



Interview with Guy and Allison Demmert

MOHAI, *Commercial Fisherman Oral History Project*, 2018.63.3

Transcribed for the 2023 4Culture Collections Care Grant

Narrator(s): David (Guy) and Allison Demmert

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Interviewer: Jeffrey Kahrs

Interview with commercial fisherman David (Guy) his daughter Allison Demmert about their careers fishing along the West Coast and in Southeast Alaska. Guy Demmert is a seine captain, and Allison Demmert is a deckhand. Conversations include women skippering boats and fishing with family. The Demmert family is Alaska Native from the Tsimshian and Tlingit tribes and briefly mention this history.

Keywords: fishermen, Alaska Native

Transcriber's Note: Areas of uncertainty have been marked with an asterisk (*).

[Statement begins]

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, great, okay. Today's November 6th, and we're meeting with Guy and Allison Demmert here in the beautiful Appassionato Coffee Shop near the west wall of fisherman's terminal. I am assisted by the lovely Courtney Martin who is taking photographs and providing plenty of information and—also usually helps me, but, alas, my digital camera's not here, and I feel terrible about it. Anyway, let's go ahead and start the interview process. Let's start with you, Guy. Okay, your family was from Craig?

Guy Demmert: Craig-Klawock.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Klawock, yeah, which is, what, twelve miles away?

Guy Demmert: Seven, six.

Jeffrey Kahrs: That's right. I've been on that road.

Guy Demmert: Walking distance if you have a couple hours.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, that's right, yeah and driving is, like, nothing. It's driving and, "Oh, this is Klawock. Okay, I'll turn around and go back to Craig." So, you're from a Native American background. Is that correct?

Guy Demmert: Correct.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Okay, do you remember what clan you're from or any of that kind of stuff?

Guy Demmert: Oh, gosh, um ... I really kind of don't, because we didn't follow that up as we were growing up. I just know that, generally, children follow their mom's lineage versus their dad's.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, okay, so it's matrilineal.

Allison Demmert: Matrilineal.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, so my mom's actually a Tsimshian.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, yeah, Tsimshian—

Guy Demmert: Yeah, and—

Jeffrey Kahrs: From Annette Island?

Guy Demmert: Well, her dad was a founder of Annette Island. Yeah, Metlakatla, and uh, but she grew up in Ketchikan. And, um Yeah, so, I guess I follow her, and if you talk about symbolisms like, eagle, raven, wolf, I'm a wolf on my mom's side because my mom was a wolf. My dad would be a raven.

[Overlapping conversations]

Guy Demmert: But he's not Tsimshian, he's Tlingit.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, he's Tlingit. So could the Tsimshian understand the Tlingits? Was the language similar at all?



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Guy Demmert: No, I don't think so. No, it's different.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I think it's different, too. I seem to remember that, but I didn't know for sure, actually. Let's move on beyond that. Growing up, tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Craig in the wilderness because it was pretty isolated in those days, wasn't it?

Guy Demmert: Yeah—

Jeffrey Kahrs: When you were very young, of course.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, when I was very young, yeah. In the early '60s, from what I remember, would be like—the only way in or out was either by float plane or by boat, usually a fishing boat. Gosh, I don't think the town was bigger than three, four hundred people. The schools went from first grade through eighth grade, and that was it—public schools. And umm—

Jeffrey Kahrs: What was it like growing up in nature? I remember you talking about how much you enjoyed running around. It's great. When I was a kid, I was raised partly in the countryside.

Guy Demmert: Gosh, it was, yeah, I grew up in the woods, and I guess it's all second nature to us to go hiking and climbing and walking on the beach, beachcombing and just playing on the beach and seeing what drifts up on the beach or what kind of sea life there was around. Um, I can remember being young and right around, I guess I was probably like ten, it was in the spring, and it was...herring fishing time. Right around Craig, around Fish Egg Island, there was a big herring spawn every year and—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Is that why you think they call it Fish Egg? (Laughing)

Guy Demmert: Probably, yeah. I remember as kids me and my cousins—our parents would go out and set branches-hemlock branches out in the herring spawn because then the herring eggs would spawn on the branches, and then they'd bring it back in and you'd have a nice bunch of herring eggs on the branches, and you just boil them up and eat them. You don't eat the branches, but you peel them off the branches. (Laughing) I remember heading to school one day, and me and my cousin were going to copy our parents. We went and got some branches and rope, and instead of going to school, we were gonna go set branches. I remember wading. We would wade way out



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and anchor these branches out. I think we just, as youngsters, our parents were fishermen, and their parents were fishermen and in the fishing industry and we just wanted to do—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Did you come up with any eggs on that day?

00:06:00

Guy Demmert: No, we ended up getting in trouble because we didn't go to school. We had to go back home. We were soaking wet. Of course, our school shoes were all wet and stuff because we just went wading with them on. I remember—it's funny because I had these purple dress shoes I'd wear to church or something, right. And I didn't like those, but they were they only shoes I had, and I had to wear those to school. That's funny.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Did you wear those out wading with the branches, the hemlock branches you were setting for the herring?

Guy Demmert: I don't think we probably even knew. We probably just went out and got branches. I don't think, as we kids, we didn't know they were hemlock—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, you didn't know they were hemlock.

Jeffrey Kahrs: But you ruined those shoes?

Guy Demmert: Yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Those purple shoes?

Guy Demmert: No, not those. I had to wear those to school.

Allison Demmert: Those are the ones he had to wear because the other ones—

Guy Demmert: Because the other ones were wet.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh. (Laughing) Yeah, I guess that was punishment enough.



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Guy Demmert: Mm-hm.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Of course, you came from a fishing family with a long tra—with deep roots in it. How old were you when you first started going in the boats?

Guy Demmert: I didn't start going out before I was in grade school with my dad.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was he a seiner, or?

Guy Demmert: No, he was a trawler then. I came from—I have like ... five—I have a brother and four sisters, and since I was five years old and not in school yet, probably to take a little of the load off my mom, staying home with all the kids, I had to go fishing with my dad, so, yeah. I didn't realize at that time I was probably beginning my apprenticeship into fishing. And uh ... I—It was tough as a youngster. You want to be in, at that age, with your friends and stuff, so it was tough for me, I remember, to go out with my dad at that age.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You didn't really like it very much?

Guy Demmert: I didn't like it at first, but I accepted it really fast and I had to be creative to entertain myself out fishing because I actually didn't really, at that age, I didn't work, but I was there kinda to keep my dad company, and he did all the work of the fishing. I would just do whatever kids did, was play, but I always made fishing boats. We did beachcombing, and we'd find these little floats, and I would carve and make boats out of those and the thread. I'd keep those spools of thread my mom would empty, and I'd put those like drums on a drum seiner, had to put them on the back of the boat or a gill netter. I'd make little cabins and motor them around and probably made strings to be like nets, seines, and put them out. Gosh, yeah so When I was 13—I'll fast forward when I was 13—that's when my dad switched. He wanted to go back to seining, which he—

[Phone ringing]

Guy Demmert: That's my insurance company, probably.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, I heard about them.



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Guy Demmert: Let's see, my dad incorporated purse seining again into his life, and so I got to go with him.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Why did he switch back to purse seining?

