Name of person interviewed: John Liarkos [JL]
Facts about this person:

- Age 51 at time of interview
- Sex Male
- Occupation Owner of Sea Fuels, a marine diesel station
  - If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),
    - Home port,
    - and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same)
- Residence (Town where lives) New Bedford, MA
- Ethnic background (if known) unknown

Interviewer: Janice Fleuriel [JF]

Transcriber: Erin Heacock

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Sept. 24, 2005

INDEX/KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS:

Sea Fuel; New Bedford; Massachusetts; Homeland Security; Marine Diesel Fuel; Coast Guard; Regulation; Fuel; New Bedford Seafood Co-op; Scalloper; Dragger; Internal Revenue Service, Tax; Drug; Hurricane

INDEX:

[36:28] Discussion of how the city of New Bedford can help the fishing industry; Biggest industry the city has at half a billion dollars; Private sector and commercial fishing sector working together; Importance of the New Bedford fishing industry to the country; Discussion of improvements to the Working Waterfronts Festival; Closing remarks

[End of Audio/End of Interview]

TRANSCRIPT

[Start of Audio]
[00:04]
JF: I'm Janice Fleuriel and I'm talking with John Liarkos owner of Sea Fuels is that correct?
JL: That's correct.
JF: And it's September 24th, 2005. So what we normally do is start by asking you just some general questions and then we'll get more specific about your work. Okay?
JL: Sure, yea.
JF: Can you tell me where and when you were born?
JL: I was born in New Bedford on September 1st, 1954. Seven children in my family, four sisters…. three girls….four girls and three boys.
JF: Okay, and has your family been in New Bedford for a while?
JL: Yup. My father was originally from New York. My mother was born in Canada and they both moved… they're families both moved to New Bedford when they were very young. So obviously they were both brought up in New Bedford.
[00:47]
JF: And were they involved in the fishing industry as well in some way?
JL: No my father was with a oil company called Stanley Oil Company, which was started by my Uncle Stanley, my father's uncle, actually he was my great uncle. And they were big suppliers to the fishing industries back in the 70's.
JF: Okay. And now what was your sort of history growing up, were you involved in your dad's business or around the docks or anything?
JL: I worked – no I worked for my father in my Uncle Stanley's company when I was in high school, in the late 60's early 70's in the summer time. So I'd come down to the waterfront every once and a while with my father when he came down he used to supply. They were the largest suppliers to the New Bedford Seafood Co-op at the time. Fuel oil suppliers. So I'd come down with him once in a while when he came down to see his customers and things like that.
JF: Oh. Okay so you had an awareness of it too yea?
JL: I had an awareness of the industry itself yea.
JF: And when did you actually get involved in your own business?
JL: I started with my father's company in 1985.
JF: Yup.
JL: And I got involved with the fishing industry because, at the time although Stanley Oil wasn't still supplying the Seafood Co-op, they had quite a few of their own boat accounts that they used to fuel. So I got involved with the fishing industry on a day-to-day basis in 1985. In 1995, I bought the New Bedford Seafood Co-op when they were closed down.
JF: Alright, and the New Bedford Seafood Co-op was what exactly?
JL: That was a cooperative of local fisherman and boat owners who formed a cooperative association and the cooperative association supplied them with all their fuel, with their supplies, lube oil and everything else and every boat owner owned a piece of it, they were sold shares in it.
JF: I see.

JL: And they controlled the cost and the rates, you know, according to what was, you know, best for the industry at the time for the owners of the, the individual owners of the co-op.

JF: The co-op could control the –

JL: Well they could control their own price, in other words the margin they would set over and above what they paid for the price. They would agree that they needed to make a profit obviously. So they would agree that we'll charge so much over what we're paying and that way we can pay our expenses, make a little bit of a profit. Because as co-ops are formed what happens is at the end of their fiscal year whatever profits they make have to be redistributed to the owners who have shares and that's basically what they did.

JF: Alright, so it's similar to the farming co-ops in a way?

JL: Yes. Yup, yup, it's exactly the same yup.

JF: It's interesting huh? So you bought that and then –

JL: Yea, I was approached by them in October of 1994, if I would be interested in buying out the assets, not the business itself, but the assets because they were financially in trouble and they were looking to, you know get their notes paid off at the bank and everything else. So, I subsequently kind of looked into it and then I actually leased the facility on April 1st of 1995 for eight months to see if it would work out for me.

JF: Right.

JL: Because it was a matter of, when you don't buy a business, you don't buy the customer list, you just buy the assets, so I had to go around the docks every day and talk to all the individual boat owners and make sure that they would still do business with us. You know once we bought the business. So for the eight months that's what we did and it worked out very well. So, I ended up purchasing the entire facility in December of 1995.

