish markets.

**RW:** No, I'm talkin' about the canneries. Some of these other guys told me that they'd also put their thumb on the scale, too.

**SG:** Well, I never ... I tell you the truth, like I say, I never been on the scales. All the time on the boat, unload, you know. Throwin' the fish in buckets and scoopin' up fish, puttin' 'em in buckets. So whoever went on the scale, we wasn't watchin' the business! (Laughter)

**RW:** What's the difference between an anchovy and a sardine? To me, they look alike, but I guess there's a distinct difference.

**SG:** Well, the sardine is a way bigger fish; it's a bigger one. And anchovies, they get smaller. But they get big anchovies. Now don't get me wrong, they're about seven, eight inches, anchovies. But sardines, they call 'em "bullhocks" and they get about 12 inches long, those things.

**RW:** I understand that when the tuna boats went out, you know, the bait boats, they would net in sardines or anchovies to chum for the tuna. Is that right?

**SG:** Right.

**RW:** So, on one hand it was a crock. I mean it was a product that you could catch and bring in for canning. on the other hand, it could be used for bait for larger fish.

**SG:** Right. Say, like the striped tuna, the skipjack. See, we used to go out there and get anchovies for them. They used to call them, like little anchovies - used to call them like little firecrackers. When you get in a school of skipjack like that, you start chummin' this, and you shovelin' that out,

like raindrops, you know, and they go crazy. They bite like crazy. Now when you go for tuna ... Say we used to go to Galapagos Islands - Galapagos Islands, we used to go diving over there and they get the anchovies - salimas (?).

**RW:** That's another type of sardine?

**SG:** No, it's not a sardine. It looked like a little bass. They hang onto the bottom. Because the tuna over there - it's all different fishing over there, see. It could be skipjack; it could be with that one-pole fish, two-pole fish, three-pole fish, four-pole fish - it's all different. And when you were fishin' there ... It depends where you was fishin', whatever, you're Galapagos you're fishin' - and then when you would go for bait, you would look for the little bait because if it was small fish, you would look for the small fish. If it was big fish, then you would look for these salimas.

**RW:** How long did you fish with your uncle, just on sardines?

**SG:** For sardines? Well, I'd say maybe about four-five years.

**RW:** That was a tough job, though, wasn't it? Even at that.

**SG:** No, it was a good job. That was a good job. That was really a nice job. Because you're workin' in the Coronado, the Coronado right here, the Coronado Hotel outside, right alongside. And the sardines used to be a lot. And we had a limit of seven ton.

**RW:** And then you would be home at night, too.

**SG:** We'd be home. It depends, you know. A lot of times the sardines, you see 'em at night. Fishin' at night is better than the daytime. They would flare up, they makin' a phosphorus.

**RW:** Yeah, I've seen that. It's beautiful.

**SG:** Beautiful. So, you know what the heck you're doin' at nighttime. So you could catch it, you know, you could see the schools, how much there was in schools. In the daytime, you, you know, you can't tell because when you go out there ... The way we used to do it, you can see 'em flippin' around. Then you make a set, maybe you get two tons, three ton, maybe, you know, a ton - it depends. But at nighttime you see the fireballs; you could tell exactly how much was in them schools.

**RW:** You say you fished four-five years with 'em. So that would have taken you up to about 1940 then?

**SG:** Well, it was not that long. Now wait a minute, now - let's say about three years. Three years, because 1940 ... In about 1938 then I started goin' tuna fishin'. My first trip tuna fishin'.

**RW:** Tell me about it. What was it like for you? What boat were you on?

**SG:** The Saint Therese, Portuguese boat.

**RW:** That's still around, isn't it?

**SG:** Naw, that one's gone a long time ago. That's a long time ago.

**RW:** Swore I saw it. So, what was it like for you to go out on a big boat like that?

**SG:** Well, it's something new, you know, really some'n new, because it's altogether different, you know. You goin' for tuna now; you're goin' for tuna. You're goin' for that size fish, one-pole fish, two-pole fish, you know. We'd go out, workin' ... Them days, when they first made these boats, there was a lot of fish in the Gulf of Mexico, I mean the Gulf of California, right there. So that's where we made our first trips. I made my first trips in the Gulf of California.

**RW:** Down the lower part of the gulf?

**SG:** Naw, right there by the cape, right by the Cape of San Lucas, all the fish you wanted.

**RW:** Yeah, I got a map here, but we don't have to dig that out. I know where it is. Did you go out with the family?

**SG:** No, no. My brother-in-law told me if I wanted to make a trip with him, you know, my brother-in-law. So I said, "Yeah!" You know, go to Mexico. And that was my first trip to Mexico.

**RW:** That meant more money for you, too, didn't it?

**SG:** Yeah, make some more money. And then, from there, then you went on this other boat, City of San Francisco. Started working there until the war broke out. And that took care of that.

**RW:** Well, yes, and no. I understand some of the boats the Navy took over and some of the boats you guys still were fishin'.

**SG:** Right. The newer boats the Navy took.

**RW:** They were all wooden anyway.

**SG:** They were wooden boats, the newer ones. Like, the one I was on at the end, the City of San Francisco, that was an old boat. Used to be a seiner, a purse seiner, a net boat. Then they made a tuna boat out of it.

**RW:** A bait boat?

**SG:** Um-hmm. They made a bait boat out of it. And that's the one I was on. The government wouldn't want that because it never make it way out in the middle of the Pacific - never make it. So they let that one go. And from there, then I joined the Navy.

**RW:** You joined the Navy?

**SG:** Um-hmm. They wouldn't let us go fishin' no more, so I joined the Navy. So I joinedd AROU - aviation and - I eve forgot what they call it. They took the fishing boats and they had a name for this. I can't think of it. So, anyway, I went down there and joined to get on these fishing boats.

**RW:** Sure. Well, they [were] usin' the fishin' boats for patrol boats.

**SG:** Yeah, patrol boats. Half of 'em got blown out of the water.

**RW:** Why? They hit mines or something?

**SG:** Yeah, they don't know what even happened. Was one of those things. Well, they was, was migrants. Well, my brother-in-law disappeared completely - never found him. Never even found a trace. Was quite a few of 'em, you know. So by the time I got in - I went and joined, and by the time I got in, the boats all left. They had these boats out already - all the tuna boats were out. So from there, they sent me ... There was a Point Loma [base], the section base. From the section base I went to the - what do you call it, down here, the ...

**RW:** Naval [base]? The 32nd Street?

**SG:** Yeah, down there. They sent me down there.

**RW:** You went through boot camp here, I take it?

**SG:** We didn't have to. We didn't even have to go to boot camp!

**RW:** (Laughter) Right.

**SG:** Naw. In them days we didn't go to no boot camp. We just went right on, right in. They give you your uniform and go right in. Right. From there went to the Philippines; stood there about three years. After three years came back home and went back fishin' again. RW. : Well, in the Philippines, were you on the fishin' boats out there?

**SG:** No, naw. They put me in an aviation outfit. RW. : What a waste. They could'a put you on one of those old fishin' boats.

**SG:** They were all bombed by then. That was too late, they said. By the time I got in, by the time they give me my uniform, I'm waitin', you know. They were all gone.

**RW:** So you worked on naval airplanes?

**SG:** The airplanes out there.

**RW:** You worked on the carriers?

**SG:** No, no. We had an airstrip out there.

**RW:** In the Philippines?

**SG:** In the Philippines. And that belonged to the crew on the, you know, the ground crew. When they would come in, work on 'em and all this, you know.