Guy Demmert: Well, his older brothers were doing very well, financially, purse seining. But you know they owned their own boat, and my dad chartered a boat from Wards Cove Packing. Of course, they would take thirty-three percent right off the top for the boat, so then everything else was divided up. He never really, I don't think, ever—fishing was kind of on a downward trend, too.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was this in the '60s then?

Guy Demmert: It was in the late '60s, and I think, at that time, there was a lot of international fishing going on, like Korea, even Russia, I guess. I remember, they would take—we didn't have the 200-mile limit back then.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, twelve-mile limit.

Guy Demmert: We had the twelve or thirteen, and they would take pictures of the Russian trawlers dragging up our salmon, and they would have these 150-foot draggers would be deck loaded with salmon, but they're in international waters, and there was not that-international treaties yet about continent-based fish being owned by that continent or that country or that continent.

Jeffrey Kahrs: So a hard time then?

Guy Demmert: It was a hard time. I remember growing up we used to fish six days a week, and I remember we caught 800 fish in a day. They counted fish back then. Like "We had 800 fish today," or something. It's crazy. I remember having seasons of less than 20,000 fish. Fast forward it in comparing to today, we get that in a day sometimes, and we would get that, growing up, you know, fishing six days a week for two and half months. They say that a lot of that had to do with interception of the foreign fisherman, China, Japan, Korea. They were all advanced, I guess, in fishing.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: So the Magnuson Act really made a big difference with the 200-mile limit.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, when that was enacted, and it still—yeah, it actually showed a big bump in our production in the mid '80s. Yeah, so my dad—I fished with my dad until '79, and he was tired of the politics of fishing and purse seining. There's politics in everything, but maybe in certain fisheries you'd have less degrees of it. But for purse seining—

Jeffrey Kahrs: (Laughing) I'd like to see it.

Guy Demmert: I was thinking of going trawling, and I was just listening to the politics of trawling today versus back then. It's like, "Wow." You can only go to this area and fish from day thirty to day fifteen of the next month, and then you can't fish in that area, where back then, you could fish anywhere, pretty much, and the season was open quite a bit. So he went back to trawling, and uh I think fishing with him—I ended up being his skiff man, probably, when I was sixteen, and I never realized, when I was out there on the skiff—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Off of Roller Bay, Noyes Island, or something—

Guy Demmert: Yeah, I'd be thinking, "If I was skipper, I think I would set over there or over there, certainly." And I think I'd try in areas where my dad wasn't trying. I didn't realize that I already had a passion for wanting to be in charge at sixteen and had different ideas that I wanted to try.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You had a lot of role models, it sounds like. The Demmert name, I mean—anybody in the southeast who knows Craig, anyway, knows the name.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, my dad had four brothers, so there was five of them, and then siblings from all of them that got into fishing. There was a big number of us fishing for Wards Cove Packing out of Craig for several years.

Jeffrey Kahrs: How did you get the name Demmert anyway?

Guy Demmert: Umm

Jeffrey Kahrs: Does anyone know?



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Guy Demmert: Yeah, Demmert's an actual German name. And...I think in symbolism of ... instead of having an Indian name—like our traditional name was Koukash—that I think somewhere, probably in the early 1900s that Demmert was chosen as a name to—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Maybe they knew somebody or—

Guy Demmert: Well, actually I do have some ... Demmert's a German name. I do have some German in me, and so maybe along the way they chose—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, there was a—

Guy Demmert: Yeah, they chose that versus Koukash.

Jeffrey Kahrs: It sounds possible that if you'd done your DNA testing and you found that, maybe Herr Demmert was in the family at some point.

Allison Demmert: Yeah, there's a Demmert, probably, far back in the family, and then maybe to try to assimilate or something, picked the European name.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Even Europeans end up picking different names, like when they went through Ellis Island, I mean. My mom's family was Somogy, which was a Hungarian name. The guy at Ellis Island said, "Oh, I can't pronounce it. Your name's Sonnet." (Laughing) I think that it happens a lot with names, for one reason or another. Names are pretty changeable things. It's interesting, though. Okay—

Guy Demmert: It's funny, though, Demmert is a German name, but it actually comes from my dad's side where there's no German.

Allison Demmert: Oh, well, there goes that theory.

Guy Demmert: My mom's side is where the German Jew is because her parents were half German Jew, and my dad's mom was half Russian Finnish.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Well, that's an interesting combination of things. You just never know, huh?



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Allison Demmert: Yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Interesting. They probably found their way to Alaska or something, and there you go.

Guy Demmert: Well, someone was telling me that they think maybe the Russian Finnish guy was probably— my gran was born in the late 1800s, and that was the Gold Rush time era. Maybe someone from Finland came from—

Allison Demmert: The Gold Rush.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Through Russia or something.

Guy Demmert: From Finland to Alaska in search of the big gold. Not through Russia—I guess Russia controlled Finland at that time.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Sure. So they just went across Russia or something.

Guy Demmert: Oh, yeah. I guess.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Heading for the Yukon.

Allison Demmert: It's an—

Guy Demmert: How they ended up down here—

Allison Demmert: It's an interesting mix, though, with the German Jew and all of that.

Guy Demmert: German Jew, Russian Finnish, and I guess there's some Scottish.

Allison Demmert: And the Alaska Native.

Guy Demmert: Tsimshian and Tlingit.

Allison Demmert: I had one set of coworker tell me I must have a lot of inner conflict for all the clashing heritage I have.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: I don't think that's necessarily true. Plenty of people just have conflict because they're that kind of person.

00:19:18

Guy Demmert: After we interview, we could work on that.

Allison Demmert: I'm fine.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Just lay down, they'll bring a couch in. (Laughing) Well, you told me a great story, Guy, earlier about how you're a miracle child. Tell the tape—

Guy Demmert: Okay. Well, I was getting out of high school in 1973, and my dad didn't want me to get into fishing because fishing was in a downward spiral still, and he wanted me to do something different. Maybe do tugboats or go off to school and become whatever. I took the advice of my dad and I thought, "Sure, I'll try to get on a tugboat out of high school." And I got a job, actually, with Boyer Towing, which was based out of Ketchikan. In order to get on the tugboat, though, I was going to be a relief deckhand. But in the meantime, they needed help in the land-based warehouse, so they put me to work in the warehouse. Gosh, this was probably two weeks after graduation, if that, from high school that I was working for Boyer Towing, and I had the warehouse all cleaned up. It was like a Monday, and we weren't getting freight in until Wednesday, and my boss told me that the tractor needed new tires on it. We had the tires sitting in the corner in the warehouse. He said, "Bring the tractor in and get the forklift. Start with the front end," or whatever, and "Take the wheels off and change the tires on the wheels." I proceeded to do that, and as far as I know, I got with the first one, putting it back together, adding air. I didn't seat the tire properly, and I don't think my boss knew exactly either how to do it. The wheel blew up in my face, and it injured me. It shattered my forehead, went across my face, and cracked my cheekbones and crushed my nose. I was so badly hurt that I went to the hospital, and the doctors there didn't even want to touch me I was so injured. It just so happens there was an airplane, Alaska Airlines, going southbound coming through, and somebody gave up their seat for me—a couple people gave up their seats for me so that I was able to get on the airplane and transfer down to Harborview.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Were you actually sitting in the seat with ice packs?



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Guy Demmert: No, actually—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Lying down?

