



# Michael Moore

Hello, my name's Michael Moore. I live in Marion Mass, and I am a trustee at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. I think I've done, this is my third stint as a trustee. My story as it regards to this region starts in 1979 when I first visited my then friend, soon to become girlfriend, and then wife Hannah, who grew up here in Marion on Ram Island in the middle of the harbor where I now sit telling this story. So, my first whaling encounter was really with a friend of Hannah's called Amy Nolton, who also lived in town, in Summers, and she worked for the New England Aquarium Right Whale Research Group. And I've worked with Amy ever since, she was asking me as a veterinarian as to what I thought about right whale mortalities. And this fairly soon led me to the New Bedford Whaling Museum and conversations with the then director versus about 10 years after I moved here, Anne Brengle.

And so Anne, and I forget how this really worked, but she told me she wanted a whale skeleton because by then I'd become one of the veterinarians that looks at dead whales around the world really, but especially in New England, and was diagnosing vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. And this got me involved in a whole bunch of different aspects of marine mammal conservation. That led to me well, Anne told me that she was looking for a skeleton to display in the museum. So, the first one was in, I think, 1996, the blue whale. That animal was hit by a ship, the size of Newfoundland and scooped up on its bows. And the pilot, when the ship was going into Newport, said, "You've got a problem on your bows." And so, that led to me being involved in the necropsy. And Dana Hartley, a lady from Rochester Mass, was the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service stranding coordinator at the time.

And she said that the skull of this blue whale was going to go to the Smithsonian in DC. And I said, "Well, I know somebody there who really, or somebody at the Whaling Museum and Brengle, who really would display the whole specimen." And long story short, the specimen got cleaned, and there's all kinds of stories about that, how she didn't get cleaned and how the oil is still coming out of the bones. They tried to clean it in New Bedford Harbor, but it didn't work very well because to clean whales underwater, you have to have a source of organisms and New Bedford Harbor being so polluted, there wasn't much there. So anyway, Anne got her bones and she basically built the Jacobs Gallery as a result of that to house the bones. And time went on. Then Anne said, "Well, I really want a sperm whale."

So, we did just that, and we found a sperm whale on Great Point in Nantucket, and we towed it. Well, we didn't, Charlie. Charlie, Charlie, the guy that runs the Jaguar Tug. Charlie Mitchell. And so Charlie, I told Charlie that I'd rigged the tail for him and that he was going to pick up the line with a long hoser and tow it off the beach. And this was on a Saturday. So, Sunday Charlie steams with the Jaguar to Great Point. And my phone rings his early days of cell phones. I think it was, oh gosh, I should know this. Anyway, we'll know the records. The records there. So, it was a Sunday. One of my kids, Sam, was getting not ordained, confirmed, and it was a tent service in Rochester. And my phone rings. Oh, gosh. So, I nip outside and there's Charlie saying, "So how's this going to work, Michael?"

I said, "Well, you're going to hook up to it, right?" "Yeah, I'm hooked up to it." Said, "Well, what you're going to do is you're going to just steam gently offshore, and if you just sit there towing at it gently, it'll come off." And about 10 minutes later, he says, "Michael," he called me back and says, "Yeah, it worked. It was good." So anyway, we towed it to New Bedford and there was all kinds of kerfuffle. We took it into what was then DN Kelly's, and we were going to tow it to take it on a truck to the transfer station in New Bedford. And that's what we did. Oh, gosh. So, many stories to tell, but perhaps for the best was that because it was crossing a town line from Fairhaven to New Bedford. We had police escorts from both towns, cities, and Mayor Kalisz from New Bedford was in front with about 10 cruisers from there.

And then the Haven Police Department had another whole pile of cars too. And oh gosh, it was crazy. And then



the best part of that story was that we got it there. It was by then, sort of early in a Monday morning, about midnight 30, suddenly a state shows up and he says he's been following a report of a tanker truck spilling oil. And the mayor says to him, "Well, it's just around the corner," because been the whale had been spilling oil out of its bloated carcass as we towed it, trucked it along the street there. So, that was fun. And the [inaudible 00:06:44] was not unimpressed. So anyway, lots more stories I could tell about the cleanup of that animal and so on. But eventually it got installed. Andrew Conith and his wife Jean did both the blue whale and the sperm whale, and part of the right whale too.

So, then we landed up with the right whale, which again, well, that one was hit by a ship down in the, no, it was hit by a ship in the Chesapeake Bay, the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and then it floated on down to the North Carolina Beach. I once met a guy down there cutting up a dead right whale. He was a retired detective. He says, yeah, all the bodies that they throw in the water, human bodies in the Chesapeake Bay tend to float down here as well, that's what happens to them. So anyway, the right whale showed up, and Andy and Jean Conith did the first half, and then Dan DenDanto did the second half of cleaning it up. So, that's the history of the blue whale, the sperm whale, and the two right whales, the mother and calf that are hanging in the gallery there.

So, I guess if you want to know who's been the most influential in my life in the region, it's undoubtedly been my wife Hannah. She's given me a life here to do enjoy and cherish and pursue my curiosity. And that's a real privilege to be paid to be curious. And so, I've worked at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution since 1986, first as a graduate student and then climbing that ladder. So, that's really what I have to say. I could write a book about all of this, and actually I did. It's called *We Are All Whalers*. And if you want to get a broader sense of some of my opinions and attitudes and hopes and fears for North Atlantic Right Whale Conservation in particular, read the book and it's available in the store as it used to be. And that's it. So, if you want more, let me know. I'm going to turn this off now. All right, see you.