**RW:** Were they fighters?

**SG:** Yeah. Bombers, and the fighters, too.

**RW:** These TBS?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Right. Course, right after the war they were bringin' 'em in ... this was what's .. What a shame. They were bringin' in - all these brand-new fighters, they were bringin' 'em in. Carriers were bringin' 'em in, these brand-new fighters, and put 'em on the barge, oriented

**RW:** Sunk 'em?

**SG:** Yup. What they gonna do with 'em?

**RW:** Yeah, what a waste because now they're valuable.

**SG:** Yeah. (Pauses) Oh, San Diego really changed, you know. I mean, it's changed all the way around.

**RW:** You were tellin' me ... I mean, to go back again ... Is that you used to climb around the rigging in the Star, the Star of India.

**SG:** The *Star of India*. We used to - we were kids. If we knew what we know today we would have been rich today. (Laughter) I mean, we used to, you know, swim at the waterfront, the ... right there. What do you call it, the ... where it's at now. It was there and then they moved it down there to the ...

**RW:** Down where Seaport Village is?

**SG:** Right. Right there. They moved it around down there. From there it come back over here. And right there by the *Star of India* they still have the ...

**RW:** So, what part of town were you livin' in? Down on India Street area, at that time when you were a kid?

**SG:** When I was a kid, on Atlantic Street - Pacific Highway today.

**RW:** You lived on Atlantic Street, Pacific Highway?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Pacific Highway. It was no highway back then.

**RW:** In other words, you were right on the other side (of) the tracks, then?

**SG:** Right. Towards the waterfront.

**RW:** I didn't know there were homes down in through there.

**SG:** Yeah, there used to be homes right there.

**RW:** Before the Civic Center was built?

**SG:** Um-hmm, before the Civic Center was built.

**RW:** Yeah. Do you remember exactly where your home was?

**SG:** Yeah. I know exactly where it is. Right by, little bit on this side, Jack-in-the-Box (fast food store).

**RW:** Oh, yeah. That's Cedar. It's slightly north of Cedar, : then?

**SG:** Right there. Right there we were born.

**RW:** Yeah. There's a ... auto rental agency, and a hamburger joint down there.

**SG:** Right. What do you call that, right there? What do you call that?

**RW:** I can't get it out either.

**SG:** Nice big hamburgers.

**RW:** Yeah. Yeah, and there was also a shipyard, always, right there, too, right across from the house from where you lived.

**SG:** You see where the *Star of India* was at? Used to be an oil dock there, right on the dock - used to be an oil dock. Right at the end of the oil dock there used to be a little cove which used to come in there, like a little cove. (Sound of gesturing against some surface as if he were drawing a map with his hand on a tabletop) Right here used to be a dock, right in there used to be - we used to call it San Diego Marina, like a little marina. There used to be a little shipyard there. Right alongside had another little shipyard, "Pete Rask." Right there, from there come around this way, there used to be a little yacht club.

**RW:** Towards B Street pier?

**SG:** Uh-huh. No, B Street, comin' this way, now.

**RW:** Oh, the other way, north.

**SG:** Comin' out. No, we come over here, used to be a little yacht club. Keep goin' a little bit more.

**RW:** Where the Coast Guard is?

**SG:** Yeah, towards - going towards the Coast Guard. Go towards the Coast Guard, used to be the Neptune cannery. From the Neptune cannery, there was a little shipyard there again. From the little shipyard there, there would be the Del Monte cannery.

**RW:** That was the big one.

**SG:** From the Del Monte cannery, used to have there the Westgate cannery, alongside of it, just about a couple of blocks away.

**RW:** Down by Laurel?

**SG:** From there you go down that way and there used to be the docks where the fishing boats used to tie up. And then you would go all the way towards Point Loma, you know, on the land side, and used to be all the mud flats.

**RW:** Yeah.

**SG:** Remember the mud flats?

**RW:** Yeah, vaguely.

**SG:** Where the Navy Base is at, and the Navy Base [is] now, used to be all the mud flats in there.

**RW:** Yeah. Well, I came to San Diego in 1941. I know Lindbergh Field was in existence then because it was built in 1936, I think, somewhere in there.

**SG:** Yeah, right alongside Lindbergh Field we used to work on our nets - remember that strip there? There used to be a lot of land on that side. Well, that's where we used to work on our nets, right there on that strip. And they had that fence there, and the Lindbergh Field was on that side where the airplanes used to land.

**RW:** Yeah. See, when I came here they had all of these little Army training planes, these Ryan trainers, these little two-seater trainers that they were training the pilots. Ryan had a contract to train pilots at that time. And I remember 'em all lined up. I was 12, 13 years old at the time and I was really impressed. Like I came out from Boston back in 1941.

**SG:** Oh, '41?

**RW:** Yeah. So you're talkin' before my time. Was there an airfield down that way before Lindbergh Field was developed? Was there a strip, an airplane strip down in there?

**SG:** Not that I know of.

**RW:** There was one further down where the post office is now. : There used to be a landing field there.

**SG:** Where the field is at now?

**RW:** No, no, no.

**SG:** Where the post office is at?

**RW:** You know where that big old post office is, down by the Marine Base?

**SG:** Um-hmm.

**RW:** Used to be a field there, an airport. You don't remember that one?

**SG:** No, I don't remember that one.

**RW:** What was it like to see the *Star of India* then? What was your impression of the ship then?

**SG:** It was a (he laughs as he is speaking) ... We would go on there, you know, and just fool around on there, you know, jump off it and go swimmin'.

**RW:** Was anybody livin' on board?

**SG:** Naw, then? Naw, nothing. It was a junk pile, you know what I mean, a junk pile. (Laughter) And alongside, like I says, right alongside that - I say, about where the oil dock was at, where it used to be tied up, just a little ways away, there used to be the old Viking ship.

**RW:** Yeah. They brought that down on board the Star. And then they took it off and put it alongside the dock, on the dock.

**SG:** Where they got that thing at, right now?

**RW:** Well, when I came to San Diego I saw it up there where the ...

**SG:** I heard it's in Balboa Park someplace.

**RW:** Well, that's it. It was moved to Balboa Park next to the ... You know, where they have the Starlight Opera, the Ford Bowl? It was there for years because I remember as a kid going by it up there. Then it burned.

**SG:** It burned down?

**RW:** Yeah, somebody burned it up, or they got - the Park Department got rid of it somehow.

**SG:** Aw, I'll be darned.

**RW:** And that was the end of that.

**SG:** What a shame. That was a nice-lookin' boat.

**RW:** Yeah, it was. I remember that. I just got through building a model, for a church, a Viking ship model about three feet long. I found out that it wasn't easy to build that model because of the planking, you know, sweeping up there. Yeah, I got more of an appreciation of it now. I was gonna ask you, you know by missing high school, [do] you feel kind of a loss of learning? Or did you learn a lot, you know, by fishing and so forth, reading, or anything like this? Lack of education?

**SG:** Aw, we don't know nothin' about education. That's gone. You know what I mean? Because then, like I say to 'em, all we were was interested in fishing then. Never had a job on the beach. Never worked on the beach. All my life I been fishin'. Never got interested in the beach. And that was that. Went all the way through life with the fishin' business. The only time I was off the fishin' business was when I was in the service.