[04:23]

JF: Wow. Huh. So by the entire facility can you describe it? I've never seen it, and I don't –

JL: Yea, it's right next to pier 3 here, it's right between pier 3 and Crystal Ice. Has four above ground fuel tanks. It has a, we have 250 feet of dockage. We have a full supply warehouse and we have diesel pumps at the dock and we also have two fuel barges that go out in the harbor and fuel the fishing fleet on a daily basis.

JF: Oh. Okay. So the dockage that you have there, do boats also come to you to get fueled.

JL: Mmhmm.

JF: Okay.

JL: Yup. They come to the dock or we send the barge out. Mostly the barge goes out and does the commercial fleet, the bigger boats the scallopers, the draggers. Um, and then the smaller boats and pleasure craft on the weekends will come to the dock for fuel, it's more convenient.

JF: Oh! Okay. I never really thought of about. I guess that's a question I would ask, you know, we talk about the fishing industry and how the fish get from the ocean to the plate. So how does the fuel get from underground to the boat?

JL: Right. Yea. We buy the fuel. We take the fuel in everyday. We have our own storage facility which make it convenient for us because we can, when there's a lot of price fluctuations in the fuel we can kinda control what our costs is going to be so that our customers don't get killed with a ten or twenty cent price spike like it has been for the past two or three months, you know, with the hurricanes and everything else. So we bring the fuel into our tanks and from our tanks we feed the barge and we feed the fuel dock. And the barge goes out and we fill the barges at our own facility, from our tanks. It goes out every morning at five o'clock. We know which customers have come in overnight. They're off-loading. We put the fuel on. The fuel bill goes right to the settlement house. The settlement house gets the check from the fish dealer who buys the catch off the boat. And they take out the fuel bill, they take out the grub bill, any food they purchased for the trip, any gear work they've done for that particular trip, and the rest is distributed amongst the captain and the crew and the boat owner.

[06:19]

JF: Uh huh. Interesting. So what, I think I heard this, but like how are the commercial boats, what are they holding for fuel these days?

JL: A scalloper, a normal scalloper on a regular trip, which right now a normal trip for them would be fourteen to fifteen days. They'll take anywhere from eight thousand to twelve thousand gallons of fuel. Depending on how hard the engines have been working, you know, with the dredgers, you know, and everything else. A dragger is only out five to seven days and they normally take three to five thousand gallons of fuel.

JF: Is that as much as the boats will hold or are their holds bigger?

JL: Um, Yeah, a scalloper, normally a scalloper will hold maybe fifteen thousand gallons on some of the bigger scallopers. And the draggers, the smaller draggers will hold probably eight.

JF: Uh huh. And how long does it take to fill, like a boat?

JL: It doesn't take us long because we got high speed pumps and obviously we can fill two tanks at one time. So if we were to put, let's round it off and say like ten thousand gallons on a scalloper it would probably take us an hour and a half.

JF: Wow. Ok.

JL: Because we pump about seventy five hundred gallons an hour.

[07:24]

JF: Wow. So these pumps and hoses and whatnot are very specifically made for —

JL: Oh yea! They're specifically designed for what we do, you know, for commercial fueling.

JF: And where are they made? Do you know?

JL: Well they're made all over the country. We buy, yea, we buy our supplies all locally, actually locally from a big supplier out in Rhode Island called J.W. Kennedy Company. They're a huge industrial petroleum distributor for parts and supplies, hoses, and nozzles, and pumps, and things like that.

[07:55]

JF: Wow. Interesting. Now you might have said this and I'm just trying to get the image in my mind. So is there some boat coming up to your place to give you your bulk fuel at some point?

JL: We buy our bulk fuel at two different terminals. We buy from one here in New Bedford which is the old New Bedford Gas Company where they have a storage facility now called Global Petroleum. They're a huge supplier of ours. We have a very strategic supply agreement with them so that we make sure that if there ever is a shortage or we have a problem with supply like they're having in the mid-west now because of the hurricanes, you know, in the distribution point. We're guaranteed to get supply over anybody else. And then we buy from a couple other companies in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Exxon Mobil is one of them and we watch the pricing. You know, we have to but there's two reasons it's not just the pricing we have to be very careful about the quality of the product we buy. You know? Because there is a big difference between home heating oil and marine diesel fuel.

JF: What's the difference?