Guy Demmert: I was lying down in a stretcher

Jeffrey Kahrs: Of course. Were you conscious?

Guy Demmert: No, I don't think so at that time, but when they were trying to – when I was hit, when the wheel blew up, my boss was trying to hold me down because I was trying to get up, even with my injuries, and I was still conscious, I guess. He was trying to hold me down and call the paramedics at the same time. Pretty traumatic time, I guess. Anyway, they transferred me to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle when some neurosurgeons from the University of Washington came down and operated on me. I think it took six hours to clean up my injury, and in that process, removing all the bone and realizing that the front side of the brain was really badly bruised that they thought it would be best to avoid further complications of blood clotting in the brain that they would remove that front lobe of the brain, so they did. Anyway, my parents were out fishing at that time when I was injured. They got news that I was injured, and they ended up flying to Seattle and getting there to Harborview when I was still in surgery. After surgery, the doctors came out and told my parents how badly I was injured, what they had to do, and that I would probably be in a coma for several months, possibly. I think they said, possibly up to three months, because of the severity of the injury. And then, when I came to, I would probably have to learn how to talk again. I wouldn't probably remember anybody, and I would have to learn how to walk and learn how to use my motor skills again, feeding myself and chewing, all that stuff I guess. So yeah, they were prepared for the worst. I ended up being in a coma for three days, and a week after I came out of a coma, I was progressing so fast that they wanted to discharge me from the hospital. I was in the hospital, which they originally would say for several months, I was in for ten days. And then, uhm, yeah, from that—

Jeffrey Kahrs: How was your memory when you got out?

Guy Demmert: When I came to, actually, my memory was—they were amazed of my memory. I knew my parents. I knew all my sisters and brother, and I knew my cousins that were there to visit me. The doctors, I remember, were asking if I even knew my sisters or family's birthdays, and I

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would just rattle off all their birthdays. Ask me today, I don't remember them. Anyway, my memory was pretty good to a point. I would have memory lapses not of the past, but from that point on, I would have short term memory—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Short term memory loss.

Guy Demmert: Short term memory losses. Confidence—I was a pretty confident person prior to the injury, and then after the head injury, I had like zero confidence to do anything, which was, I guess, normal with head injuries. Part of my rehabbing was – gosh, you know what, I had never had a lot of rehabbing. The U of W did a study tracking my healing process for about a year, and they were just amazed about how quick – it was a monthly thing I would be involved in – and they were just amazed, month by month, how quick I was healing from the injury and progressing. For rehabbing, I really didn't do anything other than get out on my own. As I was probably three months—not even three months after the accident, I was so bored and wanted to do something, I would get out and probably walk ten miles a day just around Ketchikan. And I never realized, too, at that time, all that walking and exercising probably accelerated my healing process, looking back at it now.

Jeffrey Kahrs: One thing I remember you saying is that you went to high school, I think, in Ketchikan from Craig. It was high school, right where you moved?

Guy Demmert: Actually, when I moved from Craig to Ketchikan, I was in the fourth grade.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, okay, so ten then.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, I was—

Allison Demmert: Because he had lots of older siblings that were high school age.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, my older sisters were high school age.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Your dad wanted to make sure they had a good education, right?

Guy Demmert: Correct. My Dad wanted to ... well—my oldest sister they sent down to King's Garden at the time in Shoreline. It was a boarding school in the early '60s. Basically, a private

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boarding school, and it cost money, and he couldn't afford, financially, to send six kids to the boarding school and pay for that education. My dad didn't want to move. He did it for us. He did it for the kids, and we can be thankful for that because I think he suffered, really missing the small town from where he grew up in and he was a part of.

Jeffrey Kahrs: The big city of Ketchikan was not to his taste.

Guy Demmert: No. I remember, though, I went to Main School. And Main School ... the number of kids that were Main School was bigger than the amount of people in the village of Craig.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, tiny.

Guy Demmert: So that's intimidating in itself, and then just adjusting to city life and probably being around more people than I was used to—it was a struggle at first, but he eventually adapted.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You were a pretty confident guy in high school it sounds like, though, by the time you hit high school.

Guy Demmert: I think so, yeah. Well, I had ideas what I wanted to do out of high school. I guess after the tug boating job—the tug boating job was going to be temporary. From high school on, I was applying to the Merchant Marine Academy, and I wanted to go on and wanted to be a sailor and be a skipper of a big ship. I thought one day, at that time, "I'll come back and be a skipper of one of the state ferries." I probably didn't have to go to Merchant Marine Academy to do that, but I thought that was a good place to start, and maybe I would've been a—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Did you go to Merchant Marine Academy?

Guy Demmert: I didn't, no.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You got caught short and you did something else?

Guy Demmert: You know what, my confidence was really fishing, and from out of high school on – of course I got married, and that didn't last very long, and then I ended up going to Central Washington University, and I went there for five years. I just—



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Jeffrey Kahrs: What'd you study?

Guy Demmert: I studied elementary education, and I just thought, "I don't want to be a teacher. I want to be a fisherman." What I looked at is I looked at my uncles who were teachers and fisherman, and they always quit about two weeks early from purse seining because they had to get down to their jobs and prep for—

Jeffrey Kahrs: For the coming year.

Guy Demmert: For the coming school year, and I just thought, "No, I couldn't do that. I don't want to do that." So I just, I never finished. I probably should've at least finished my degree because I was within eighteen credits of graduating. I had done student teaching at Ellensburg.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Did you insist that Allison finish her degree?

Guy Demmert: Absolutely (Laughing). I encouraged them. Actually, when fishing got kinda poor, I was looking into finishing my degree, and it was twenty years after I had been out of college. They had said, "Well, you've been out a long time. We could probably accept some of your general credits, but everything else, you'll have to start over." and I thought, "No, I don't want to do that." So, I told the girls to at least finish, and then they could build on. You have that bachelor's degree, and then you can build onto it whatever you want, do whatever you want. I think, also, higher education is—

[Phone ringing]

Guy Demmert: There they are again. Higher education is a developing of the mind, whether you go in and use your actual education for any specific purpose of your studies or whatever. I saw it as an important thing to whatever you did. That was my idea anyway, as a parent.

Jeffrey Kahrs: In 1979, did you take over your dad's boat? Was that it?

Guy Demmert: Well, like I said, he chartered a boat from Ward's Cove, and when he retired, I was in college. When I found out that he was going to retire, I asked him if it was okay I bought him out because I owned property in Ketchikan I could sell and give him a good chunk for down



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payment of the permit and the net is what I would've bought. And then for a boat, I just felt Carl Asplin will find me a boat. I didn't care what boat I got at that time, I just wanted to fish. My dad said, "Well, you know what, I'll let Carl Asplin know that I'm retiring, and I'm going to recommend that he takes you on as my replacement." At that time, my dad had the newest boat that Ward's Cove had in their fleet.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was that the Marco?

Guy Demmert: It's the Marco Boat, yeah. And his was actually the newest one. And what generally worked in the cannery were they had a bunch of little boats where you worked your way up from the bottom to the nicer boats. What my dad was recommending was I start at the top. Boy, by—I'd like to say a miracle, but I think it's probably the general history of fishing of the Demmert family paved the way for me to have that opportunity to show Carl Asplin, who was superintendent at Wards Cove, Craig, that I had the abilities to be a producer and, by him, making the decision to give me the Chirikof that he wouldn't be disappointed. Anyway, I had that opportunity, and he ended up agreeing to it and kept it quiet because—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was there some jealousy?

