

Introduction

This is the life-history of a retired Newfoundland seaman, Wilson Vey, who lives in the community of Long Beach, Trinity Bay. The community in which he lives is small, with a population of approximately 300-400 inhabitants. With the decline of fish stocks, the inshore fishery is no longer a viable operation in the community. As a result of this, the majority of the working men have to leave the community in order to find employment. These men usually live close to their place of work during the week and return home on the weekends. However, in the past when cod stocks were plentiful, a different style of life existed. The inshore fishery was active and a large number of the residents participated in the annual Labrador fishery. The life-history recorded on the following pages is a reflection of that way of life.

Wilson Vey has been connected with the sea in some capacity or other for a period of over 65 years. His experiences and activities include the inshore fishery, the Labrador fishery, and coasting freight around the bays and inlets of Newfoundland. In addition to these activities, he is an accomplished boatbuilder, sawmill operator, and woodsman. He served in the armed forces during World War I ^{and} has been shipwrecked several times, ~~once even to have been~~ presumed lost at sea.

During the interview, I specifically asked him to elaborate on the last of these experiences and therefore it takes up a major portion of this paper. Very few people have ever heard the complete story, and in my opinion it serves to illustrate the life of this man. It is my

belief that this almost legendary experience should be told and not forgotten because it will serve to remind us of the type of men who were so much a part of everyday life in Newfoundland's past history and who are sadly disappearing.

I've lived here all my lifetime, for 81 years. I'll be eighty-two in September. Well, about my life, I'm a fisherman, I was a fisherman, anyway. I don't know what you would call me now. A landsman, I suppose.

I went to the Labrador with my father when I was twelve year old, fishing. He had a schooner of his own. I remember the first summer I went down there. I was only a boy of course. I was seasick. Boy was I seasick. I was some sick. But I got over it, you know. After that trip I was never sick after. We got our load of fish anyway. Had a very good summer. My sisters used to go down then. All my sisters took their turn going to the Labrador to cook for father. And, we fished in different places; Batteau, Cut-throat, Cape Harrison, Ragged Island, Grosewater Bay, all them places.

Fish was nothing then boy. You'd get \$1.00, \$1.50 a quintal according to the cull, you know. Dry it as hard as the rock. Dry it for five or six days, whatever sun you could get. You wanted a lot of fish then to make a quintal. We'd bring it home, make it here, wash it out here, shipped it. we used to deal with Bowrings. Father used to, and I dealt there too after he gave it up and I took over the schooner. That one there, the Edward VII. We runned her ten years.

Father had the Annie M. K. and 1914 was the first summer I went on the Labrador, 1914. He sold this schooner after that and we was fishing home here for a couple of years and I enlisted in the army when I was eighteen year old, and went overseas. I just made up my mind. That was in 1917. We trained in Winchester, England. We

used to get leave now and then and go to Scotland to a place called Ayr. I was in London twice. I was there once on a guard of honor. There was 15,000 went there. Five hundred from each Allied nation; 500 from Newfoundland, 500 British, 500 Scotsmen, 500 Canadians, you know.

We went there and got off the train at Hyde Park, London. That's where we lined up. We had to walk through the main street of London, along by Buckingham Palace, take the salute from King George V. He was reigning then. He was there on the balcony with the Queen when we passed along by the place, you know. And we walked five mile through the main street. When we was going out of the park the last of the line was coming in. Five mile, now that's what they reached. Was nice you know, looked nice, everybody was dressed up. You have to have extra training for this, you know. All picked men, all picked one size, one height, all marching along with fixed bayonets. It looked good. If you stood off to one side and looked, all them bayonets was all one slant, the thousands and thousands, 15,000, that's what it was. That was around the year before the war ended, 1917. We came back to the park, and they had a big canvas tent, shed made up, about 150 feet long, I suppose. You had to march right on through that and take a mug of beer from the counter. There was girls there serving. Take a little paper bag with a lunch in it and mug of beer and go out on the grass and lie down and eat it.

I remember when I first got over. We landed in Liverpool when we first got over. We leave St. John's on the Columbia, and went to Halifax to take in some Canadian troops and some ammunition. She was

a old armed cruiser, with guns on her. We was there part of two days. They wouldn't let us ashore, had guards on the gang plank. Anyway, we was nearly starved to death. All we got was a little loaf of bread, small loaf, and some tripe. That was pigs fat, from the pig's belly. No lean on it, just fat. That had to do from four o'clock one evening until four o'clock the next evening. Nearly starved to death. We had to go ashore to get something to eat. We would of starved by the time we got over.

Anyway, the next day all hands went ashore. We knowed they wouldn't going to shoot anybody. If they shot one, the guards would have had to shoot all hands. We got something to eat; some fruit and some bread, and stuff. When we came back aboard, an officer was on the top of the gang plank taking your name and numbers. We didn't know what was going to happen now. But, nothing ever come of it anyway.