JL: Well, they'll both burn in an engine, right, but home heating oil tends to be a little dirtier. Because it's only going into a two hundred and seventy five gallon household tank and it's not as critical if the nozzle plugs up or something because the fuel is dirty. If something happens to the equipment because it's getting plugged up by dirt. In a house, because you just call the service man and he comes down, he cleans it up and you off to go again. When you got a fishing vessel that's out at sea that's battling ten to twenty, twenty foot waves on the fishing ground, you can't take the chance of their engines cutting out because the fuels been dirty and its plugged up. And now they've lost power, they've lost steering, very, very dangerous situation. So that's why we have to be very careful what we buy for the waterfront, that's why we get specifications on all the fuel before we bring it in.

JF: Is there a way for you to test it? Or do you just get the specs?

JL: Oh yea! We have it tested. It's tested at the terminals and they'll give you the report because if they give you a false report and something happens then they're going to be on the hook for the liability. So they don't take that chance either; it's just too much of a risk, you know? So we get reports on every product and you know some products we like, some products we don't like and if we think that it's iffy then we won't buy it. I'd rather pay two or three cents more a gallon for a better quality product you know, because then my mind's at peace and when these guys leave the dock and they got my fuel in their boats, you know, I want when they're at peace and I wanna make sure they don't have any problems out there.

JF: So do the specification reports have like a range where you might where you might say 'Okay that's too, that's outside the range for me!'

JL: Yup, that is absolutely right, yup. And sometimes it's even within the range but if it's on the higher ends of the range we don't want to take a chance. You know?

JF: What does that mean the higher – Is it the higher end has the content of something that you don't want in it?

JL: Yeah. It'll be a percentage. And the biggest thing we look at is a line item called BS&W which is bottom, sediment, and water. Okay? They do a test for that. And it could be anywhere from zero percent to five percent. I've seen it as high as twenty percent. Well that means that you got that percentage of dirt and grime and water in the fuel itself. It'll settle out on the bottom obviously because fuel is

lighter and will ride on the top. The problem is when you start pumping, it all gets mixed up because the pressure from the pumps turning mixes everything up. So it might be on the bottom now but once it starts burning fuel and the ship is bouncing around and the truck's are pumping all it gets mixed up in the fuel and that's not what you want to happen. So you have to be very careful of the quality of product that you buy.

JF: And is that BS&W a result of, well the refineries can refine it so much but there's always going to be a little bit left?

JL: Well yeah. But a lot of it comes from, I mean, when they transport, they have these huge cargo ships and transport barges that transport and they transport all kinds of product. You know? So you might get the residue from something they might have transported six months ago. And now the company calls them up and says 'I need to bring up five million gallons of marine diesel fuel to New Bedford.' Well they dump it on top of that and it's just the natural thing that's gonna happen in the industry so you just have to be careful for it.

[12:01]

JF: And is marine diesel different from like automotive diesel?

JL: Yea. Marine diesel is. Well there's only one major difference really and it's the color. Automotive diesel needs to be clear now and that's a tax issue because you could use marine diesel in an on-road vehicle, as automotive diesel okay? And you can get away from paying the tax because there's a tax on road fuel.

JF: Oh!

JL: So the IRS in order to stop people from cheating on their taxes by putting, you could put home heating oil in an automotive that runs on diesel and it'll run just fine. But the government doesn't get their tax money that way. So about five to, I wanna say, five to eight years ago, the Internal Revenue Service went to a two color system. Clear fuel is for an on-road use, and dyed fuel which is a red color is for off-road use. There is no tax on off-road fuel. But the clear product is taxable. Twenty-four cents a gallon which is a lot of money.

JF: Yea, huh! So that's interesting because of course you hear so much about regulations in the industry. So there's this one piece of it at least that's so far.

JL: Oh Yea! There was a point in time and I want to go back probably fifteen years where the government decided, the Internal Revenue decided that they were going to charge their road tax on all diesel fuels sold no matter what it was for. There was a point in time that lasted about, I want to say, three months where the fishing vessels were getting charged diesel taxes. And at that time it was fifteen cents a gallon. Well the tax is actually for highway work, it's for a fund that we keep up with the highways that's why it's called a road tax.

JF: Okay. Yea!

JL: Yea. So in order to charge vessels or farm equipment or construction equipment that doesn't run on the highways the tax, you know they made such a stink about it, that they repealed in about three months.

JF: Did you get involved in that?

JL: Oh yea, oh yea we got involved in it alright.

JF: What kinds of actions did you try to take?

JL: Well we got right away involved, with our industry was one of the main leaders of saying 'listen you can't charge road tax to these boats that are going out fishing on the open waters, they're not using the roads, why should they pay the road tax?' But the government was strapped for money back then and going back a good fifteen, you know early eighties and mid-eighties, and they said 'well this is a way of grabbing some extra money' cause they needed the money. But you just can't, you can't do that because now you're adding fifteen cents a gallon to the cost of the fuel the fishermen are paying already. Right? And they weren't at that time weren't getting a lot of money for their catch. So they're paying an extra fifteen cents a gallon on ten thousand gallons is another fifteen hundred dollars that comes out of the…you know? It just didn't work, it was unconstitutional. So it's—

JF: Yea. Illogical?