**RW:** What was your first impression on goin' out on a big boat, in tuna? I mean, here you are on a bigger boat with more crew (probably you knew most of the guys anyway if you're not related to 'em) were you impressed with what you were gonna do, you know, the bigger boat?

**SG:** Yeah, you get really excited, really excited, you know. You're gonna do it - you're doin' somethin' different. It's in the fishing business, you know. You hear about the tuna when you were a kid; these guys would come in with a load of fish, you know, the way they would catch the fish with these poles, that's three-pole, two-pole, four-pole, two-pole. Hey, you really get excited, you know. And then when you got on the boat, I mean, you know, you see what it's all about; you really start likin' it.

**RW:** What was your job? You were about 18 then; anyway, you were probably a husky kid about that time. I mean, physically you were pretty tough, weren't you?

**SG:** Yeah. I mean, you know, when we went on the boat it was just like ... They had certain guys do certain things.

**RW:** What was your job?

**SG:** Catching fish.

**RW:** Yeah, but don't you do somethin' else when you're out at sea?

**SG:** Oh, you help 'em, you know; you gotta help 'em, you know. Like when we go for bait, you gotta help 'em catch bait. That's the whole crew's job, you know - catch bait. That's about it. Stand watches - you stand your watch.

**RW:** Let's break that down a little bit. If you stand on watch, you stand on watch in the bow, or you stand on watch in the deckhouse, or what?

**SG:** The deckhouse.

**RW:** You rotate?

**SG:** Rotate. Every two hours you rotate.

**RW:** I see. I understand that one of the [other] jobs is to go up on the mast to look for ...

**SG:** Fish. That used to be my job later on. That's the way I got stuck on that thing; for 20 years I was on there.

**RW:** Why? Because you had good eyes?

**SG:** Yeah, you know, pretty good.

**RW:** What did you look for when you were up there?

**SG:** Well, it all depends, you know, it all depends. The fish act all different ways. You would look - if you would go on the mast with me, you know, you got the mike up there. You tell the people - you know, on the pilothouse, "Come to the right," or, "Go straight," you know, whatever you want to do. You would say, "What do you see?" Because the water - it depends if it's rough, if it's calm, you know, that all depends on the weather. If it's good

weather you would see these little ripples on the water, you know, like a lot of ripples on there - different, you know. So you know where's a school of fish. Or you would see the fish jumpin' or, you know, they used to call 'em "boilers" - the big foaming on the top, them fish just eatin' on top the water. Or you could look, and a lot of times you're movin' around and you see this black spot. You say what the hell do you see, you know; what do you see? There's a big ball of fish, I mean, big school of fish. It's underwater little bit. And it makes a big black spot. Then we call it a black spot. That's what we call it. And, like I say, you got the foamers, we got the "breezers" we call 'em, the breezers that went on top of water, just breezing on top of water.

**RW:** How about under a log or somethin' like that? I understand they would school under a piece of driftwood.

**SG:** Oh, you know, lotta times that's the way you make your trips, with the wood, with the driftwood. You look and you look, and, you know, with the binoculars everybody looks - it depends who finds 'em. I find 'em, you know. When you're lookin' for wood, usually look on the binoculars, you know. You don't get on the stick. You're lookin' for lumber. You're lookin' for logs. Because you're lookin' for logs, and with these binoculars you can see about eight miles, or ten miles. So maybe you see a little thing like a white bird on there, you know, little white bird just standing in the water, or birds flying around. So you go over there and there's a big log, there's this big log. So you see "breezers" fish all around this log. Lotta times you would find a log with nothin' on it. So you see this log, well, say there's nothing on it. So you throw a jig over the side and you go jiggin' around this log, you know, see if you're gettin' any fish. You know, all the times you gettin' fish under these logs, but you don't see it.

**RW:** Because they're too deep?

**SG:** Right.

**RW:** I mean, the whole school is deep?

**SG:** Right. Deep, we don't see 'em. So we'll stick around awhile, you know, and then you see the fish come up. They'll start breezin' around there. Then you know there's fish around there. The most of the time with these logs, what's makin' these guys, with these logs, is the airplanes.

**RW:** Now.

**SG:** See, they fly over this log over there, keep lookin' around, around, circling this log, and the fish is deep. They'll see this big black spot underneath it, just coloring out, which we can't see. With our eyes we can't see it, but that one up there, they can see it.

**RW:** It took time for you to get experience, though, what to really look for?

**SG:** Yeah, right. You know, because when you ... Like I said, when you was a kid you start out, like we were worked the local; we go back to local fishin'. So my cousin used to go out in these, you know, because he was a little older than I was and he used to go on the stick all the time, on the mast. So I went up there with him, you know. I said, "What're you lookin' for?" So he explains everything to me, you know, from then on.

**RW:** It seems to me you'd get sick out there.

**SG:** Naw ...

**RW:** Whippin' around.

**SG:** I'm telling you, that's when I'm sick, you know. On these boats, soon as it gets daylight, you're goin' up there. You're goin' up there just as soon as it gets daylight. And if you don't see nothin' all day long ... I'm talkin' about, you're puttin' in 14 hours up there.

**RW:** I thought you guys would rotate, at least.

**SG:** Naw, you don't rotate nothing. You go up there for 14 hours. I used to be up there 14 hours. Soon as the sun goes down ...

**RW:** You come down?

**SG:** Lotta time I put in, lotta time up there, lotta time.

**RW:** How did you do it without gettin' sick or tired, or fall asleep?

**SG:** Aw ... I mean, you know, (small laugh) you try, like I say; I guess you get used to it because years and years and years I put a lotta years in. And everybody, every time I get on a boat ...

**RW:** Because you had the eyes, huh? Your reputation, then?

**SG:** (Laughter) Oh, that was it - the mast man.

**RW:** Did you get a bonus for findin' a school?

**SG:** Naw, not really - didn't get nothing, you know. Them days you didn't get nothing. You come in, make a trip, you didn't have to go to San Pedro, unload. Well, that wasn't too bad. They saved their two or three days. You get to be off another two or three days before the crew members can, you know. That wasn't bad. But, you figure the hours you put in there.

**RW:** What were some of the other duties on board when you were underway? In other words, you'd be underway and you have to go - I would assume you would start lookin' for fish as soon as you leave San Diego, I would assume.

**SG:** It depends what area, yeah. It depends what area you're in. A lot of times you got the bluefin tuna out here - that's right outside Point Loma. So you get on the mast. As soon as you leave Point Loma, you start lookin' for the tuna.

**RW:** Wasn't that a case where sometimes you didn't do that and you just went on down, down off of Mexico or Galapagos, or Panama, or down in that area without stopping?

**SG:** Without stoppin', right.

**RW:** 'Cause you knew that there was gonna be - there usually is ...

**SG:** You're gonna go to Galapagos. You're gonna go straight to Galapagos. And that little boat I was on, it'd take 12 days to get there, 11 days, day in, day out. That's all you do is eat and stand watch.

**RW:** You guys ever fight with each other? It'd seem like, you're all confined ...

**SG:** Naw. Well, you might get into a little argument, you know, because you always got somebody that knows somethin' more than the other one. If you tell him he's full of baloney, you know, then ... (Laughter)

**RW:** Were there certain subjects you wouldn't talk about because there'd be an argument, like politics, religion, or somethin' like that?