We leaved Halifax. I think we had about two or three thousand troops aboard. There was 27 ships altogether. In convoy, you know, troops used to go in convoy. I was over there 182 days altogether. We was over there all the summer and winter before we got home. You couldn't get booked for passage home till your turn come. Troops enlisted first, they got passage home first. We got home in July.

Came home here and my father and my brother, Dan, was fishing here then. They had traps up along shore. They heard there was a lot of fish down in Deer Cove. I come home one day and the next day we took up the traps and went down Deer Cove and set them. My sister was living in South port then. She was married to poor Tim Smith. Nobody was getting much fish. We went in Deer Cove and I looked down on the

bottom and she was covered with fish. Out with the traps, boy. Anyway, we went over to Southport to my sister's and had a lunch, cup of tea. Tim and them was clearing away some fish. Father went over in the stage. Father went over, it was a hot day like you see, you know, to help clear away some of their fish. The sun was hot and he took with a terrible headache. When the time come to haul the traps, there was only two of us, me and Dan.

So we buddied up with Tim and his crew to haul the traps. We hauled their trap first, and me and Dan left and went on to our trap. Tim and the rest of them was going to come along after they finished up their trap. It was almost dark now. We hauled up the trap. It was dark now. When we hauled him up, here comes the fish. We picked a boat load out of the mouth of the trap in the Veas. And when we raised the trap the fish come up afloat. He was full, full of fish. And we never had another boat cause Tim and them thought we was up in Brook Cove. That's above, half mile above Deer Cove. We was in the cove. Here we was with the trap up, the fish all afloat and going out over the heads. Didn't have another boat to keep up the heads of the trap. Floating away, this great big fish. Joe Smith had a camp up around there, fishing. They come out anyway and helped up the trap and gaffed out their load. They gaffed out two or three loads and carried it ashore. By and by, Tim come back from Brook Cove. By God, he says, how much is in here, a thousand quintals. I said, he's full, all gone now. Yes he said, we meet it coming in floatin' out. Didn't know what to do. Never had no bag to put it in. I told Tim the best thing to do was to row over to Southport and get whatever boats he could get. So they got in the rodney and rowed

to Southport. They got seven motorboats, and we loaded all of them, besides what was gone out of the trap, floated away. My son, there must a been three or four hundred quintals of fish there. The like was never heard tell of, not down around there. Now, we give it all away, and told them to split it on the halves, you know. Some brought a bit and some didn't. we only got 50 to 60 quintals out of that.

I was at that a couple of years, fishing home here, and father went out St. John's and bought the Edward VII. He went to Labrador two summers in her and he got blind, you know, lost his eyesight. I had to take her over then. We runned her ten year and the last summer we had her, we wasn't fishing. We was making a few freights up around the bay, St. John's and one place and another. Fish was no price so we didn't go fishing and that was the fall she was lost, 1933. I'll tell you the story now.

It was the 25th of November when we left St. John's with a frieght, a load of lumber and stuff. Anyway, we left St. John's on the 25th, a beautiful day, just wind enough to bring us down to the Grates Cove. It was late in November, cold time of the year and the storms coming on. November is always a stormy month. The glass was going down fast all day, and when we got through Bacilieu Tickle, just as dark, and here she comes. About west north west the wind was. Chopped and began to blow. We was four mile out in the bay from the Grates when the hard wind took us. I knew we wasn't going anywhere across the bay, so we reefed the canvas. We lowered foresail and swung around, thought we might get back in the tickle somewhere and get anchorage, but we never. Before we got back, we lost our foresail. The foresail blowed off her. He blew right out of rope. Nothing left, not a bit of canvas, only the

rope. Blow, nothing only smokes ; drifts of wind. Snow dywes too and the frost come up. Everything began to ice up and freeze. Drifts of wind.

There was some wind that night, I tell you. Our best sail, the foresail was gone. So we tried the mainsail. So as soon as we let go of the down haul on the main gaff, he went out over her side and a big sea broke into it and busted it abroad, torn it up. We got that in aboard. Don't know how, got ropes around it, rolled it up and braced it in the best way we could. We was drove down accross Bacilieu now, so we had to run her out to sea, due east, under bare poles, no canvas. That night it iced up. Terrible night, going off east all night.

Sometimes we used to see sea rising up about forty feet high and break right down on top of you now. We had some drums of oil on the quarter. That all got loose and washed overboard, torn the bulwards off her and beat her up.