Guy Demmert: There was a lot of jealousy, and the reason he wanted to keep it quiet is he actually wanted the transition to make it look like my dad was going to be running it at the beginning and my dad would step off, secretly step off the boat and go do his trolling, and I would just continue running the boat that summer. I was amazed to have that opportunity, so I remember just working my tail off. My first season, I remember, out of twenty-some boats, we ended up being seventh from the top, which I thought was a good start. Carl Asplin was pleased enough to keep giving me the *Chirikov* for the next season. Progressively, I did better and better each year. The grumblings were not only just localized and to the Craig Fleet, but there were other fishermen from even different canneries who had to follow that same type of pattern, start off on those smaller boats and work their way up to the better boats, and I had that opportunity to just start with the better boat. There was grumblings all over the fleet. And umm

Jeffrey Kahrs: Favoritism.

Guy Demmert: Yeah. I just feel so fortunate to have that blessed to have that—



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Opportunity.

Guy Demmert: Opportunity, and—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Tell me, why was the Marco boat so much better? You and I know they're much better boats than anything but the Deltas that Ward Cove had, and the Deltas, maybe, were the best when they came in from—

Guy Demmert: Well, the Marco boats were a lot bigger than— A lot of the boats that Ward Cove had were probably built in the early 1900s from probably the '30s to the '50s, maybe even before the '50s. So they were smaller. A lot of them were wood and just—

Jeffrey Kahrs: How many pounds of fish could they hold?

Guy Demmert: They could probably hold thirty—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Forty?

Guy Demmert: 30,000 or 40,000 pounds, where the *Chirikov*—the Marco boat could hold at 70,000 pounds plus.

Jeffrey Kahrs: And when they glassed in the hull, those smaller boats, they even held less, when they brought refrigeration in because they had to take space to put the fiberglass on the walls and everything, and that took away poundage.

Guy Demmert: Well, even that they would be traveling around fully tanked with water, that brought them down to a point of—

Allison Demmert: Lower capacity.

Guy Demmert: Safety concerns for being over tanked. Gosh, I can remember even—well, you're talking capacity wise—we had as much as nearly 95,000 pounds on the *Chirikov* when it's—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Deck loaded.



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Guy Demmert: Deck loaded, all fish up to the top of the cap rails falling back overboard, fish in the net still when we went to unload. That still, to this day, that was—when was that? That was in '89.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Quite a year.

Guy Demmert: That's still my—well, biggest—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Great price, too?

Guy Demmert: We were given thirty-five cents, I think, at that time.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, that was good. That was great. Everybody made at least twenty grand, and a lot of guys made forty. That was a good year. I remember that.

Guy Demmert: I remember my crew made thirty-five that year—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Pretty good, pretty good.

Guy Demmert: For that.

Jeffrey Kahrs: So you got the boat, now, do you have any good first year stories when you were just learning the ropes? Anything about getting hooked up on the bottom, getting your lead line hooked on the bottom or—

Guy Demmert: Oh, yeah, I remember we were fishing—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Webbing the wheel.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, I got the web in the wheel.

Allison Demmert: Hitting someone.

Guy Demmert: I won't go into that, yet.

[Laughing]



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh yeah, what happens is they get web in the wheel because your net is often around your prop. What happens is, especially young guys that leave it in gear accidentally, it would be turning, and then it would suck up the web, and then you'd be dead in the water. Those guys kept scuba gear, at some point, but if you didn't have scuba gear, you had to call out to someone—

Guy Demmert: Who had it.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Who had scuba gear, and then if you were drifting somewhere, you had to try to get your anchor out to hold the boat so you wouldn't go into the shore. It was really not fun. It was really unfun.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, I think I was so hyped up and wanted to get down on deck and work with the crew in retrieving the net. When we closed our set at, I would put the—thinking I would put the boat in neutral, and it was a mechanical shifter, so when I'd put in neutral, I would bring it back just a hair too much, and then I'd run down deck and start working. And we're all hauling gear, half pursing, right? Hauling gear, we got a third of it in, and then all of a sudden, something stuck underneath. Well, when it's just a hair in gear, the propeller's turning like this, and when the web went slack, it would catch on one of the flukes on the prop, and it would just continue to wind and wrap that web up until it was wound up enough that it would just stop, and then it's all over with. I've done that a few times.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I think everybody has.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, snagging up. I remember East Addington, there's one hook off that—and this is what I didn't understand on what happens when you snag up. So we make our set, and we're going to start hauling gear. Well, we'd close up, and we'd start pursing, and all the purse line's really tight, but everything's coming in okay, but every once in a while, there's a bonk. "Well, that's a different sound. What is that sound?" We're hauling, and then it'd go bonk. We'd just keep hauling, and then every once in a while, systematic, there'd be bonk. "Well, what the heck is that?" Oh, after a while we realized, "Oh, we're snagged up, and we're breaking bridles off the lead line." Anyway, I think we even let the end go, the way to get it, retrieve it, so you let the end go, and you back haul it. We never tied the purse line on to the last string, and when we let the purse line go,



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we'd lose—I think we lost twenty rings one time. I think we were full pursing at that time. There was probably sixty rings that that time.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Could you explain a little bit about the difference between full pursing and half pursing? Which is important to the fisherman because half pursing really changed the way guys were fishing in the Southeast.

Guy Demmert: Well, when you're through towing on a set and you close up, bring the ends together, and you start pursing, when you full purse, you purse from both ends of the net, so you have two ends. You don't haul any of the web aboard, so you purse up, bring in the rings altogether.

Allison Demmert: Before you bring any of the—

Guy Demmert: Before you bring any gear aboard.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, bring the rings up and they would come up—

Guy Demmert: Yeah, and then you'd have to bring the rings aboard or put them in—we had that pin. I don't know if you remember that pin, that ring bar that—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, ring bar, yeah.

Guy Demmert: That stuck up and then all the rings would thread onto that ring bar, and then you start hauling gear. In order to do that—

Jeffrey Kahrs: How long would it usually take for—?

Guy Demmert: It would take about an hour to full purse each time, make a set. Where half pursing is Half pursing only meant that you were only pursing from one side of the net, and it usually was the skiff side. There would be a ring attached about two thirds of the way to the other end of a net so that when you're pursing, you're pulling all the rings up just from one side and, at the same time, you're hauling a third of the net back aboard. It would speed up the set by fifteen to twenty minutes.

Jeffrey Kahrs: It's quite a substantial amount of time.



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Guy Demmert: Yeah, and one thing I noticed is in full pursing, the pursing process always pulled you back into the net where I thought the net would collapse, and I always thought that, actually, it would work against us fishing because when your net collapses, the fish would want to get out somehow, and they would probably get out where you're pursing at, to where you're half pursing, I noticed that the net kept a nice round shape, which as you purse and hauled, you had a bigger area where the fish could mill around in and not feel panicked to want to escape yet. By that time, they realized that, maybe they're caught. We got the rings up and the end of the net up where there are no rings and—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Were there any advantages to full pursing?