JL: Yea! Very illogical. Yea. So that was an interesting period you know.

[15:07]

JF: So how is all of the fuel— Is any of that translating to the fishing boats? Are they paying more for their fuel like cars are right now or are –

JL: Oh yea. Oh yea, when one goes up it all goes up because it's all made from the same base stock and it's all made from crude oil. So if the crude oil rises, the distillate rises, and distillate is the number two heating oil, diesel fuel, on-road fuel, marine diesel. So everybody pays a price and it's very high right now.

JF: What is like the price per gallon about these days? I don't know if –

JL: It's—We're selling it to the fishing fleet right now for two dollars and thirty five cents a gallon. A year ago, it was a dollar forty eight.

JF: Wow! And of course they don't, they're not getting more for their catch are they?

JL: Well the scallopers are.

JF: They are?

JL: Yea. The scallopers are. The scallopers are doing very, very well. The management plan that they've had in place for the last few years has worked exceptionally well. And now there is not only a nationwide demand, there's an international demand for scallops that come out of this section of the country. So a lot of scallops are being shipped overseas because the Europeans have gotten a taste for it, for fresh scallops out of New England. And that's driving the price up. So the boats, the boats are getting paid an incredible amount of money for their catch right now where I think a year ago, it was, they were probably getting— Well, I want to go back two years ago. Two years ago, they were probably getting two fifty, three dollars a pound. A year ago it was closer to six. Right now it's ten.

JF: Oh my goodness!

JL: The boats are getting nine eighty five to ten dollars a pound for their scallops. Paying the boat. Which translates to about fifteen dollars a pound to the consumer.

JF: And that's in this country probably—

JL: In this country. And they get more for it in Europe.

JF: How do they get to Europe?

JL: They ship them up to Boston and they put them on a plane and they fly them over. Yup, in refrigerated, you know, refrigerated trucks and everything else. Yup. Yea interesting.
JF: Huh. Wow that's a lot of money.
JL: They're getting a lot of money. So, translating that into the cost of fuel right now which is abnormally high. The scallopers are still, they can pay, they can afford to pay the price that's out there on the street right now. But if they were getting three fifty or four dollars a pound for their stock.
JF: They couldn't even go out, could they?
JL: They could – It would be very, very, very tight for them to go out, make a trip, come in, and pay that kind of fuel bill and basically have nothing left over to pay the crew, you know, and the boats expenses and everything else. So they're not bothered right now because they're stocking, you know, their boat comes in with eighteen, twenty thousand pounds you know which translates into two hundred thousand dollars. So to pay the fuel bill is no big deal. The ones who are really getting hurt right now are the dragger fleet. Yea, the draggers, they don't get anywhere near the price for their catch that obviously the scallopers are getting and they're paying the same price for fuel. They might not burn as much but they're not making as much either, you know?
JF: Have you seen any of them decide not to make trips because –
JL: I got half a dozen customers right now in the last two months that have tied up to the dock. They can't afford to go.
JF: Wow.
JL: They can't afford to go fishing just cause of the fuel bill.
JF: And then that affects you business?
JL: Sure it does. Absolutely.
[18:23]
JF: About how many boats does your business fuel? Do you even have a number that you know?
JL: We do sixty percent of the fleet.
JF: Okay. And how big is the fleet?
JL: The fleet is about just under three hundred boats now. Yea. We do the largest portion. We do sixty percent of the fleet. And out of sixty percent of the fleet that we do, I would say that probably ninety percent of them are scallopers.
JF: Wow. Well that's good for you I guess.
JL: And the other ten percent is dragger which is – Yea, which translates to be a little more advantageous for me at this point.
JF: Yea. So did you sort of have a strategy around that, knowing that?
JL: Oh Yea. Absolutely.
JF: Smart.
JL: Because you could see the things coming down the line, I mean, with the new amendments. You know. Amendment seven and amendment ten and they're changing all the time. Fewer days at sea for the scallopers, fewer days at sea for the draggers. The draggers whole area's just closed right out for them to fish. I mean if you've got to go twice as far to catch your fish because they've closed so many areas that are close to you then you got to burn twice as much fuel just to

get there and that's the problem. That really is the problem with the fuel costs, you know? And the fuel costs right now should be, you know, it should be no more, it should be no more, it shouldn't be over two dollars, it should be a dollar sixty five, a dollar seventy. But the stock market drives it now and that's the problem with it, you know? So it's not a supply and demand market anymore.