Everything froze up that night. I seen ice three to four inches thick, twenty to twenty-five feet up her masts. The wind used to blow the spray up and freeze on. It was a hard night I tell you. Next morning, Sunday, she was froze up just like a iceberg. Our motor boat had three inches of ice froze in her that night. Up foreward, the windlass was buried in ice, all around her sides, ballycattered around. Anyway, the outside jib washed away, nothing left but strips. The sea did that when her head used to go under water and the sea used to roll right over her. Sometime during the night, I said to the boys, if we keeps on going like this we won't see land tomorrow morning. Running under bare poles now. So we got a rope and tied on four

or five old rubber tires and heaved out, thought it might slow her down, you know. But it slowed her down alright, too much. They sunk down, you know, we had them on a big seven inch line. They deadened us, stopped us. Now the sea used to roll right over her. She wouldn't run away from the sea. So we had to cut the line and let her run clear of the sea.

Anyway, Sunday morning come, no sign of land, no sign of nothing. Frosty, cold day and blowing. We was driving away all day. About three o'clock in the evening we seen a steamer. A big passenger boat with three funnels. I spose she come down across from Cape Race going across to some foriegn country. She was about a quarter of a mile from us when she passed. We had a distress signal halfmast in the rigging. But they never took no notice of us. They went on and we drove on with the wind. We saw three more steamers that evening before dark and three passed us. They never noticed the signals anyway.

Night come on now and the wind give out. We patched up the old mainsail that Sunday. We had nothing only this part of a mainsail and part of one jib. Fixed up the best we could. Looked just like a bag. We hoist that up to try to steady her. There was a wonderful swell after the storm. Just like you was going down in a hollow between two mountains. When she would go down in the hollow the main boom would swing in the middle and when she come up on top of the swell and take the wind, he'd go off to one side with a bang. He had three or four swings like that and by God he broke off. Broke off right in the center. One part fell overboard and one part fell on deck. That was a mess. Dark was coming on again. The wind dropped and there wasn't a draft. Got calm. And we got the old main boom along on deck, got

lights and tried to fish it together. I was expectin' to have the wind in easterly now, we might get a bit of a run in towards land if we had a bit of canvas on her. We was off seventy or eighty mile by now. Couldn't see no sign of land anyway. We fished up the main boom. We had nothing to splice the boom with. We got a few old sticks, wrapped rope around that, and wedged it. That was the best we could do.

We lost all our water. No water, that all washed away. The cask was on deck and washed away. Anyway, we spliced the boom, and three or four o'clock that night we hoisted it up. A little draft of wind came in from the south east. We was coming in now, in on the land. And when daylight broke, you never seen an angrier glass on the way up. The highest I've ever seen in my life. He went down below 28 and then he rose way up, and it started to snow, and blow. This heavy wet snow. Boy, she almost snowed into the rails. Mountains of sea again. We had all the canvas, what we had left down off her. Thought she was going to turn over two or three times. She used to cut about see, there was no way to steer her, without a foresail.

It was a awful day; blowed and snowed all day. By and by, in the evening it cleared, and the wind started to veer and the glass started to go down again. Veered right around from the west north west again. Blowed the next day a storm again, a hurricane. We had to run right back on our heels again right east all next day. That blowed out and that evening we got in a calm spot, there was wind around everywhere for half a mile. We got in this bog of water. I thought that's where she was going to founder. It used to break in over her sides, over her bow, under the stern. Shook her all to pieces. Made her leaky. She

started to leak now; leak up through and down through the deck. She started to give because she was a schooner that was rebuilt. She was two years rebuilt when father bought her. Her seams opened up and she started to leak. Now we had to keep the pumps goin' all the time. Handpumps we had. When two hands would leave the pumps, two more would take over. Couldn't leave them for ten minutes.

The next morning the wind come up from the northeast and started to blow again. Another storm from the northeast. We saw three steamers again that day, between the snow flurries. We didn't see the boats but we seen their smoke. They passed on. That northeast wind blew out and the next night it veered from the south and blowed a storm. Rain this time. We just wheeled around and blowed back again. We blew around the compass, running before the wind. Nothing we could do. Blow; it was a full week, every single day a storm, chop and veer from the northeast, from the south, and then from the northwest. That's the way it was the whole time we was out there. We was going in and coming out, back and forth. We was out there eleven days drifting around like that. We was just about all in now, we had no water but we had plenty of grub. She was full of provisions. We had that for the shops and stores here around home.

we never had any wood. We had to chop up old rubber tires we had left. And fat back pork; we burned about a barrel of fat back pork. Just as well for us to burn it, because the crabs had it anyway. we used to open the barrel of fatback pork in the hole, throw it in the stove with the rubber tires. You know what that was like; the smell of that and the fat running out of the stove on the floor and the water running down through her deck. Sleep; no one got a wink for eleven

days, no sleep at all.

Later on the wind moderated for a few days, and this night just after dark, I had the wheel and poor Uncle George Smith was up forward looking out. I thought I heard something like water swishing. Uncle George couldn't hear it but it sounded like something on the weather side of the schooner. By and by, I seen it. This was a great big square stick of bauk. Probably washed off some vessel loaded with timber. He was about 100 feet long, as square as the television there. He wouldn't not more than 20 feet from her. If she had of struck that, he would have busted the side right out of her. But she didn't strike as it happened.