00:50:06

Guy Demmert: Some guys thought that your net would fish deeper and that you would catch more sockeyes, which I disagree. I think it more had to do with— and any time you fish— it more depends on where you put the net versus the technique.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I haven't talked to anybody about that, but I thought we'd just talk about it a little bit. I'll hit you up for some more stories then, but I want to get Allison in here. She's been patiently waiting. So Allison, your dad is a born fisherman. When was the first time you went out on the boat with him? How old were you?

Allison Demmert: I was an infant. I don't remember. When I was younger— and I have one younger sister who's three and half years younger than me— so when we were small, we would always go and spend the summer up in Craig, and my dad would be out fishing, and we would rent an apartment or stay with family or something in Craig, and so we were up there for the whole summer. We'd go out occasionally.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, you'd go out for a week sometimes.

Jeffrey Kahrs: How old were you when you were doing that, just a little kid?



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Allison Demmert: I was in a highchair on the boat. (Laughing) I don't remember, but some of my earliest memories are being on the boat when I was three years old and being in the galley and watching videos to keep myself entertained.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, sure.

Allison Demmert: Or just playing in the bunk when the weather was rough.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You never got seasick?

Allison Demmert: I did once, and it was a really particularly

Guy Demmert: It was on the way to Alaska, right?

Allison Demmert: Maybe.

Guy Demmert: I think it was.

Allison Demmert: It was a particularly rough afternoon, and I was—

Guy Demmert: I think it was Queen Charlotte's— going across Queen Charlotte's.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Everything's standing up. In the Charlotte's there was one area that used to always be rough.

Guy Demmert: Cape Caution to Cascade Islands.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, every time you go through, it was always— it just looks like a bomb.

Allison Demmert: I think I was three or four then, and I was in the galley and threw up on the galley table, and the rest of the crew—

Guy Demmert: Everybody was eating breakfast.

Allison Demmert: They all went down to their bunks and left me.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: And threw up down there, huh?

Allison Demmert: That's the only time I ever got sick, though.

Jeffrey Kahrs: That's pretty good, though. Better than me.

Allison Demmert: Yeah, I never really—

Jeffrey Kahrs: I used to get sick as a dog sometimes.

Allison Demmert: I think as I get older, though— I've never really gotten sick, but I feel—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Queasy?

Allison Demmert: More that my equilibrium isn't what it used to be when I was younger.

Jeffrey Kahrs: That's a nice way to put it.

Guy Demmert: Well, I think where Allison spent a lot of time as a youngster on the boat was when we herring tendered out of Sitka. She would be on the boat, and she was probably three years old. We lived on the boat for probably two months.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Now, were you living in Craig at that time? Or were you living in Seattle?

Guy Demmert: We were living in Edmonds.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Edmonds?

Guy Demmert: Yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, I lived there.

Guy Demmert: When we herring tendered, the whole family went up, and we hired one person as crew, and her mom would cook, and me and crew guy would work the deck. Allison was entertaining herself, probably watching what was going on.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Did you watch cassettes there in the galley?

Allison Demmert: VHS tapes.

Jeffrey Kahrs: VHS tapes, yup.

Allison Demmert: I'm not even sure what. Song and dance?

Guy Demmert: I don't know if you remember the "We Sing" series.

Allison Demmert: Oh, yeah.

Guy Demmert: She had the "We Sing", and she would dance around the galley table, and sometimes she would miss—she would be so dancing and she would step off the bench and fall down and hurt herself and bounce right back up and continue dancing and singing to the "We Sing".

Jeffrey Kahrs: Obviously, family—you were dancing around the galley for many years.

Allison Demmert: A lot of that time, during the summer when my dad was out fishing and we just lived in town, a lot of my early memories are at the cannery in Craig and playing on the beach there. My grandparents were the caretakers of the cannery so they lived above the cafeteria, and we stayed there often. So I remember being a little kid and running around with my life vest and running up and down the beaches.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Do they still have those wonderful boardwalks in Craig? All the cannery used to be connected on boardwalks.

Allison Demmert: Some of it is—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Falling apart?

Allison Demmert: Well, a lot of it has very much fallen apart, but they've maintained one boardwalk that goes from the little downtown area to the cannery. Aside from that, a lot of the cannery has really fallen apart.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah I'm sure. Things fall apart quickly in Alaska if you don't keep them up. The weather will just—

Allison Demmert: Yeah. I like to walk around there every year and reminisce. But yeah, every year, it gets a little more weathered and the boards are rotting away and everything's overgrown. Yeah, it's kind of sad to see it that way, but it was a pretty magical place to be as a kid.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, I'm sure. How old were you when you actually started to become an adult and start working on the boat?

Allison Demmert: During my high school years, I came up a couple of time for a couple weeks just to kinda cook a few meals—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Were you on the pile? Were you working?

Allison Demmert: Nope, I cooked, and I was very, very bored. I didn't really have much of an interest in it then.

Jeffrey Kahrs: You were in Edmunds, right?

Allison Demmert: Yeah, so we grew up in Edmunds. That's where I went to school and everything. I think because fishing and going to Alaska was very normal for me and it wasn't anything that, when I was a teenager, was like, "Oh, it's so cool that I go hang out on a fishing boat." For me it was very boring and my friends weren't around, and I could only watch the same movies so many times, and I didn't really have much of an interest in working on deck at that point, until I was in college. I went between my freshman and sophomore year of college, I went back for the first time in a couple of years and spent the whole month of August cooking, and I had a really great time. It was really challenging and adventuresome, and I really enjoyed it in a way that I hadn't before, maybe saw some of the uniqueness in it that I hadn't seen before.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Now, when you were cooking, were you also operating the winches?

Allison Demmert: That didn't come till a couple years later. I cooked for two summers.



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Guy Demmert: I could comment on that. Her mom said if she ever hears that she's out on deck and working on deck and all the dangerous winches and gear flying around, that she's back home on the next plane. I honored that and never let her go on deck, although, we could've talked about it and conspiracized.

Allison Demmert: Well, by that point, I was an adult, too.

Guy Demmert: No, this was when you were in high school, though.

Allison Demmert: Yeah, right, okay.

Guy Demmert: When she was sixteen and I thought, "Gee, I was on deck when I was thirteen." She could've done that, too.

Allison Demmert: Well, looking back, I think it would've been a really neat experience to do that when I was in high school, but—

Jeffrey Kahrs: You weren't interested.

Allison Demmert: I wasn't that interested at the time.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, and you were going to university, right?

Allison Demmert: Yup.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Where'd you go to school?

Allison Demmert: I went to Seattle Pacific University just across the—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, just over here.

Allison Demmert: The bridge there.

Jeffrey Kahrs: A good school and the best deal. I was thinking it was for the money, it's one of the best deals, nationally, yeah.



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Allison Demmert: It was a good education. I finished my degree.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Communications, right?

Allison Demmert: Sociology was my major and communications was my minor.

Jeffrey Kahrs: So you're a hard working student then?

Allison Demmert: I was involved in a lot of things, always, and I always had a really busy school year, and then to go to Alaska, even though for working long hours it was this wonderful retreat from my normal busy life and just to go out and be on the water for two and a half months.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yes, sir.

Guy Demmert: Can I comment on that?

Jeffrey Kahrs: You may indeed.