**SG:** You know, everybody gets along beautiful. Don't get me wrong. You know what gets everybody cranked up - when the trip starts gettin' long. When the trip starts gettin' long, they start gettin' a little cranky. Because, they figure you go down there and about ... It takes ten days to get there, twelve days to get there, load up this boat in three and four days and come home - which it don't work out like that lots of times. It don't work out. Tape 1, Side B:

**RW:** What was bad about [that]?

**SG:** Well, you get these younger guys. They're not used to : stayin' out, you know. They're not used to stayin' out too long. And they figure you're gonna go down there and make a trip, get this money and spend it real fast. But that don't work out like that. You're out there maybe two months, three months. on the bait boat they used to stay out 120 days.

**RW:** Geez! First you had to go get the bait, then you had to go find ...

**SG:** Then you gotta go there, where you gotta go. Then you : gotta look for fish all the way down. Just like, if you're goin' to Mexico, then you look all the way down going to Mexico, certain spots, you know. You hear about somebody else that's down here, say outside Costa Rica. Lotta fish outside Costa Rica. So you're all the way to Acapulco. You're at Acapulco. Nothing doing at Acapulco. So, man, you put that thing wide open, the skipper puts this thing on, open it up, and go all the way to Costa Rica with the fish - where they're catchin' a lot of fish. Because you want to make a trip - because you ain't gonna do nothin' outside Acapulco because there's nothing doin'. You know, different areas; you gotta keep runnin' around all the time.

**RW:** Weren't you part of an association? What do they call it?

**SG:** Code boats.

**RW:** Were you part of the code boat business?

**SG:** Oh, yeah. They all were. Everybody had a group.

**RW:** I understand you guys didn't always play it legal.

**SG:** Auh, you is serious? (Laughter) These guys, catching fish wide open, they don't like you [to] know nothing. Nothing doing, nothing doing - meanwhile, they just ...

**RW:** And that guy could be your brother on the other boat?

**SG:** That's true. (Laughter) Boy, they really get - they really get cranked up, you know. I mean, that's the way it is. I guess on beach the same thing, you know.

**RW:** So the code boat worked sometimes?

**SG:** Sometimes. But when they don't catch no fish, and you're catchin' fish, and you report it, then they like that. When it goes the other way ... (Laughter) Boy, you're all kinds of cuss words, you know.

**RW:** Tell me, what was it like workin' in the racks when you had one-pole, two-pole fishin', and so forth?

**SG:** Well, it's just like them pictures up there.

**RW:** Yeah, I see them. But you were standin' in the racks. What was it like for you to do that? You pull your boat up alongside a school of tuna, and what was it like for you to start pullin' the fish in? How did that happen?

**SG:** Well, it depends, you know. You could see what kind of fish was comin' underneath the boat. So if it's one-pole fish, you get the one-pole.

**RW:** You let the racks down?

**SG:** Yeah, you let the racks down; soon as you get to the school you start throwin' bait. The bait man, the chummer, starts throwin' bait. And then they can see what kind of fish is under the boat. So you lower down the rack real fast. You just ... In fact, when you get near the school you roll it down automatic; the rack goes down. Because the fish come just like this - underneath the boat. Soon as they throw bait, they come right underneath the boat and you gotta be ready for 'em. So as you're going through this school, everybody's down there by the racks, just waitin'. So, soon as the chummer throws a couple of baits, way, you know, before they get to the school, the fish starts goin' crazy, so you lower down the racks down in there gettin' in the racks. By the time he keeps throwin' bait, the fish is underneath the boat already.

**RW:** And you got your poles?

**SG:** So you got the one-pole because you could see what kind of fish is jumpin' around and what kind it is. If you see it's a two-pole fish, you get the two-poles set. As you're fishing two-pole, maybe the bigger fish come on underneath, the three-pole. So you gotta put the two-pole away and get the three-poles set. So you got three men on the pole, so forth. Then you go to four-pole.

**RW:** Let's stick with the one-pole for now. One-pole, how heavy was the fish?

**SG:** Yeah, you could put fish aboard because it's, say, from a 15-18 pounds, 20-pound fish, you could work 'em.

**RW:** One pole?

**SG:** One pole. And you get kinda tired.

**RW:** I would think so.

**SG:** Yeah, you get tired. So, soon as you get about over 20pound fish, then you get two men because when they start bitin' ... I mean, you know, they get heavy. So two guys on a pole, and they flip 'em off like this, you know, and range of 20 pounds in it.

**RW:** Was there a sort of rhythm to it? What was on the end of the pole? A line with a hook on it, right?

**SG:** Um-hmm.

**RW:** Was there any bait on it, or any chum, or anything on the end of the hook?

**SG:** No. We got the poles with the squid, they call 'em. You seen 'em, ain'tcha?

**RW:** Yeah, I've seen those.

**SG:** You seen 'em? I got the pattern for all of 'em.

**RW:** They're feathered, aren't they?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Wanna see one?

**RW:** Yeah, later. Later. I'd like to see one.

**SG:** And you got the things rigged up with a piece of wire. And you put 'em on the poles, put the feather - like a squid. We called 'em squid.

**RW:** So, somethin' they could see?

**SG:** Uh-huh. Jiggle it around and make a little motion, (he demonstrates; there is a rhythmic slapping sound) you know, splash the water. The fish get excited and they grab this thing. And you flip 'em out.

**RW:** Was there a rhythm to how you [did it]? It seems like your back would break, and your arms would get broken, just movin' these fish.

**SG:** Yeah, when you're all day long, you're catchin' fish, you get tired.

**RW:** You didn't stop for lunch, or no breaks?

**SG:** Oh, when they stop - I mean, when you got a busy day, you got everybody in the racks. Say about 12 o'clock guys get, you know, I mean, you catchin' fish steady, I mean, you know. You workin' all day long. Every time lotta fish around, so you workin'. So the skipper gets the cook to go in the galley. He's fishin', too. Gets 'em [to] go in there, make sandwiches. Couple o' guys go in there, get somethin' t'eat, come back. Next two guys go in there, get somethin' t'eat, come back. And that's the way you gonna eat for the day until the nighttime. When it's all over, it gets dark, and everything put away and everything else, everybody cleans up and everything, and the cook's in there makin' a good meal. And that's the way we eat on them boats.

**RW:** Sounds like the cook worked harder'n all of you guys?

**SG:** He works! He works.

**RW:** 'Cause not only he's fishin', he's cookin'.

**SG:** 'S right! He's cookin'.

**RW:** When you flipped the fish in, it went into sort of a tank, didn't it?

**SG:** Yeah, a brine tank. After you got the rail ... Say you're workin', right? So everybody's catchin' fish, throwin' 'em on the boat. Say you got an alleyway full of fish like that. Okay, you stop because you can't hold no more. So everybody gets out of the racks and passes these ... They got the chutes on the side of the bait box; you lower the chutes down. Everybody gets in the alleyway over there and starts throwin' these fish in the chutes, and the chutes line up right to the wells, the brine wells. And they go right in the well. So, soon as you clean out the alleyway, you put up the chute again and jump back in the racks and fill it up again.

**RW:** There was nobody on deck passing the fish into the well at the same time you guys were fishing?

**SG:** Well, when it's big fish like this, they got the blue guys in the file racks that are moving these fish because they're too big. They're big ... They weigh 200-pound fish. Then they get the gaps and they're pushin' 'em all the way up. And they're pushin' 'em up because you can't get 'em and push 'em in the chute - they're too big. So you're pullin' 'em all the way to the brine wells. And you got, you know, depends on how fast they are .. Maybe three or four guys are just passing those fish, you know, and the guys in the stern are still catching 'em.