About an hour after that uncle George called out and said he thought he seen a light, right ahead. By and by he said, I sees it again. Little later on I seen it. We was just drivin' away before the wind. We had a flare. A steel drum lashed to the main mast filled with fatback and kerosene oil. That was what we used to use in case anybody might see us. Anyway those lights began to get bigger and bigger, coming right for us. when she got close we could see all her lights, still coming for us. He seen this flare up we had, and after we got aboard he said he though we was a ship afire. Then flames used to shoot out of the barrel about ten feet in the air. She came up alongside, slowed down and stopped, and put his searchlight on us.

He could see she was all beat up. She stopped for about five minutes and not a sound. So I called out. Told him we was in a sinking condition and wanted to be taken off. Still not a sound; no answer. After a while she began to move on, to go away. The boys thought that's pretty tough, especially after she stopped and left us. But she didn't

leave as we thought. She went about a mile, I suppose, and turned around and came down and stopped again on our quarter. Still no word from her. We didn't know what to do. There was still a fair breeze blowing and swell, but you could handle a boat. We had a good boat, new, about twenty feet, lashed on deck. We had to get her overboard now in this swell. The schooner was rolling back and forth. When we lifted her off deck she swung from one side to the other. I thought we was goin' to beat her up. I told the boys to take the painter and take a couple turns around the riggin', and another piece in her stern. We watched her and when she swung out over the side we let her go in the water. Dropped her in the water. A couple of hands jumped down in her and unhooked the tackles and the nine of us jumped aboard.

It was only about fifty yards and we rowed up along side of her. She was broadside to the swell. She'd roll down till her rail was almost in the water, then slide right back up till she was almost forty feet up over us. You couldn't get handy to her like that. We got up close and looked at her. Big old boat she was; about 15,000 tons, old cargo boat. We got handy enough and they throwed down fifteen or twenty ropes accross the boat and they throwed over some rope ladders over her side. Now, when we'd see her rolling up we'd take a chance and, we'd swing into the ladders. If we swung in too close her plates could of hooked the gunnels and capsize us. We kepted her away from the steamer with oars and so many hands would jump in the ladders when she used to roll up, cause if you jumped when she was coming down, you'd go on down with her. That's the way we got aboard. All hands got aboard of her. Not a thing saved, only what we stood in, our oil clothes. Got on deck, and when we got there, there

was a crowd of men standing around like a crowd of sheep. One couldn't speak to the other. A Danish ship she was. She left Hamburg, Germany bound for North Carolina, Wilmington with a load of fertilizer.

Anyway, we couldn't speak, but the mate come along, asked for the skipper, and took me up to the bridge to see the captain. Well, he said, skipper you're safe. Yes I said, thank God. He said, where are you from? Newfoundland, I said. The little schooner was there along side with the searchlight still on her. He said how long have you been out? Eleven days, I said. He couldn't believe it, looking at the little schooner alongside. I asked the captain what was he going to do with her. I was allowing he was going to ram her, because you're not allowed to leave anything that could be a menace to foreign going vessels. But he didn't. He said, is she very leaky? I said, there's about five feet of water in her now. Well, he said, if she's that leaky we'll leave her because there's another storm due and should finish her. We only did~~it~~, just made it.

The captain asked me if I wanted to send a message to my family. I said yes. He wrote off the message. Now, he said, where are we going to send it. I said, I spose to Cape Race is the nearest point and they send it to Marine Fisheries in St. John's. He said, do you know how far you're from Cape Race right now? I got no idea, I said, because we was going around the compass with the wind. Log was no good for that. He up and told me then. He said we leave Hamburg six days ago. Sunday, in a storm he said, this one was driving broadside all day. I thought she was going to roll over. She broke her wheel chains. A big sea hit her on the stern and busted everything up. He looked at his chart on the table and he said you're 265 miles south-east of Cape Race. That's a long ways. I can't imagine what you had

it like in that little vessel, he said, according to what we had. Three of his life boats was broke up, and his bridge was beat in. She was a big boat too, 15,000 tons. I seen the plank that they used to batten down the hatches, three inches thick and six inches wide, broke off on their flat by sea. That was some water. The captain told me he seen sea rising forty feet. Her sleeping accomodations up on the bridge was all flooded; doors broke off their hinges.