Guy Demmert: She came to me and said, "Dad, I want to go fishing this summer." And I said, "Oh, okay," because I knew she never had interest, but I think a lot of it was generated because she never had the opportunity to work on deck so I never thought that it was going to go beyond that, and it never even crossed my mind that she would want to go fishing. When she asked, I said, "Well, okay. I guess I could hire you." I don't want to expose my chauvinistic ways, but I said, "I can hire another crewman."

Jeffrey Kahrs: What year was this?

Guy Demmert: This would've been in 2006, around there.

Jeffrey Kahrs: But still, women— when I was around in the '80s, there were some women who were working, but inevitably, not always, but ninety percent of the time, they were cooks or more.

Guy Demmert: And there was probably a bigger crew on the boat or something

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, we were just moving from six to five in those days.



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Guy Demmert: I think I was five, and I thought, “I could hire another if I need to when it gets busy”, but—

Allison Demmert: Well, you running shorthanded when I—so he was just going with two deckhands.

Guy Demmert: Oh, from the early 2000s when the price was a nickel a pound, actually, eliminated a crew man so I could pay the crew a bigger share of the earnings, so I’d only hire three guys and me. It would make four of us on the boat. And then with half pursing—

Allison Demmert: I came up for two summers. I came up just for the month of August.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, for the busy time.

Guy Demmert: For the busy time.

Allison Demmert: And then I came to you and said that I wanted to go the whole summer and work on deck, and that was the year I graduated. That was in 2007.

Guy Demmert: When they said “I want to go fishing. Just treat me like any other crew guy that you would hire and get me any job.” And I thought, “Uh, okay.”

Allison Demmert: Well, because then I have to do deal with the other guys. I don’t want them to see me getting special treatment or whatever, and they gave me a really hard time as it was because they perceived any kind of special treatment, and then would take—they weren’t going to go to him with it. They would take it out on me. (Laughs) That was probably the biggest challenge the first few years was figuring out how to work with the crew and working hard to prove myself.

Guy Demmert: Were you working on the pile too, the controls?

Allison Demmert: I started doing hydraulics. I had always wanted to be on the pile, too, but—

Guy Demmert: My dad would always say when he was—up at—even just out of fishing, I had

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cousins who took their wives fishing, and they actually got hurt on the pile. My dad would say, “Oh, women shouldn’t be back there. They shouldn’t be back there. So and so should be ashamed of themselves for letting the women back there to do a man’s job.”

Jeffrey Kahrs: It’s considered bad luck, too. I remember in those days—in the early days—

Allison Demmert: But lots of women are on the pile. My sister works on the pile, and I like to specify that I can—I’m capable of piling gear. It’s not because I’m weak that I’m running the controls. Because I got a lot of flak for that.

Guy Demmert: I just thought when she wanted to go fishing more, and I knew she had been bored in the past, I said, “Okay, I’m giving you control of the jet. Call the controls.”

Allison Demmert: Well, yeah, what you gave me was not just the ability to operate the controls but to run the deck. So he doesn’t necessarily have to be on deck.

Jeffrey Kahrs: So you were unplugging the purse line, bringing around the winch and all that stuff?

Allison Demmert: Yeah, I can do everything on deck.

Guy Demmert: Well, even today when we complete a set, I have another daughter —younger— both my daughters are on the winch when we start hauling. One’s pulling the big boat side of the end up to the power block and one’s pulling the skiff side prepurse line—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Prepurse line, right. You’ve got it on and you’re getting ready to pull the Canadian. Yeah.

Guy Demmert: So I guess I made sure when they were operating the winch that they would learn how to operate the winch and the rope on the winch, and if the rope ever tangled up on the winch to not try to pull it out because I think the biggest mistake people make is when the winch—a rope gets tangled on the winch head, it just keeps winding up, and people try to pull it out—And they actually get sucked in. Maybe the rope and the winch grab the rain gear or a glove, and you can’t stop it. So I tell them, if anything just gets tangled up, yell stop or let go of the rope and stop, and



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we can address the situation then. They make sure anytime—I still think, even today, when I close up, I think, “Both my daughters are on the winch. I’ll say a short prayer just for safety.” I just want to get down there and be down there with them—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Protective dad.

Guy Demmert: Yeah. I worry about them, although, they’re really great on the winch.

Allison Demmert: We take lots of safety measures, too.

Guy Demmert: I think I taught them well on the winch and they understand the dangers of the winch, and they realize that that can injure you, lose fingers, crush, break arms—

Allison Demmert: I think we have a healthy respect for it.

Guy Demmert: Or get wrapped around the winch. So they’re really good at that.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Do you have any stories, Allison? Moments when you were scared working the winch?

Allison Demmert: I think some of my scarier experiences on deck were lines breaking. We had—we were towing the net. We had just put it out, and we had finished cleaning the deck. We were either taking our rain gear off to sit down for a few minutes and take a break, or we were putting our rain gear back on to start hauling gear. But we were standing out on deck, and our tow line snapped past the release, and so all the tension in that line sent the release shooting—

Jeffrey Kahrs: The Canadian, which is—

Allison Demmert: We, for whatever reason, weren’t using the Canadian release then. We had a bear trap on it.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, you had the bear trap on it?

Allison Demmert: Mm-hm.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Well, describe a bear trap.

Allison Demmert: There's a flat, round piece of metal, aluminum—

Guy Demmert: Stainless

Allison Demmert: Stainless? Yeah, and then on top of it is a release. It's usually used as a skiff release, but I think our Canadian had broken, or it wasn't working. We had replaced it with this bear trap. It's maybe nine, ten inches across. It's a pretty big piece of metal, would carry lots of force, and it came shooting towards where we were standing on deck, and it hit one of our guys in the back of his shoulder, just below his neck. That was a very sobering moment because if it had hit him in the head, who knows what would've happened.

Jeffrey Kahrs: It weighs like a pound or a pound and a half?

Allison Demmert: A couple of pounds.

Jeffrey Kahrs: A couple of pounds?

Allison Demmert: Yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Okay.

Allison Demmert: I think everyone was just in shock. But he was fine, and we hauled the gear aboard. Did we make another set? I think we quit early that day, a little bit early because we were just kind of—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Freaked out?

Allison Demmert: It was just a sobering moment. It's something we're always very aware of, just to be careful around the tow line. Of course, now, almost everything is—line is spectra, and it doesn't have the same elasticity that nylon lines had, so there isn't as much pull. So we did have a tow line break a couple seasons ago, and it was spectra. And because there's no elasticity in it, it just fell to the ground. It didn't shoot back like the other line had. Even things like that, there's always improvements—



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Guy Demmert: When something like that happens—

Allison Demmert: To fishing equipment being made. I think people become good fisherman just by living through all those experiences, and when things go wrong, you figure out what to do, and then when something goes wrong again, you know what to do because you're already had to do it. There have been many moments of scrambling around, not knowing what to do when something breaks down or we lose the end of the net or whatever. But I think now— this is my eleventh year that I just finished. There are still things that happen that I don't know what to do, but, in general, I think I've gained a lot of knowledge in that time, knowing how to react to things, and how to do things safely, too.

Jeffrey Kahrs: So it's your eleventh year, huh?

Allison Demmert: Mm-hm.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Wow, you're pretty experienced now.

Allison Demmert: Yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I watched you sewing. You're really good. They say draggers are the best sewers, but for saying that—I didn't know what it was like these days, but when I was around, you'd be working, and you'd be three years on and you still couldn't sew worth a damn.