JF: It's not. You know it hasn't made sense to me, although I have heard that, you know, China's now demanding more than they used to. Yea, it seems like it's more in that abstract realm –

JL: It is. Yea. You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right about that. Yea, China's been demanding more for years because they're in the middle of a huge industrial boom. They're buying all the oil they can cause they need it to run their factories and to make their products. But still, it does not translate into paying twice as much for oil this year than we did last year. It's all about how the traders on the, well it's traded like a commodity now, just like gold, or silver, or pork bellies or cattle. It just is what it is.

JF: Hmm. Wow.

JL: And it's all the hedge funds that are driving the market.

[20:27]

JF: Yup. And you've been in, you probably said this earlier, you've been in the business how long?

JL: This business since 1985.

JF: Since 1985.

JL: Yea. On a full-time basis.

JF: And do you think if you were just starting today would you see this as a good business to be in?

JL: No.

JF: You wouldn't go into it?

JL: No. Nope. I shouldn't say I wouldn't see it as a good business. It is a good business. There'll always be a demand for distillate products especially in the northeast section of the country. We use more distillate than anyone else in the country. Just the northeast section. It would be almost cost prohibitive to go into this business today because you would need such a huge line of credit, from the bank, to be able to buy your product and wait for the money to come in because we're paying well over two dollars gallon oil. I'm paying. And I get charged the cheapest price on the street because of the volume we sell. And you would have to have a huge line of credit and the banks would look at you and say, you know, 'I can't give you that much money.' And without being able to buy it and have credit terms –

JF: Yea. Wow.

JL: It would be very difficult to get into this business today! Yup.

JF: So how many people actually work in your business? In your company?

JL: On the waterfront business there is seven total, and I have another company that does home heating oil marketing and commercial fuel and there's seventeen there.

JF: Oh, okay.

JL: Yea.

JF: So you're sort of diversified?

JL: We're diversified, yea.
JF: Yea. And for you, then as the owner, what is the typical day like? Are you more like networking?
JL: Yea! I kinda like do a lot of different things. We start at four thirty in the morning. Every morning. We're open till four o'clock every afternoon. I have a general manager that runs the day-to-day operations. Paul Anthony, who's excellent. I trained him over the last five years and then put him in charge. I usually come in around five thirty, six o'clock. And then my day is seeing what's going on for the course of the day and then I've gotta get out and see customers. I've got to go out and try and find new customers, I've got to do the day-to-day business stuff that you have to do. Look at the stuff that comes—Deal with the regulations. You know, move people around if I need got a truck driver over here I've gotta send him there. And then it's pretty much in and out of the office. I'm on the road most of the day, I don't like being in the office. I like being out, I like being outside you know. So I spend two or three hours first thing in the morning, but by nine or ten o'clock I'm out, and I'm back and forth and then I usually like to get back before by time we close just to see what's going on for the next day and talk to Paul about what happened this day.
JF: And is it then five days a week or will it depend on when the boats need the fuel?
JL: It's six days a week.
JF: Six days a week?
JL: Yea six days a week. And we work Sundays too. Sometimes we work Sundays. Yea. We open the fuel dock on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day, we're open seven days a week.
JF: Oh right cause any boat might want a—
JL: Any boat can come in yea. And it's worked out very well for us because we've marketed our pleasure, private boat business along with the commercial end, you know, just to make sure you know that we get a bigger piece of the pie so if one starts to slide a little bit you got the other one that's going to keep you going.
[23:28]
JF: Right. Huh, interesting. Oh! The barge that you own, so do you have one person that's the pilot of that?
JL: Yea. We have two. Well actually we have two barge captains. Two barges, and we have two barge captains. Paul who's my general manager is one of them and I have another barge captain that takes the barge out with a deck hand and they go out everyday.
JF: Is it very tricky to – It sounds like it would be I mean how close does your barge have to get to the boat?
JL: Right along side of it. Yea. When we tie up right to the boat itself and then we're side by side, you know, right up against each other and then we pull the hoses onto the boat, start the pumps, and fuel it. And then throw the hoses back on.
JF: On most boats as I understand it, they have fuel tanks on both sides of them.
JL: Both sides yea.
JF: And so are those different hook ups?
JL: Yup. Yea, so that's why we run two pumps and we can fill both tanks at one time. Some boats have, they have, six tanks, two in the front, two in the middle, two in

the back. So you go from one fuel to the next. Yea, because they've got to space them out amongst the ship you know to keep it level.

JF: Is that called ballasting?