Anyways, he sent us down in the galley. He said you won't get a lunch 'cause the cook is turned in. Went down and got a lunch of something; drop of cold tea, some black bread, right dark. That's what we got. And a drink of whiskey. The mate come along a give us a drink of whiskey. There wasn't rooms enough, so I slept up in the saloon, on a big chesterfield. You could look right out over her head. I had three or four of those big red blankets and that's where I slept. In the night I found her trembling, where she'd dip in the sea. I spose her propeller used to come out of the water. By and by, daylight come and I looked out over her head. When I got up, there was nothing but white ocean. Mountains of sea. She used to drive her head down under water about six feet. She made 24 mile that day in eight hours. that's all the headway she made. Just keeping up, that's all. It was some rough, but she weathered that. From then on we had it very good. It was seven or eight days before we got up to Wilmington, Carolina. We got up to Cape Hatteras in the night, passed the light ship anchored there. Went in then and anchored about fifteen mile off in the bay. We had to wait now for the pilot. Customs officers and doctors had to come aboard her, close liquor stores and see if anyone was sick, any diseases. We had to line up on deck; all hands, their

crew and ours. The doctor come by and look at you. That's all he done and passed on. They went ashore and the pilot took her then. We had to go about forty mile up the river. Funniest place ever I saw. Old stumps and grass sticking up in the river in patches on the sides. Big old sticks and roots on both sides of the channel by the shore. Along the shore, there was all pine wood growed up all the way up the river.

We got up^{to} the pier, and when we pulled into the pier, there was nothing there but about 300 darkies; negroes. Not a white man among them. They was longshoremen, there to unload her. That was the Negro town. Wilmington was about three mile inland from that; the city. They unloaded the steamer by hand. They used wheelbarrows and shovels and big tubs. Every time a tub would come out of the hold, they all used to sing this little song; shanty I s'pose. We didn't know what they was singing anyway. They used to dump the fertilizer into boxcars on the other side of the pier. There was a railroad track over there with a train.

We had to go ashore the next morning nine o'clock to the company office. The British consul used to look after wreck crews, see, but there was neither one there in Wilmington. They had one in Havana. They had to send to the Havana and have a man come up to fix us up to get down to New York. Once we got to New York we'd be alright, cause there was a British consul in New York. We had no trouble.

The quickest way to get to New York was by bus. We had to sign a paper to pay for this trip to New York. The man said I might get a bill that winter. Well, I signed the paper but that's all I heard about it.

We had no money, no clothes, only what we stood in. Old long rubbers, clothes, some had a oil hat. That's what we had on you know, old clothes. Got aboard the bus one o'clock, Thursday. Now, we had to change three times. It was 1500 mile to New York. We changed buses and drivers every 500 mile. He give us ten dollars for food and that wouldn't much; a lunch for nine hands. Well, you could get a cup of coffee, something like that, you know. We got in New York, Friday evening six o'clock.

When we got to the bus station in New York there was three taxis there waitin' for us. The company arranged everything see. The fella from the company was there and we got aboard the taxis. It was six o'clock now, right in traffic time. We got caught in the traffic. He was going to take us down aboard the Rosiland. The old Rosiland was on the New York-St. John's- Liverpool run then. Anyway, he seen us aboard the Rosiland. We couldn't get nothing to eat aboard the Rosiland cause the cooks was gone ashore. But we get a lunch in the longshoremen's place. He give us some money and we got something to eat there. They had four or five railway cars put together for a lunchroom. Now, the morrow morning nine o'clock he said, you come to 15 Wall Street, the British consul office.

I said, how is I going to get there. He said the best way is to take the subway. He told us how to get there and to ask the man in the office which train to take. Anyway, the next morning, we got down to the subway office. Had to give the man a nickle. He told us which way to go. We left, but we went astray. We went out instead of in and ended up on the surface again. I took Uncle Lou Barfett with me for company. I took him because he worked down in New York

for a while before he got married. But he didn't know nothing about it. Uncle Lou couldn't read, see. I could read the signs anyway.

So, we went astray and had to go back again to where we went first. Went and seen the subway fella again. This time we made it. Got on the subway, and I asked this fella; dressed-up man reading the paper, where I had to get off to go to Wall Street. He said that's where I'm getting off. Just as I finished asking him the door opened and this was the spot. Come along with me, he said, and I'll take you there. He was going that way.

Carried us up to this building and up four or five flights of stairs and in the office. He told the man there that there was a wreck crew to see him. He said, well now, you're in the wrong place. This is the main office of the British Consul. You got to go two blocks down the street. Well we got out of that and went down the street. We couldn't find the place because everything was dull, dirty, with dust and smoke. Couldn't make out the letters of the signs. Finally we met a cop and he showed us. We went in the Consul office and the first thing he asked was if I had my register. No, I said, I got nothing. Anyway he fixed us up to get home. Now, I said, is there any place here where a fella could pick up a bit of clothes. Just about a month now, and no stitch of clothes, only what you had on. He said, I dear say if you was down to the seamen's institution you might pick up a bit of clothes. He sent a feller from the office down with us to show us where the institution was.