**RW:** Seems like at the end of the day you guys ought to just fall down on the deck and just pass out!

**SG:** Oh, at the end of the night when [you're], you know, all day long fishin', you get kind of tired. Because at the end of the day you gotta make your hooks again because you start runnin' out of gear, you know. You lose a lot of hooks. Squids, they eat out all the feathers and everything else. You gotta put feathers back on there. So a couple of hours of the day, you know, at night when you're on watch because you're drifting now. On watch you get all the feathers and you get the skin and all that and you start making new gear. You're on watch anyway.

**RW:** Yeah. I don't know how you stay awake.

**SG:** In them days over there - the local fishin' now, you talkin' about local fishin'. When you're fishin' you gotta go back for bait. When you're local fishin' you run all night inside and then you gotta get the bait at nighttime, so you can be out there again the next morning. So you're workin' with the light. You put out a light in the bay. And meanwhile the anchovies, the little sardines come around. So you put over the rig, go make up a couple of sets and put the bait on the boat, and you're up all night. Soon as it starts gettin' daylight, go back outside, start again.

**RW:** Were the times kinda boring between finding fish?

**SG:** Oh, yeah, lot of 'em. You ain't doing nothing, you go crazy. I mean, you know, you got days you're busy all the time. And there's days you don't do nothing. Say, like these superseiners. You go fishin' on the superseiner.

**RW:** You been out on 'em?

**SG:** Um-hmm. Now there's days you're workin', busy. There's days all you do is nothing. All you do is sleep and eat because you can't find no fish; there's no fish. You know what I mean? And that's boring!

**RW:** And then you gotta go a long ways, too, don't you?

**SG:** Um-hmm. So I mean there's days when you're busy, you're catchin' fish all the time; you're busy. And there's days you don't catch nothing.

**RW:** In the old days - I'm talkin' about when you first started goin' fishin' in the old wooden boats, the bait boats, did you have any entertainment of any kind? Radio?

**SG:** Naw, nothing. In them days they didn't have nothing on those boats.

**RW:** Did you read?

**SG:** I'm not much for readin'. You know, them days over there, there's people, I guess that, you know, took out books. And maybe we still have the Mickey Mouse books.

**RW:** The comic books?

**SG:** Right. That's about all. But for pure readin' - I mean, you just doing nothing, just laying around, laying around. People now, like you say, when they're not doing nothing, they get a book and read.

**RW:** Of course, I assume you'd have discussions.

**SG:** Oh, lots! (Laughter)

**RW:** How about superstition? I understand that was a problem sometimes.

**SG:** Well, everybody got their little dig, you know. They say you bring out a woman, you know, like lotta times you know the skippers bring out their wives. They say that's a jinx, you know. Bad luck

**RW:** You mean, to go out with a crew?

**SG:** Yeah. You know what I mean - you know, let's face it. When you're workin' on these boats and all that, you know, you're full of blood and all that, so, you know, you take off your clothes and you get the hose and rinse down. And when a woman's on the boat, you don't do that.

**RW:** I thought that [taking women out] was absolutely forbidden?

**SG:** No. Once in awhile they take out their wives, you know. Like I said - like these superseiners, now. They got beautiful quarters; they got like hotels on these now, you know. You seen 'em? They look like a hotel in there. I mean, they got bathtubs in there; they got their showers; they got their own rooms; they got the bar set up in there. That's fine for them bringing, because a woman like there - they could live right in that pilot house - in their room, you know. But during the old days, there was nothing like that, just a hose.

**RW:** Yeah. And a saltwater hose, at that.

**SG:** Uh-huh. You get lucky if you got a glass of water to rinse off. For fresh showers - fresh water, you know, after you rinse off with saltwater. I mean, you know, wash down - you get one bucketful. And just rinse the saltwater off.

**RW:** Didn't your skin get boils and rashes and things like that?

**SG:** Oh, you get the rash wide open. When you're fishin', underneath here.

**RW:** Under your arms?

**SG:** Yeah, because, you know, you're fishin' all day long in that salt, especially when you're workin' in Mexico, you know, and around Costa Rica. And the heat. And the salt water just keeps gettin' ya - you know what I mean, you're real raw, you know. At the end of the day, like I say, you rinse off and everything else with fresh water, and you powder yourself. (Sound of slapping as he apparently demonstrates the powdering) We use'ta bring a lot of powder, cornstarch and powder.

**RW:** Yeah. Otherwise you'd be miserable.

**SG:** Yeah, miserable. I mean, you know, when you get these pads with the big fish, you know, you wear these pads, leather pads.

**RW:** The apron-like. To put the pole into it.

**SG:** Uh-huh. Right. And you used to get the rash between your legs. Oh, it was bad. Lotta times that some of these guys couldn't even work the next day. They're so raw.

**RW:** How many was on a crew, on the average? On the first boat you went out on?

**SG:** The first boat? Oh, we went out about 40 days.

**RW:** I mean, how many guys?

**SG:** Oh, there was about 12.

**RW:** Twelve. Was that about average for the wooden boat?

**SG:** Yeah, about that - 12, 13.

**RW:** So that would be the skipper ...

**SG:** Navigator, cook, engineer, assistant engineer. Because in them days everybody used to fish

**RW:** Yeah, even the engineer, I assume.

**SG:** Uh-huh. The engineer would fish, too.

**RW:** I understand the engineer was very critical - I mean, his job was critical to preserve that fish.

**SG:** He makes one mistake, that guy ... You got a whole load of fish, you know.

**RW:** You mean, you ruin a whole load of fish?

**SG:** Yeah, a whole load of fish. But I guess they know what : they're doin'.

**RW:** You ever have one [when] that happened to you?

**SG:** No. Never had one that had trouble with 'em:

**RW:** What would you do if you had?

**SG:** (Much laughter)

**RW:** He'd be walkin' home, wouldn't he?

**SG:** (Laughter) You know, lotta times you can't help it. If the engine goes bad, you know - I mean, somethin' just conks out, like an ice machine goes bad, you know, just goes bad all at one time - then you got problems, you know. You gotta make sure. A lotta times you're out there and your ice machine goes bad. Say, you've got so much fish on the boat, you gotta come home. Because if you don't come home, you gonna lose this load of fish, whatever you got.

**RW:** You don't have any backup machines?

**SG:** Oh, they got [them] now. Today they got half a dozen of 'em on. But the old days, they used to have two ice machines. They would - you know, depends on how much fish, they would start one ice machine. Lotta fish, they would start the two ice machines. Say you got a load of fish on the boat and one conks out. Now with just one ice machine, it's gotta carry this load of fish. In the old days they didn't put out that much power, so you gotta come home and make sure you dump what you got before everything turns sour on you.