JL: Ballasting, yup that's right, yup.

JF: Huh. Interesting. So how much fuel does your barge hold? How many boats could it do before it has to come back?

JL: Depends on how much the boat's going to take but the barge holds thirty thousand gallons. And the smaller one holds eighteen. When they're done and if they're empty and we have more boats to do that are waiting for fuel, then they come back in, we reload and then they go back out.

JF: So does your barge have to be careful about how it disperses the fuel to keep its weight?

JL: Oh yea!

JF: Are there special instruments that show anything like that?

JL: Yea. Because the barge is separated in tanks also, ballast tanks. So when they offload, it's all automatically regulated. It will draw from one tank and if it senses that it's starting to list a little bit, it'll switch over to another tank, and move the fuel around.

JF: But I suppose they're still always checking?

JL: Always checking, oh yea, absolutely. You always got to be checking.

JF: So what kind of training does the barge pilot need? Is that up there with like harbor pilot specialty.

JL: Well, there's two avenues, two areas they have to. First of all they better be trained to get their license by the Coast Guard. That's classroom instruction. And then there's firefighting. But you get your training out on the open water you know, that's where you get your experience, you know, it's got to be hands on. So what we do is like the barge captain I have now, I trained him under Paul. Paul was a barge captain, so he took him out and took him out everyday for a year, learned how to operate the barge, how to bring it into tight situations and sometimes if we go to areas where the customer needs fuel and you only got a small area to maneuver in, you got to know what you're doing you know? So you're not slamming into everybody you know and causing damage and god forbid split the barge open or something which we don't want to see that happen. So it's really hands on experience, and in the winter time out here, even in the harbor gets pretty nasty. When the winds blowing you can get bounced around pretty good so you got to know what you are doing.

JF: So they probably must be like that sort of quality that the fisherman seem to have about, something about them and nature that they get a charge out of, right?

JL: Yea. That's exactly right!

JF: You couldn't catch me to do that. A lot of times, those of us who know nothing about the waterfront, you see the boats all next to each other. Do they need to move to get fuel? How does that, I mean, they're all like three in a row—

JL: Yea. Well the problem is two fold. The problem is we don't have enough docking space in New Bedford harbor so they have to raft them out. That's what they call it. Now, they don't really have to move because we've got enough hose were we could conceivably pull the hose across three vessels to do the vessel that we want

to do. That's about as far as we can go, safety wise. I won't have my, my people are not allowed to pull the hoses over anymore than three vessels.

JF: And what's the safety issue with – Why is three –

JL: Well if you got too much hose out there going across three boats that you're not on, if something happens on that boat right? If the boats are moving with the tide and the hose gets squished or somebody is working on one of those boats and they're cutting with a torch, you just can't take that chance because they're not paying attention, because you're not fueling their boat. We're fueling the boat on the inside of them. So you got to be careful. Three boats we can see across, these guys can see, and if somebody is working they gonna say 'hey wait a minute, don't go near those hoses, we're fueling this boat, we'll be done in a half hour.' And the fishermen are real good about it, you know, everybody works together and that's the best part about this waterfront. But any longer than that gets too dangerous.

JF: So now is that something where if you want to drag the hoses across someone else's boat, do you need to get permission or is that just sort of a camaraderie thing?

JL: No. Nope, it's a camaraderie thing. You know they all do it because.

JF: They all know they need it right?

JL: Yup, yup. Absolutely. But I mean it's a great industry. What's going to happen in the future I think every year everybody holds their breath to see what the new regulations are going to be. These guys are getting killed with regulations.

[28:54]

JF: What about your industry per se? Like storage of fuel, what kinds of regulations do you…

JL: Oh! I've got a million of them.

JF: You do? Has that gotten worse over the years?

JL: Oh yea! That's gotten worse over the years because now, because we store so much product we come under the Homeland Security Act now. Because we've got over fifty thousand gallons of storage at one facility. We're regulated by the Coast Guard more than anybody else. For safety, and for pollution control and all that stuff but now these last two years since, obviously, since nine eleven, these last few years, the Coast Guard has become part of the Homeland Security Division and now we've got homeland security issues. We had to spend, we've spent well over fifty thousand dollars this last year just putting in new fencing, razor wire, locking systems, yea. We have to be able to shut the complete facility down within an hour. Which means no vehicle traffic, no foot traffic, no anything. So we've had to put things in place for that.

JF: Wow. Do you have to do drills and things like that?

JL: Oh yea! We so two drills a year. Every six months.

JF: Like lockdown or something, would you call it?