We went down to the institution. Must have been two or three hundred poor people looking for something. We went in the office. There was a girl. She said that she belonged to Newfoundland, to

Bonavista Bay, she said. She give us a note. I got a suit of underwear, pair shoes, a sweater, overcoat, and a cap. We took the note over to another fella, and he give us a suitcase and what we wanted. He picked up the bit of stuff for us.

We come out and took a overhead train this time back to the dock, to the Rosiland. We got aboard the Rosaland and went down to the berths, four men in a room. Uncle James Gosse was with us and he had a terrible cold. Uncle Lou had a cold too, a sore throat.

There was another old fella from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia with us. He was part of a wrecked crew too. He was a mate on the ship that he got wrecked on. Anyway, he went up talking to the purser. He said that he knew a skipper or the captain, whatever you mind to call him is entitled to a first class passage, if you want it. And the mate can go first class too. This was what he was after. Trying to get a first class passage. He came down and told me that the purser wanted me. I went up and the purser said, you know you're entitled to a first class passage. I said yes, but I didn't want it. I said I'd rather be with my crew. I'm not fitted out for first class passage. O.K. he said. The old fella got up sky-high. He said everything. Anyway he wouldn't go himself and come down with us. He was a comical old boy. Alright though, once you knew what he was.

The Rosiland had to go to Halifax, then we come on to St. John's. And when we was coming around Cape Spear, we took the snow, a storm of snow. About a foot of snow fell in St. John's that night. That was Christmas Eve. We got home here Christmas Day. Just a month from the time we leaved from the 25th of November to the 25th of December. That's a long time to get from St. John's home here and going every day, never stopped. Everybody back here had us give up. Father never had

us give up though, even though he was blind. He kepted his hopes up, you know.

When I got back I went back at it again. Fishing again. Went fishing on the shore, down in Batteau that summer. I fished on the Labrador two or three summers and this year, I was going down with my cousin Herbert John Vey. He had a schooner; the H. F. Wilson. He was taking us down, the crew and our gear. We was goin' fishing on the shore. And on the way down, we runned ashore on the Grey Islands and lost her. Runned ashore in the night, in the fog. Couldn't see nothing because of the fog. We was run in towards the land. Shipwreck again. Lost all our fishing gear this time. Never saved a thing, not a thing. Curil, and Ron and your father was with us and uncle Tom Smith. That was the crowd. Lost everything except my boat. We was towing her down. We runned into a square cliff about two hundred feet high. We was there a week in the Grey Islands. We rowed the motor boat twenty-five mile up to the Southern Grey Island. We never had any gas or oil; we had to row up. Nothing to eat. We was a day and a night. Forty families in the Grey Islands at that time. We got scattered around to the different houses. We had to stay until the Northern Ranger, the mail steamer, come down. We got aboard her and went to Battle Harbour on her and back down to Corner Brook. We took the train then and come home. So that was the end of that.

I went to work then out to St. John's down at Fort Pepperell; I worked there two years. My mind wasn't on carpenter work; my mind was on fishing. And I had nothing to go fishing with. There was a fellow over in Harbour grace. He had some fishing gear for sale. He had a ad in the paper. But this gear was on the Labrador. He had it

up for a thousand dollars; two traps, house, stage, store and an engine. In the fall it was in the paper again for six hundred dollars. The man's name was Gabe Newell. I found him on the job. That evening after supper I went down to his place. I said, now you wants six hundred dollars, and I said I didn't know what you got. If I buys it, I'll be buying a pig in the bag, won't I? That's right, he said. I said half of that could be gone now. You knows what the Labrador men is like. So, I give him three hundred dollars there and then and I said if everything is there when I goes down, I'll give you the rest in the fall. That was the agreement we made.

When I got down the Labrador, and went to open the house door, the door was already open. There was nothin' in the house; no stove, no dishes, no nothing, only the table. New house with nothing into her. Now, where's the traps and fishing gear? The store door wasn't open. Got the door open, and when I looked in, all I could see was a bulk of salt. Big bulk of salt right across the store. I got up on the loft and got some shovels and started shovellin' away the salt. First thing I struck was a tub of trawl. That was alright. Next thing I struck was a herring net, rope, moorings and buoys. Then I come to the traps. Wouldn't bear to haul out. Break away, and rotten as dirt; wouldn't bear lift up. Got salt burn. The two traps was just like dirt. They're down there now; left them there. Down there now and nothing to got fishing with. I got twine enough out of it to patch up the small trap enough to get the summer out of it and no fish. No fish that summer. That's what I got out of that. Pig in the bag, like I said.

That fall I come home and seen Gabe. We called it square. I got the worth of three hundred dollars, I spose. I sold the engine for one

-20-

hundred dollars and he had some hogheads of salt. The murrings, and grapes was alright so I figured I got the worth of three hundred dollars.