**RW:** When you were down around Mexico area, Costa Rica, and so forth, did you pull into shore?

**SG:** Oh, lotta times.

**RW:** I understand you guys used to raise kinda hell down some of those places.

**SG:** Do what?

**RW:** You used to go in and, you know, have a good time.

**SG:** Oh, you better believe it. That's for sure. Couldn't wait to go in.

**RW:** The women there, or what?

**SG:** Oh, you serious? (Laughter) All you wanted down there. That's why you say you go to port as soon as you come home, "Did you go to port?" (Laughter) No, I mean, you know - you get these young guys on the boat, what you gonna do. All kinds of women down there. There's no problem for the women. Because when you go into these ports, you goin' with no money. You go down there with no money, you know, because you never know

you're gonna hit port. So you go in there, as soon as we go in the port, the port captain comes out, you know, the port captain of the place. So that anybody wants to spend some money, you know, the captain will tell you, "You want to draw some money?" You know - \$50, \$100, you know, they give you a hundred dollar limit, you know. Because when you go on the beach, you know, they got all kinds o' stores in them foreign countries; you can buy lotta stuff.

**RW:** Cheap?

**SG:** Yeah, you could buy anything. You got lotta merchandise, you know.

**RW:** You mean like clothing and things you could bring home?

**SG:** For the women, you know, for your wives and the kids, and all that stuff. You could buy an awful lot of stuff. But the young kids don't wanna know nothin' about buying the stuff; they run to the ...

**RW:** See the ladies?

**SG:** See, uh, the senioritas. (Laughter)

**RW:** When did you get married?

**SG:** It was, let's see, was it - 47, (counting) 48, 49, 50, 51. Fifty-one.

**RW:** Fifty-one. And since you were single then, you were fishin' all that time. So you were down there ...

**SG:** Oh, yeah - havin' a great ball. Yeah, havin' a ball. Today, you gotta be scared to go anyplace. (Laughter)

**RW:** Was there a declining - could you sense a declining of fishing, later on? I mean, you got married in 1951. Was fishing still pretty good in those days?

**SG:** Yeah, really good. Um-hmm. Still good, but the money wasn't there. You know what I mean, as the price kept goin' up and then ... Like I say, well, you bought a car in them days, you bought a car for maybe \$1500. 'Stead of makin' \$5,000, you makin' \$1200. Well, you bought a car, you know.

**RW:** On one trip you could buy a car.

**SG:** Uh-huh. You could buy a car.

**RW:** Yeah, new.

**SG:** Because all these young kids when they're ... That's why everybody wanted to go fishin', especially the young guys. They make one trip and run buy cars. They's young kids, you know. Because the money was there. I mean, it was good money.

**RW:** Sure, I remember that. Well, actually fishing was good until - to me, it seems like when they started makin' a big thing about the porpoise. Let's back up a little here. When, and why did they stop the bait boats, the pole fishin'? Why was it changed to the purse seiners?

**SG:** Well, it was like this. In Peru - lotta fish in Peru, all the fish you want in Peru. You know, lotta times they don't bite; lotta times they bite, make a good trip. It depends, you know, the part of the country you're in. Well, anyway, this guy ... The Southern Pacific, the boat Leonard was on for awhile - was down there. And they had the purse seiners in San Pedro, had it all purse seiners, no bait boats. They were all seinings, big seiners, you know. Two hundred ton was big them days, you know, because - you know, just beginning. So they were in Peru and the fish wasn't bitin'. So this purse seiner from San Pedro, he goes onto the boat, goes onto the Southern Pacific. He says, "Why don't we set around you with the bait? You're throwing bait." He says, "You got the fish around you; we'll set and we'll go half and half." He said, Lou Breedall (sp?), he's the first guy who started here. He says, "Fine." So they were throwin' the bait and this seiner settin' around 'em, puttin' 'em inside with all the fish and everything else. Soon as you make the set, he would back out the boat. Now this guy's got the fishin' in there. So he took his share and give 'em his share. He'd loaded up the Southern Pacific. So they were talkin', because we talked to 'em later on, Lou Breedall. He said, "Wait till you get this boat," he said, "when you get home and make a seiner out of it." "Hey," he says, "I think I'll do that." Soon as he come home he makes a seiner out of it. He took it to the shipyard right now. (He claps his hands to show the speed of the action) He made a seiner out of it.

**RW:** Yeah. That was Bill Magellan, wasn't it?

**SG:** No, that was Lou Breedall. So, got started that one. So I was over here. The second boat was the Southern Queen; that's the one I was on. They came in from a trip. Because Lou Breedall, soon as he converted this boat, he was outside Point Loma out here, just on the local banks. Within ten days he was home with a load of fish. That's the only way to fly! So this boat I was on took it to the shipyard; [again he claps his hands to emphasize the speed of the action] take it off, boy. Take the big box off, throw it out, throw everything off. Put a net on it. Soon as you go out, in ten days you're home with a load of fish. So everybody sees this, start throwin' the bait boxes out. Fine. They're makin' fast trips. So things start moving pretty good; the canneries start wanting fish. From a 200-ton boat they start building the 450-ton boat. So with the 450-ton boat they were home in the same time. So these guys with the little ... As time it goes on, everybody's convertin' these boats now. There's no more bait boats. That's it - they all threw 'em off. That's it. That's all. So these guys buying a 500-ton boat, makin' beautiful trips - I got the 250-ton boat yet. So they put 'em all for sale; Mexico bought 'em all.

**RW:** Before you get to that, I understand that you were doin' : okay catchin' fish with a purse seiner, but then it seemed to me they started comin' up with the dolphin problem. American fishing started disintegrating, starting with that. Is that true?

**SG:** Yeah, because, like I say, they made so many superseiners, them bigger and bigger. And now you talkin' about they had superseiners they carry 1500 ton of fish!

**RW:** Geesh.

**SG:** Now, like you say, they started gettin' this porpoise. I tell you, now - this is the porpoise fish. When we went out fishin', now nobody knew nothin' about porpoise. Like the boat I was on, the Southern Queen, they don't know nothin' about porpoise. The porpoise were loaded with fish. They used to follow the boat. So this man we had from San Pedro, for the mast, 'cause we're goin' porpoise fishin'. So he tell me, "Spano," he says, "I'm gonna take you on the mast with me." He says, "I'm gonna show you how to catch porpoise." How the hell do I know it's a - just look at 'em and put 'em in the net, I guess. So we went to Cape San Lucas. Lotta porpoise at the Cape. Them days, never were touched. So we find the porpoise. I says, me, I says, "How the hell you gonna catch fish in the porpoise?" He says, "I'm gonna show you what we're gonna do." So we start goin' around the

porpoise. We don't see no fish. I said, "Phil." I said, "Where's the fish in these porpoise?" He said, "I show you." Because you see fish jumpin' in 'em all the time, you know. So he tells the skipper, he says, "Put on the sounding machine. Get behind 'em, make a turn, get behind 'em, stop, put on the sounding machine." So he puts on the sounding machine and these porpoise start movin' a little bit. They start moving faster and faster. Now these dwarfers (?) start running because they don't like the sounding machine noise. So we get behind the porpoise - we get behind the porpoise and the fish come up behind the porpoise, following the porpoises. Says, "Now, you see the fish?"

**RW:** What's a sounding machine?

**SG:** You know, see how deep that is.

**RW:** Oh, a depth sounder.

**SG:** A depth sounder. We use'ta call 'em sounding machines. They used to have that dee!-dee!-dee! You know?

**RW:** So they're putting out a sound so that the porpoise could hear 'em?

**SG:** So that the porpoise would move. They were scared of the sounding machine; they were scared of the noise. So the fish come up, after the porpoise, following 'em, you know. The whole school come up behind 'em. He says, "Look at that fish behind 'em." So you turn off the sounding machine. Says, "Keep your eye on them porpoise. They'll have the fish." Oh, Lord, that was all that section over there, fine. Set; get the fish with the porpoise. Now we don't know to get the porpoise out. This is the beginning now. Hell, we got a net full of porpoise. How are we gonna get these nets?