JL: Lockdown drills and then we have to do pollution control drills. In other words, if there's a boat at my facility and they're taking on fuel and the tank ruptures and the fuel starts going into the harbor what do you do? You know we've got all that safety equipment and environmental [inaudible] in place there. You've seen those

big yellow pool things [inaudible] and we gotta train on those. So we gotta drill on putting those out in a timely manner.

JF: Now are you there person in your company that's kind of in charge of all that or is there somebody else that?

JL: Nope, my general manager Paul Anthony is in charge of that. Goes up the line though.

JF: Right! This is one instance where it all floats up hill!

JL: It all floats up hill! That's absolutely right.

JF: Interesting! Well it's really fascinating.

[30:45]

JL: It's a great industry. I mean I love the industry. The people are terrific; I mean they're all hard working people you know? The industry still has the old stigma from back in the seventies the drug stigma and all that, and I just don't see that anymore. I mean there's a little bit of it now, but as much as it used to be, it's been cleaned up. Because the industry has really monitored itself. And you know what? Some of these vessels are making so much money with their catch that they don't have to take on a fisherman who's on the fence, who might cause a problem out there, they don't need them anymore.

JF: Oh. So that's what was happening before they were just so squeezed?

JL: They're so squeezed for help that they take anybody you know? And then that's when they started having all the problems instead. But you know they've cleaned themselves up pretty good. They're a pretty good self-regulating industry. It's a great bunch of guys. I mean like I said they're hard working people. Everyone is up early and working long hours so you got to understand each other, what everybody has to do you know to make a living around here.

JF: I don't know if I read it in the guide or somewhere but in the course of the last just couple of days that just sort of phrase of 'who you are is what you do'. I mean it seems so applicable to people in this industry.

JL: Yea. In this industry yea, you're absolutely right. No questions about it.

[32:03]

JF: The only other question I can think of is, sort of, I know with fisherman they have their special gear and clothing, do your people, like the ones that are fueling, do they have special stuff that they wear?

JL: Not really. No.

JF: They're not going to get much fuel on them in the process of what they do?

JL: No, no. Not if they do it right they're not. If they do it's because they're doing something wrong, you know?

JF: That's sort of a spill in a way isn't it?

JL: That's a spill in a way. That's exactly right. That was gonna be my next statement. If a guy comes back to the dock covered with fuel then I know something blew out of a vent somewhere and it didn't just go on him it went on somewhere else and I'm not going to be very happy. Because that's a human error and I don't, and we don't take kindly to that. You got to pay attention to your job. It's a very safety sensitive this job, you've got to be careful!

JF: So is your job the kind of job where drug testing and stuff has to happen?

JL: Oh yup. We have pre-employment drug testing and random drug testing. Your name can be called at any time. And if it's called within an hour you get up there without any notice and you go and that's just the way it is.

JF: So even that kind of a little spill, let's call it. I don't know if that's accurate. Would you have to fill out all kinds of reports?

JL: No the standard for Massachusetts and the Coast Guard standard is ten gallons. If you spill more than ten gallons into the water, then you've got to report it. And luckily—And if you have a little spill, it's normally because somebody wasn't paying attention or there's a problem with the vent and the fill on the boat itself but it'll spitting out the vent, and they have buckets underneath it to catch it real quick. So if you have a little spill it's normally on the deck of the boat and they clean right up.

JF: So the fuels getting pumped in and somewhere else there's this little vent that will let—

JL: Yup, on the tank it vents the air out as the fuel's going in. When the tank is full it'll come out the vent and catches in the little bucket and we shut the valves down and move on to the next one.

JF: And you don't find in your industry you're getting one set of things from the EPA versus the Coast Guard, do all the agencies, are you under the EPA?

JL: Yup.

JF: But do you feel it all works together pretty well in terms of what they're expecting of you?

JL: No! No! The worst industry in this country is the EPA. The MassDEP is…I don't know how to put it. The Coast Guard understands a working situation. So they're not gonna, well you're going to do what they tell you to do, but they're not going to make you do something that is unreasonable in a working situation if it really doesn't have an affect on polluting the harbor, because they're very, very in tune to that. The DEP, they have no clue as to what a working situation is in any of these areas. They just send you down regulations and expect you to go by it.

JF: The word bureaucracy really—

JL: Oh yea! Oh yea. The thing about it is none of these guys are out in the real world. They're in offices, in front of computers, and they're looking at data, and they're looking at tide charts. You know they don't spend the time to go out and see what does this operation actually do. Let's go see how critical it is for certain regulations to this, you know, without overburdening these people. I'm not just talking about me but everyone in the industry, without overburdening them with an unnecessary regulation. They don't care about that. And they've got so much power that they could come down tomorrow and close me down if they saw something they didn't like and that's the problem with that but bureaucracy is a great word. That's exactly what it is.