I made two traps after that and took to the fishing again. Then I got a chance with Ottenheimer. I took some lumber to St. John's that spring. He sent me a message; wanted to know if I'd take the Saffron to Labrador.

He'd fit her out if you had the fishing gear. Anyway, I went up to see him. Wanted to know if I had any fishing gear. Yes, I said, I got traps and boats. But, now, I said, the old Saffron, she's just about wore out. Oh, she's alright yet for a few years, he said. So I took a few days to think about it and while I was there I made up me mind to take her. I told Ottenheimer, I'd take her on one condition; if I could get a crew. It was going to be a job to get a crew that time of year. I wants nine men for a crew. If I can get the men, I'll take her, If I can't I won't. He said, tell you what I'll do. I'll pay your passage home and the time you spends looking for a crew. O.K., I said. I come home and went from Southport to Northwest Brook, in motorboat looking for men. I got a crew, such as they were. She was down in Trinity, the Saffron. Mr. Morrissey was looking after her. He used to pack Ottenheimer's fish. We left Caplin Cove eight o'clock and got down in Trinity twelve o'clock in the day.

When we got there to the wharf and got aboard the old Saffron; I tell you she was a sight. A sight for sore eyes. If I had me time back again I would a never took her. She was half full of water; old cod's heads and tomcods what was left in her. The fella who had her belonged to Wesleyville, Abe Kean, was his name. He never washed her out; old salt that come off fish, tomcods, he left everything in her.

She was about half full of water. Her main boom broke off; her main gaff broke off, all lashed up with old sticks of wood. Well now, I said, if that's not a sight, I don't know what is. I didn't know what to do. I was sat down there two or three hours considering what was best to do. Go home or what. I said to the boys seeing as we're down here now, I spose we'll have to tackle it. Pumped the water out of her; washed her out, took apart the old 10 Acadia what was under water, and cleaned that. Morrissey put some grub aboard her. Enough to get us to St. John's, and we left. Took all day from the Horse Chops to St. John's. Her bottom was coated, buried with old barnacles, weeds, and dirt. She wouldn't move, no way. Barnacles as big as your fist on her. I never seen nothing like it in me life, and leaking like a flake.

We got her up to St. John's. Mr. Ottenheimer and me went up to the dock. He was going to put her on dock. Get her caulked, painted, fixed up, you know. But there was a steamer coming up on dock. If we went up with her, we'd be there a month cause she had a lot of work to do on her. Didn't know what to do now. We had 180 hogsheds of salt, thirty of forty barrels of gas, all our provisions to take on board. I had a mind to tie her on there in St. John's and leave her. The only thing I sees now, I said, is to take on our salt and provisions and put her on dock in St. Anthony. O.K. he said.

At Hickman's wharf we started taking salt. Took in a hundred hogsheds and when I went down in the cabin to get something, me clothes box was floating about the cabin. Now, that was a good lookout, wasn't it? There was a brook of water running down the steps; a brook. Now, to go up and till the boys this news certainly they was all going to

leave. I wouldn't dare tell. I took up a couple of rung boards off the cabin floor and let the water run down. I went up and told them to cut of the salt; I wasn't taking any more. Went down and told Mr. Ottenheimer. I said we can't take any more salt, cause we'll only lose it; water gets in her, it melts. Well take the rest in St. Anthony. He gave me a order to get it at Murray's in St. Anthony.

We got down in St. Anthony on Sunday. Monday morning, I went ashore, seen the dockmaster. Hard luck again. They had the Marvel, the doctor's boat on dock, and they had to put a new stern post on her. That would take ten or twelve days. Well now, that was ten or twelve days in July month. July now. Didn't know what to do. Stay in St. Anthony ten or twelve days. Couldn't leave and go fishing because she was too leaky. Anyway, it was hang her down. Twelve days they finished the job. when it come our turn to go on dock, we left the salt in the hold. If she fell abroad on dock, well and good. Wonderful strain though on her. The time come and they took her up. What a sight. Well,well, barnacles as big as your fist. I doubt if she was ever cleaned.

Under the stern, one of the carpenters hooked his hammer in a piece of plank and give it a little tug and that dropped down on the dock. Don't know how in the name of God we got down without sinking. They fixed her up. Caulked her, painted her, filled her up with water and she didn't leak. That was fixed. Her keel was all eat away. I used two sacks of cement on her keel, filling up the holes there. Number one now; the summer was gone. Fifteen days in St. Anthony in July month. When we come to get the salt at Murrays, they had none. That was very good. So we went on to Battle Harbour and picked it

up there. Everything happened that summer that could happen. The 28th of July we got in Fish Cove in Grosewater Bay and no fish. We stayed there; never got not two quintals of fish out of the traps. What we got, we jigged, and never got nothing then. The summer was gone, see.