**RW:** In other words, you got the fish in the bottom and a porpoise on the top?

**SG:** The porpoise. And the fish is in the net now. We got the porpoise in there. And the porpoise never was in the net before. So how we gonna get 'em out? We don't know how to get these porpoise out. We're talkin' about when we first started - just start rolling the net. We're talkin' about millions of porpoise. I'm talkin' about millions of 'em. Wherever you looked there's millions of 'em. So we start rollin' this net. They never rotted a net; they never were in the net. Like I said, they start tangling up in the net. Takin' 'em out as a regard. Takin' 'em out, you know. As they're comin' up we try to untangle 'em, you know. Little live ones, I throw 'em back. There's a few dead ones now. Now this was what started it because nobody knew how to get these porpoise out. So finally the San Pedro boats start workin' the porpoise. That's when we were watchin' them. Before we start watchin' these Pedro boats So now we're talkin' about the San Diego boats with all this porpoise we're in. You know, killin' a lotta porpoise; we're killin' a lotta porpoise. I mean, that was an automatic, killin' a lotta porpoise.

**RW:** How'd you feel about that?

**SG:** I mean, you've got - you know, I mean, you know, you hear 'em cry. You know, you've got the little baby ones and all that. You say, "What the hell. Jesus." How in the hell you gonna get 'em out. There's no way to get 'em out. We didn't know how to get 'em out. It was impossible. You didn't wanna jump in a net full o' porpoise like that, you know. So that's where it started this thing. And then they started gettin' bigger boats, bigger nets. Bigger schools of porpoise we're going inside. So what'd everybody like, you know, try to get 'em out? And then they start - environmentalists start gettin' in, "They's killin' too many porpoise." Because they put the observers on the boat and they could see what they were doin'. So that's when they start makin' this backout. They put panels in the nets, smaller mesh and all that, so they wouldn't tangle, and everything else. From then on they started gettin' stricter and stricter because they were still gettin' a lotta porpoise. Like I said, the ocean was full o' porpoise, millions of 'em. Now they started getting stricter and stricter, and now you start puttin' in the panel, and you start gotta do this, you gotta do that, because they were killin' lotta

porpoise. Now they doin' a good job, now. Now you got the Mexicans down there, and you got the Costa Ricans down there, you got the Panamanians down there, they don't care less how many they kill!

**RW:** Yeah, that's the sad thing. Are they [the porpoise] edible? I mean, do these - let's say the Panamanians - do they bring the porpoise in?

**SG:** Naw - they dump 'em. No, they don't use 'em.

**RW:** Are they edible, at all, if they wanted to?

**SG:** Aw, they - the meat is blank (black?) on 'em.

**RW:** I don't know.

**SG:** Now you got the white belly porpoise, you know, where you see the ones with the white belly - the white bellies. I call 'em white bellies; I don't know what they call 'em. The white belly porpoise, the big ones .. And they carry a lot of fish. And they work; they down all the way; they usually inside the gulf. I mean the Gulf of California right here. There's a lot of white bellies in there. They carry a lot of fish. So you're gettin' one of them. There's a lot of people make salami out of 'em. They get the loins out of 'em, salt 'em down, and they hang 'em up. They make salami out of it. So that's a white belly porpoise because the meat is more on the whiter side. But then you get these spinners and the spotters down there, the meat is black, I mean dark, real dark. They don't even want to fool with them.

**RW:** Well, do you think that the decline of purse seiners in San Diego was because of the dolphins, or from foreign competition, Japanese and so forth, using purse seiners? And other countries?

**SG:** Well, I mean, there's a lot of porpoise.

**RW:** I know. But what was the decline? I mean, there was a lot of fishin' out of San Diego. There isn't now. What caused the decline, that you think?

**SG:** The decline? When everything went down?

**RW:** What caused it?

**SG:** What caused everything - when everything, the steel companies closed up. And then when everything start goin' down, when Reagan got in ... When Reagan got in, everything started going down. The steel companies start going down, this start going down, everything start going down. Canneries wouldn't buy no more fish.

**RW:** Well, now, wait a minute. From what I understand, that the canneries didn't want to pay the workers any more money than they had to. And they could get the same work done offshore somewhere. They could go down to Mexico; they could go [to] Tahiti or some of these islands, Taiwan, and they can get the cannery workers to do the work.

**SG:** See now, they were bringin' this - see, what happened. Reagan put the - you know, everything for overseas and all that, like Taiwan. Now they work over there for 30 cents an hour, dollar an hour, fifty, whatever it is. Now they ain't bought a lotta boats. Now they're bringin' in a lotta fish over there. Now they're bringin' in this import fish over here, in water. Like I said, the weight watchers, everything is in water. And the duty was on there at

five per cent. Duty free. So all this fish is comin' in, this fish is comin' in, this fish is comin' in. Well, I could get a case o' tuna from Taiwan for twenty bucks. And you guys gotta pay \$50 over here for it. We gotta put out this kinda money when we could get it for \$20. So that's where it started going down. They start squawkin'. You go, "Gettin' too much money. They're givin' too much money." Then the cannery workers want more money.

**RW:** Because inflation is goin' up.

**SG:** Yeah. And that's what started everything, with this fish comin' in at five per cent. It started floodin' the canneries over here. It started floodin' everything. We're talkin' to one guy who works in the Safeway. He said, "What the hell," he said, you know, he says, "What the hell. We could pay for \$20 a case and I gotta buy from Star Kist or Van Camp for \$35." That's kinda stupid, you know, and they buy thousands of cases - you figure how much money they save. So they wouldn't even buy it from them no more. They was hardly enough on the grounds for them. So that's when they start, you know, everything start goin' rigamarole.

**RW:** When did you quit fishin'?

**SG:** Oh, it was about ten years ago. The doctor put me on retirement.

**RW:** [Nineteen] seventy-eight. Your heart giving you trouble?

**SG:** Yeah. Um-hmm.

**RW:** That's kinda strange because it'd seem like you worked hard. You think it was too much hard work that caused your heart to give out?

**SG:** Aw, I don't think so because I loved that work. I mean, I really loved that work. Just - whatever caused it, I don't know. How many times you see a guy looks like a million bucks, "Man, that guy's gonna live to be a hundred years old." Week later he's in the graveyard. You know, like I say, nobody'll ever think you had heart problems. You and me, every time you see somebody, "Boy, you look good," since I feel good, but the insides don't look too good.

**RW:** So what do you have? You didn't have a heart attack or : anything like that, did you?

**SG:** Oh, they think I had a slight one, you know, but it's ... : They wanna go through with the balloon.

**RW:** Yeah. Angioplasty.

**SG:** Or whatever it is. The doctor - like I was talkin' to the doctor, he says, "Well," he says, you know, "it's up to you," he said. "I'll leave it up to you," he says. "You live twelve years without it." He says, "You do what you want to do." Says, "I'm not pushin' it." He says, "Don't get me wrong," he said, "with these balloons you could die, too."