JF: Well my husband is in wastewater treatment so they're his, one of his bosses too.

JL: Then you'll understand.

JF: Yea I've heard horror stories on that end.

JL: Oh yea! But the Coast Guard is, they're very tough but they're very fair. They're very business understanding in this industry which is very important. You know let's face it if these business can't operate, then people can't work, if people can't

work, they can't pay their taxes. They can't pay their taxes, the country is gonna be short of money. And stores are gonna suffer, and restaurants are gonna suffer, and schools are gonna suffer. And, you know? So they understand that. People have to work. I mean we want this done right, but you know? And that makes a big difference. A real big difference.

JF: And of course they understand something about making your living on the water

JL: That's right. Absolutely. They do!

[36:28]

JF: Interesting. I don't have any other specific questions. Is there anything about your industry that you feel like I should have asked and didn't?

JL: Not necessarily. Other than, I would like to see the city of New Bedford, be a little more involved and spend, and I shouldn't say spend a little more money, but a little more involved and pay a little more attention, you know, to one of the largest industries in the country is right here in New Bedford harbor.

JF: And is there certain ways you feel that they should be doing that, or – Would that be start the conversation and see–

JL: I would say. Yea. I would say, you know, they need to sit down with the local fishing industry, administrators and some boat owners and some [inaudible]. And start a conversation. What do you guys – They should be looking, what do you guys need, what can we do to make things better for you? To keep this industry strong –

JF: Like adding more berths kind of thing?

JL: Exactly! Perfect example. And you know what the funny part about it is, these guys are willing to pay, they'll pay more money if they have to, they will pay more money for dockage if they have to, if they have the docks. They don't mind. But it's finding out what they need. You know this is the biggest industry this city has, you know? To the tune of a half a billion dollars a year. That's a lot of money. I don't know of any other industries in this city that bring in that kind of dough. And yet, I think there's a lot of people down here that feel this industry is being neglected because, it's almost like, well it's, how should you put it, well everything's going fine, everything's running fine, they're doing great, so we don't have to pay attention to them. You have to gotta be proactive, and not reactive. Because if all a sudden National Marine Fisheries decides to close down a huge portion of this fishery, the city will have a serious problem. If that money's not coming in, there will be a lot of people out of work. They need to get a little more involved in what's going on down here, you know? I think it's the private sector and the commercial fishing sector can work very well together. Like the fast ferry terminal here which doesn't bother the fishing fleet. They're not taking up any docking space because the fishing fleet can't dock at State Pier anyway. It's a state piece of property. There's other areas that they can, you know, they need to talk to these guys to see what can we do to make your life better. Make things easier for you to make a living. Because if you make a good living, the whole city does well.

JF: The only the other question I've sort of being ending with people is for like the festival visitors that come, what would you want them to understand about the industry? Would it be that same kind of thing?

JL: It would be, yeah, I would want them to understand how really important this industry is to the country, and it really is. I mean, I think, and I'm not sure if they have it out here, I'm gonna go – I was here last year with my daughter, and my wife is gonna come down in a little while with my daughter, and we're gonna take a walk around again. This is my industry too. What I would really, and I'm not sure if they have it out there, and if they do you can correct me, but what I would like to see is some actual figures that they can put on a huge board that can the show the public walking around exactly what this industry in New Bedford, Massachusetts, does for this country. You know how much, how many pounds of scallops they supply, and fish they supply, and where it goes, the distribution network, how much is the total catch, what they actually catch out here. Cause I'm sure there's a lot of people from out of town who don't understand it if they're down there. I'm sure, I would say that 75% of the people in New Bedford don't know those figures.

JF: Yes, I understand that's there's a real sense of this side of the highway and that side of the highway

JL: That's exactly right. And for people who come down and look at that and say 'Wow! I've never realized how big New Bedford was in the commercial fishing industry in the United States of America.' And it's huge, it's huge!

JF: I think you're right though. I mean, I think those facts and figures area scattered throughout the guide. But that's a great idea. I'll pass it on to Laura too. She's the director.

JL: We all know that in the industry. We all know. But that's in an industry newsletter or an industry known thing. I don't think the general public has any idea.

JF: Like a 'Did you know board?' Or something.

JL: Yeah. Exactly.

JF: That's a great idea.

JL: And this is New Bedford, Massachusetts. And it produces more seafood throughout the nation than any other port.

JF: Well, this was fascinating. I knew nothing about this.

JL: Well that's ok. Thanks for calling me. I was happy to be here.

JF: Great. Thank you.

JL: Thank you. It was a pleasure meeting you.

[40:50]

[End of Audio/End of Interview]