The next year we went down again in the Saffron, in the same place and when we got there this time there was thousands of fish and no one to catch it. No schooners; not a schooner and we loaded the old Saffron out of one trap. We had a thousand and thirty quintals, I think.

The best kind of fish. The most money I ever made on the Labrador was that summer. We got \$12.25 a quintal at that time. That was the last year of the Saffron. Brought her home and they put her ashore up in the back of Trinity. The next year, I took the Flora Machiver, another one of Ottenheimer's boats. We went down and we loaded in the same place, in the same berth when I had the Saffron. I had her two summers. The next year they wouldn't send the Machiver fishing. Fish was no price. None of his schooners went down. That winter I made a couple of freights around the bay in her and moored her in Little Heart's Ease. That winter she got full of water and we put her in on the mudflat and that's where she ended her days. That was the end of the Flora Machiver.

The next year I took the Dorothy Berle and had her a couple of summers. And that was the end of it. That was the end of my fishing on the Labrador. So I started fishing home then. Two or three years I used to have a trap out; I used to trap myself. I give up the traps then. Sold it all. Got a few codnets and had a spell fishing with codnets.

We had a sideline too, you know, when we come home from Labrador in the fall. We had a saw mill; used to saw lumber, cut logs. We used to sell that everywhere; St. John's, Carbonear, Harbour Grace, Brigis, Bay Roberts, all up around them places. Not much money in it. You'd get seven or eight dollars a thousand for board. I built about forty boats in my lifetime. The last one, now I built this past winter. I think that's enough building now at my age. I'm going to take it easy now, but I'm still on the go doing odd jobs around the place. Always something to do.

Conclusion

I believe that it is quite evident from the life history on the preceding pages that one basic fact about the character of this man comes through. It is very obvious that he had and still has a deep-rooted love of the sea. In spite of all the cruel blows dealt to him by the sea in his struggle to maintain a living, the bond of affection between the two still exists.

I also believe that the experiences related to me show an overwhelming sense of courage, independence, and self-reliance. Likewise, the ability of this man, and others like him, to accept setbacks and to experience frustration in the face of adversity and yet, to still maintain a sense of humor and positive outlook, points to the type of individuals who were truly fishermen and seamen.

Also, the desire of this man for work and for getting the job done is quite evident from his frustration at being on dock at St. Anthony in July during the middle of the fishing season. Similarly, his pride in a properly managed and well cared for ship is shown by his disgust when he first views the Saffron at Trinity. Likewise, the verbal agreement made with Gabe Newell concerning the fishing gear at Labrador may seem strange to us today living in an age of mistrust and dishonesty. But in the past, the measure of a man's word was also a measure of his character.

I wish to point out that the life history recorded on the preceding pages is not intended to be a complete document. Hopefully, I have related most of the memorable experiences. To summarize the long career

of this man, I believe the best words to use are those of an often repeated old Irish saying; "may you live as long as you want to; and may you want to as long as you live".

I do not believe that this man is a unique case in the true sense of the word. I believe that he is simply representative of a generation of Newfoundlanders who spent their lives on the sea. His experiences are those of many. They show us a way of life that was a product of the times in which he lived and that, as mentioned in the introduction, is slowly disappearing.

Superb paper
 - I have no major criticisms - your introduction and particularly your conclusion are thoughtful, extremely sensitive, well written, and provide important background detail and commentary upon a truly incredible narrative
 - well done (A)

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Collectors are requested to get as much as possible of the data below on each person interviewed/recorded, either from conversation or by direct query. Full background information adds historical value to the interview or recording.

Serial Number _____

Interviewer/Collector Lloyd Vey

Place of interview Long Beach, Trinity Bay

Date(s) of interview July 10, 1979

Name Vey, Wilson
(PRINT in block letters: LAST NAME, First Name, etc. and how referred to locally)

Community lived in during first 5 - 10 years Long Beach, Trinity Bay
(Give Bay)

Place of birth Long Beach

Age 81 Date of birth Sept. 19, 1898

Education Grade 5

Occupation(s), present and past Fisherman, Carpenter, Lumberman, Boatbuilder, Farming

Religion Anglican (Any changes?) No

Same religion as parents? yes

Churches in place of principal residence Anglican, United,

Occupations in place of principal residence Fisherman, boatbuilding, Carpenter, Farming

Places of residence (including significant travel) with years _____

Birthplace of FATHER and places of residence (with years, if possible) Grates Cove, 1864

Grandfather lived where? Born in Ireland & moved to Grates Cove, T.B.

When and from where did ancestors originally come to Newfoundland? Ireland, 1830's

Birthplace of MOTHER and places of residence (with years, if possible) Northern Bay, C. B. -> born 1864

Grandfather lived where? Northern Bay His last name? Puddister

When and from where did ancestors originally come to Newfoundland? England, -

Any changes in last name of either family? They changed from Vey

NOTES:

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