**RW:** Oh, yeah, absolutely.

**SG:** So I said, "Just leave everything like it is."

**RW:** Well, until somethin' more drastic happens. I had a bypass eight months ago.

**SG:** Did ya?

**RW:** Yeah. A rather interesting experience. So, did you completely retire then?

**SG:** Yeah.

**RW:** You didn't go to work doin' somethin' else?

**SG:** No, no. Because, you know, I get these dizzy spells. That's what's causing everything, you know, these dizzy spells. So when I get a dizzy spell the doctor said [to] just relax, sit down, whatever you're gonna do, you know, until it goes away. And that's what I do. You can feel it on, you know, comin' on. You can feel these dizzy spells comin' on.

**RW:** Take any medication at all?

**SG:** Oh, yeah. I got a whole shebang full of stuff, you know. Takin' it every morning.

**RW:** Well, I assume that since you got a nice home here in Mission Hills that you were smart enough to save your money, invest your money.

**SG:** Oh, you know, like I say, the fishin' business treated you good, you know. It was a good life. You made money at it, you know.

**RW:** Well, you know, some guys thought that fishin' was gonna go on forever, and they spent their money.

**SG:** Oh, I understand that. Right.

**RW:** And other guys like you were raised durin' the Depression years. You probably appreciated a buck, so you saved it.

**SG:** Well, like I says, long as you got the wife, she knows what she's doin' with it, you know.

**RW:** (Laughter) Yeah. Wives can make a big difference.

**SG:** You know, like I say - well, let's face it. You know, you come in from one trip, you're home maybe a week, ten days the longest, then you're back out again.

**RW:** Do you have any children?

**SG:** Two and two.

**RW:** Two boys and two girls. Did they go into fishin' at all?

**SG:** I got two of 'em in the fishin' business. One's in Samoa; he's gonna be here tonight. That one over there, the one in the black, he's runnin' a boat in Samoa.

**RW:** What's his name?

**SG:** Michael. Then I got the other one in ... He goes to Alaska and fish salmon. Guy Anthony. But right now he lives in Bellingham [Washington]. When it's salmon season he goes to Alaska. Right now he's in Bellingham workin' the crab, Dungeness crabs.

**RW:** So you passed on your fishin' experience to these kids?

**SG:** There you go. Yeah.

**RW:** Well, as I say, it's a good livin' - it's a legitimate livin', and healthy, too.

**SG:** It is. It is. It's a good life. It's a good life. I liked it. (Pauses) Yeah, but there's a lotta difference between the pole fishin' and the net fishin'. It's more physical, you know. You felt better when you was going with the poles. Because there's a lotta layin' around. When it's time to work, you work. I mean, don't get me wrong, but there's days you don't do nothin'. With this pole fishin' you always makin' poles, you makin' the squid, you know, you makin' this, you're doing that, or you're goin' for bait. You're always active. But now, on these superseiners, if you don't catch fish that day, you know, your turn to look for glass, you know, look for fish ... Go down the galley, eat. Guys eat breakfast, fine. In the afternoon they go eat. Night, eat. And just lay around. Nothing. I mean nothing physical, you know.

**RW:** And gettin' fat.

**SG:** Yeah. That's right. That's so.

**RW:** Were you on one of the big super purse seiners?

**SG:** The biggest one I was on [was] the Marco Polo, 850 ton.

**RW:** Was that all part of the family deal, somebody you knew?

**SG:** Naw, that belonged to another outfit. See, because, you know, when this thing started gettin' bigger, this fishing business ... Like I said, I was on the 200-ton boat. Now, on the 200-ton boat, when they start building the bigger ones, so you start, "Geez, I'm on a 200-ton boat here." They got the 500-ton boat. You're making 2,000 here; you're making 5,000 over there.

**RW:** You get a percentage of the load, didn't you?

**SG:** Yeah, you get percentage. Share basis. You work a share basis.

**RW:** How did that break down?

**SG:** Well, it just depends on the size of the boat you got. Depends the size, like I say. Some boats take 50%, smaller boats; the bigger boats take 60%, 75%.

**RW:** That's for provisions and fuel?

**SG:** Naw, no, no, no! That's their share. Now, first of all you got the fish is \$1,000 a ton. You carry a thousand ton, you got \$1,000,00 dollars, that's the fish. Your expenses - the fuel, the grub - is \$50,000 bucks. Fifty thousand. That's nothing, \$50,000. I'm just puttin' in an example. Say \$100,000, a hundred thousand. So \$100,000 comes off the top. Now, he's takin' 60% of this that's left. Don't forget, he's investing \$12,000,000. So he takes 60%. That leaves us 40%. Forty per cent of what's left, then we share this amongst us. Say maybe you get \$15,000 out of it. Which, you know, \$15,000 - say you're out 35 days. That's still good money. There's guys that were makin' five and six trips a year like that. They were making \$70,000/\$80,000. They were makin' good money. I mean, it was good money in this fishin' business. Then everything started goin' down, and there was no more money in it.

**RW:** So you got out just about the right time, didn't you?

**SG:** No, I could have run in a little bit more. I wish I would o' got four, five years because the fish start going up when I got out. When the doctor put me out, it was \$550 a ton. Then it went to \$1200 a ton.

**RW:** Well, you know with this health-food kick, seems to me that there would be a tremendous market for offshore fishin' now.

**SG:** Oh, the fish is goin' crazy again. It's going out of style again. Every time you go in there, the fish is goin' crazy. Before there was fish here, there was local fish over here, there was fresh market fish; they used to give it away. Two cents a pound, nickel a pound. Now you can't buy this fish no more. You know that! The fish at the market - my God, you go to the store and the meat is cheaper than the fish. Before, it used to be the opposite way around. But now you can't touch fish. Everybody's goin' crazy for that fish.

**RW:** Back in the thirties [1930s] did you used to trade fish with vegetables, with the Japanese gardeners, or did you used to exchange, use fish [for barter]?

**SG:** No, but a lot of people did. Used to go to the farms, to Chula Vista and bring a couple of fish down there and they give you all the vegetables you want. You know, not very often, but, you know, you would do that. Go down there and bring a couple of fish down there, and give you all the produce you wanted, whatever they had on the fields. Today I don't think you're gonna trade anything. When you was a kid, until now, you know ... You could see the difference in everything, you know.

**RW:** You think there's any chance of fishing comin' back to San Diego?

**SG:** Oh, it's back already. It's back. Since the price of fish went up again, it's all the way at \$1100/\$1200 a ton. It's back. But the people that sold their boats; they couldn't make it. See, when they built these boats ... Say I want to build a boat, I go to the cannery, "I want a boat." Them days, "Fine. How big of a boat you want?" "Oh, let's make a thousand-ton boat." "How much per cent you want?" "Oh, I want 30%/40%." "Fine. How much money you wanna put down?" "Oh, \$50,000." That's nothing. The cannery put up the rest. See what I mean? This is what's caused this, all this up. Now, you put in • I put in, say, \$50,000 - \$10,000,000 boat. I got 30% of this boat. Come in with a load of fish, I get three shares. If crew members are makin' \$15,000, you're makin' \$45,000. That's one trip!

**RW:** Geez! You get your investment back in one trip.

**SG:** Yeah. That's what I'm saying. You get your investment back. And you still got 30% of this boat. Yeah, 30%. I'm home, nice in bed, and the cannery puts out the money.

**RW:** Spano, we're running out of tape. I want to thank you for the Historical Society and the Maritime Museum for this tape. We really appreciate it.

**SG:** Thank you.

***END OF INTERVIEW***

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