Allison Demmert: Well, we've always done a lot of work on the net, um, or done a lot of the work ourselves. And my dad showed me earlier on, and we have just spent a lot of time over the years mending holes and rehangings things, and now it's just him and I for these few weeks working on it, which we thought was pretty good because we're both perfectionists and we both know what we're doing. The net's in pretty good shape.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Your crews pretty lucky because—

Allison Demmert: They don't have to work on it.

Jeffrey Kahrs: They don't have to work on the gear. They've just got to paint the boat, pretty much. And your boat, it doesn't take much paint because you've got aluminum house on it.



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Guy Demmert: Well, I'll probably be painting it in March this year, so nobody will be around, except Allison. I don't know if she'll be up to painting by then. And I hire guys to help me, actually. The only reason I do that is because all my crew, I realize, I think fishing's a temporary job for crew, and they go off and either go into school or they have a different job to go to, and so I give them that opportunity to go do what they want to do. A boat and the whole business operation is mine, so I'll just deal with it, and that's my job all winter to just get everything prepared for the next season. Sometimes I'll hire help, and Allison wanted to learn more into fishing, and so I told her I'll hire her this year to help, and we'll figure out how to put this net together.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Are you thinking, Allison, of becoming a skipper? I mean Hollis has been a skipper—Hollis Jennings I think was the first woman skip captain—

Allison Demmert: Yeah, in southeast Alaska.

Jeffrey Kahrs: She's been at it four years. I guess she's pretty good. She doesn't have a real fancy boat, but she's done well, hasn't she?

Allison Demmert: Yeah, as far as I know she has. And then this last summer, we added another female skipper to the mix, Amy, too, and so that was exciting.

Jeffrey Kahrs: If you're excited, is this something that you're thinking about doing?

Allison Demmert: I used to say no way, never. I could see it. I think it's—it's not a matter of could I do it. I think I could. I think the thing that's most intimidating about it is my lack of mechanical knowledge, but those are things I want to learn, too. I think it's been a slow process of coming to realize that this is work that I really enjoy and I think, um, I mean I always knew I enjoyed it, but I think it's been a process to realize that I might not enjoy anything else as much as I enjoy fishing because I've always viewed it as a temporary thing, and I went to college, and I got a degree, and so I kinda thought, "Well, I should follow that path." I always thought I'd do something different, but fishing is something I really love, and I love that it's been a part of my family for a long time. I really enjoyed the adventure in it and the challenge in it. I think that really fits my personality, so we'll see.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: We'll see. You look at—Hollis is a marine electrician, so, certainly, if she can do it, I'm sure you can, too.

Allison Demmert: Well, that's the thing about all skippers is that they know what they know because they've just had to figure out. I guess that's what you buy into when you buy a boat is it's going to come with a whole host of issues, and you're going to have to be the one to figure it out.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Are there still a lot of Demmerts fishing out of Craig and Noyes Island?

Guy Demmert: Yeah.

Allison Demmert: Yeah.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, I've got a brother who lives in Craig, or Klawock, and his son has skippered a boat for two years. He's how old, twenty-seven?

Allison Demmert: Yup.

Guy Demmert: He's twenty-seven so he started skippering when he was twenty-five. It's funny because I remember when he was fourteen going up to the local grocery store in the summertime getting groceries, and there's my nephew bagging groceries. I said, "Hey, Mike, you're working at the grocery store." And he goes, "Yeah, my dad lost his market, so I don't have anyone to go fishing with." I thought, "Oh, come on. You want to go fishing next year? Come with us." So he was the next—he says, "Really?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Okay." So he really, at fifteen, was—he had to get special permission to go fishing. He wasn't supposed to run winches, anything in the engine room, and blah, blah, blah, but I thought, "Here's a youngster, fifteen, I've got to teach him how to run the gen set, the refrigeration, pump out the boat, run all the hydraulics."

Allison Demmert: And you did.

Guy Demmert: And I did.

Allison Demmert: He knew it all.



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Guy Demmert: And I probably would've got in trouble from the state. Look out after child labor laws, right?

Jeffrey Kahrs: Could be.

Guy Demmert: But today, he's got all this experience and mechanical abilities, which I failed to—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Instill.

Guy Demmert: Instill in my daughters, but Allison, she wants to learn mechanics. I said, "After we're done with the net, we're going to take the PTO off the engine. We're going to take the hydraulic pump off. We're going to replumb the condenser pump; change a winch on the deck." I said, "You can help me with all those, and you can be the one doing it. I'll be there telling you what to do." I'll give her some hands-on training.

01:18:36

Jeffrey Kahrs: You both fish together, quite a long time now. And as you know, families are not a perfect situation always. There are sometimes conflicts between members of families where people start yelling at each other or—

Allison Demmert: That never happens.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Or this or that or they get mad at each other. This never happens with you two?

Guy Demmert: I think we're done now. (Laughing)

Allison Demmert: I was talking to someone, and they were like, "Wow, if I ever talked to my skipper the way you talk to yours, I'd be fired."

Guy Demmert: I remember when both the girls were fishing with me, and we were in a set or I'm looking for where I'm going to make my next set, and one daughter's coming up and saying, "Dad, Allison's doing this, that, and blah, blah, blah." And Allison would come up, "Dad, Jacqueline's been a blah, blah," and I'm going, "Oh, my goodness, if you guys are going to fish with me, you



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guys got to realize that we're here to work as a team, and you guys have differences between yourselves. You guys are going to have to work that out on your own time. You guys get down there and go to work."

Jeffrey Kahrs: Do you remember that, Allison?

Allison Demmert: Yeah, I think the most challenging part of fishing is the people you work with, and then when you work with family, that's a whole different—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Has its own challenges—

Allison Demmert: Level, has its own challenges. But there's something that's really great about that, too. We all know each other well and trust each other, and that's really important in fishing, too. Yeah, it gets to be particularly challenging on an interpersonal level at times, but it's nice to work on a family boat, too.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Sure. Tell me, aside from fishing, after you go your degree, did you ever work in your area?

Allison Demmert: Yeah. Well, because of fishing income for a recent college grad who didn't really have a lot of expenses, I did a lot of volunteering, was working pretty much full time between some different volunteer jobs, and I was really interested in working with homeless people and did some volunteering here with homeless youth here in Seattle, and then I lived in Minneapolis for four years, and I did some homelessness alleviation work there and some advocacy for people with public housing and things like that, coached a hockey team, which also led a tutoring program and helped to start a coffee shop for youth employment. We would train teens in customer service and how to make coffee and all that, so it was like a hands-on vocational training or job skills building for teens. All of that was sociology related and, for a while, I thought maybe I'd go into social work or something like that. That's challenging work. Some people think fishing is challenging. I think social services is extremely challenging work, and there are things that are very rewarding when you help families gain tangible services and meet tangible needs, and I admire the people that do that. I think I realized I like to work with my hands, and I like to be outside. For me, that's more fun. (Laughing) And what's great about a sociology and a communications degree is that it's applicable anywhere. But those are the jobs that have most related to that degree. Yeah, I've done

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lots of different part-time jobs in the winter. Last winter, I was working at a brewery bottling and kegging beer, which was fun in a different way.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Okay, just curious. Well, guys, you have anything else to add to it? Guy, you have any great, final last pronouncement?

Guy Demmert: I just remember one of the girls—when the family came fishing with me for a week. We left Craig, and we were going fishing over towards Ketchikan, and we were fishing McClain’s Arm, and there was hardly any boats there and chums were running by and almost filled the fish hold. You could see the fish up top. We had probably 50,000 pounds aboard, and the girls were— it was a nice calm day, and the girls were just playing. They were pretty young. I don’t remember how old you guys were, but I remember telling them, “Hey, girls, look at how much fish we caught.” They just looked and it was kind of like, “Eh.” Didn’t mean anything.

Jeffrey Kahrs: And 50,000 pounds of chums, that’s a pretty good day. What year was it? Do you remember?

Allison Demmert: Early ‘90s?

Guy Demmert: Huh?

Allison Demmert: Early ‘90s, maybe?

Guy Demmert: Probably mid ‘90s, yeah. Early—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was it September? Were you working late?

Guy Demmert: No, this was July, actually.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Wow. Sounds like a hatchery.

Guy Demmert: It was before the coast . There was a hatchery opened along Kendrick Bay that they would give us four days a week for June and part of July. And umm No, it’s been a joy having my daughters on the boat. Allison, I remember because I didn’t want her to get bored, I gave her control of the deck and the controls. She would roll the salmon aboard, sets of—15,000-



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pound sets, and to coach her through at the beginning—how to roll the fish aboard. Now, it's all second nature to her, pretty much.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I always hated socks anyway.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, those were—

Guy Demmert: Yeah, we've made huge sets with socks, and it would take two hours to get the fish aboard, (laughs) and you would do them at, a thousand pounds at a time or whatever.

Jeffrey Kahrs: I know. It just drove me crazy.

01:26:06

Guy Demmert: Boy, to have a crew and family, like she said, to trust each other—last summer, I think, was one of the roughest summers we've ever fished it. I think we fished to the max, even just for partial days, to where it got too rough for me to warrant staying out there fishing because I just felt like the safety – if any of my daughters got hurt, my nephew or his friend got hurt, I just All that versus money wasn't worth it.

Jeffrey Kahrs: It was really rough last year, huh?

Guy Demmert: Yeah, we just learned when to say, "Okay, enough's enough, and we're gonna go in," and we would give up on some really good fishing to go in and fish in a different area where it's calmer and catch about twenty percent of the amount of fish. But we do that for safety, and I talk to the crew to try to feel their comfort level out working because I don't want anyone to be out there working if they're really scared and don't want to be out there working. My youngest daughter actually told me there were a couple days where she felt very uncomfortable out there fishing in, probably, twelve-foot seas, or bigger. Like I said, I'm not sure if it's the El Nino that—it just seemed like—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Was it westerly?

Guy Demmert: Westerly always.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, those are horrible.

Allison Demmert: Every day, yes.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, every day.

Guy Demmert: Mm-hmm.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Because you get a metal boat banging on the stern on the waves.

Allison Demmert: It was a rough one.

Guy Demmert: Yeah, it was dangerous, but we weathered the storm.

Allison Demmert: Well, we've all been fishing long enough that everyone knows what to do. Yeah, there's less liability and we—

Jeffrey Kahrs: That's a good boat, too. Those Marco boats are still all around. Nobody's sunk one yet.

Guy Demmert: It's only one gone. It's in—you know where Milbank Sound is?

Jeffrey Kahrs: Sure.

Guy Demmert: There's one there on Susan Rocks.

Jeffrey Kahrs: It's on the run up or run down?

Guy Demmert: Run down on a halibut fishery trip, coming south instead of turning to go towards Ivory Island, they fell asleep and went right into the rocks with a load of halibut.

Jeffrey Kahrs: That hurts.

Guy Demmert: Yup, they just abandoned the boat there. I guess it was in the middle of the night.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: They said when they got off, they could hear the boat just being ripped apart, like the mast falling, just the crushing of the waves onto the boat. Other than that, they're really good sea boats. If you don't—

Allison Demmert: They are.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Don't fall asleep.

Jeffrey Kahrs: They are. They're really—

Guy Demmert: They are, yeah.

Jeffrey Kahrs: They're really good sea boats. Very stable, you feel really good on them.

Allison Demmert: Well, and last year, you put rolling chocks on the *Chirikov*, and that made a huge difference.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Oh, you guys didn't have rolling—

Guy Demmert: Rolling chocks, yeah.

Allison Demmert: Right on the hull of the boat, right where it goes down and then it goes under, right at that seam there. It's like these little fins that—

Jeffrey Kahrs: Yeah, they're running along the thing, yeah.

Allison Demmert: Just stabilize it. So rather than the boat rolling so much, it helps stabilize it, and it has that feeling of being fully loaded, like a hatch full of fish. That's how it just rides with the rolling chocks. Like he was saying, we'd be out in this weather fishing, and the boat was handling it, and we're all handling it, but everyone else is going in, and we're thinking, "Okay, well, maybe we should go in, too."

Guy Demmert: One thing I noticed, because I would work with them on deck, is—I do some of the hookups for rolling fish aboard. One of the things I noticed was when the waves would hit broadside, they would hit those rolling chocks. The rolling chocks, technically, are ninety degrees



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to the bottom this way, so they're right at the chine. So they're sitting like this, and the wave would hit and splash up, and I'm leaning over to grab a rope or something, that wave would hit that (makes crashing sound).

Allison Demmert: Because we're not rolling. We're just like a stick in the mud.

Guy Demmert: It would take the roll out of the boat and redirect the wave, usually, up or down, I suppose.

Jeffrey Kahrs: And in your face.

Guy Demmert: And in my face. And I'm like, "Well, I'm going to have to learn to look out for waves." Yeah, its—I tell you, it's been a joy, and my daughters have been the best crew I could ever have, I think. Their knowledge of how everything works and the pride that they have for working—probably being a family member, maybe, that they just have the pride of making sure, whether they're on wheel watch or doing their job on deck, that they do it to—and work to the best of their abilities. Very hard workers.

Allison Demmert: One thing I wanted to add, too, and to tie into what he was talking about earlier about growing up in a fishing family, because we grew up down here in Edmunds, and we'd go spend the season in Alaska, but I didn't go to school there, I wasn't there year-round and spent a lot of my adolescence down here. We didn't go up there as often. When I started fishing with my dad, one of the most special parts of that was getting to participate in this thing that my family had done and learning more about my family history as an adult returning to Alaska every summer and spending time with relatives and getting to know my dad better because so much of his life has been spent on a boat. That was something that's just a part of him that I didn't really understand until I spent that time on the boat, too, so that connection to it has always been really important to me as well.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Is he a screamer or is he different on a boat than he is in port?

Allison Demmert: No. He has a reputation of being the most mellow, easy to get along with, easy to work for person. Everyone that's worked with him has really loved working with him.



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Jeffrey Kahrs: Right, so it's not just a rumor then?

[Laughter]

Allison Demmert: Yeah, he's great, and he—

Guy Demmert: They don't know me in my younger years of skippering. I had to transfer somewhere along the way.

Jeffrey Kahrs: Things do change, and I think of businesses like fishing, and if you survive being young and getting - learning the business and everything, hopefully, you mellow, but that's not always true, not always true. Okay, guys.

[Statement ends]