

Name of person Interviewed: Jack Saunders [JS]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known) 80

Sex Male

Occupation Owner of Pier Oil, New Bedford

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)

Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel [JGF]

Sound technician: Jeff Sherman [JSh]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Sunday, Sept. 28, 2008

INDEX (minutes:seconds) / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: [00:00] Newfoundland; Fishing; Dragging; Lumping; World War II; U.S. Navy; Boat fuel business; Norwegians; Portuguese; Government involvement; Seafood coop; Wooden boats; Steel boats; Eastern rig; Western rig; Boat technology; Russian fleet; Georges Bank; Grand Banks; Barges; Tow boats; Double hull barge; Coast Guard; OPEC

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[00:00] Newfoundland family background; Family's fishing background; Father owned boats; Father's boat requisitioned during WWII, lost at sea; Lumping as a teen; Navy after high school graduation; Fished with father five years after Navy; Worked for brother's Paul/tanker owner after fishing; Continued his own business after brother sold to seafood coop; Still involved but doesn't pull hoses; Navy boat requisition procedures; Father captain other boats after his taken;

[04:58]

Enjoyed fishing/liked the water; Lumping good pay at the time; Lumping work shifts; At docks with father from early age; Switched to oil business because his brother needed help; Seafood coop took a lot of business after it started 1980; Mainly Norwegians, Newfoundlanders, then; Portuguese owned smaller boats; Government subsidies to upgrade fleet; Wooden boats versus steel boats;

[10:00]

Wooden boats versus steel boats (cont'd.); Eastern rig versus western rig; Working on his father's boats – shifts; Russian Fleet at Georges Bank;

[15:02]

Russian fleet (cont'd.); Grand Banks ruined by overfishing from many countries; Buying his fuel barge in Gloucester; Borrowed money from Atlantic Richfield oil company; Changes from early fuel prices; Had another barge and a tow boat built locally; Has a double hull barge, Coast Guard will be requiring these; Daughter also in the business;

[20:00]

Double hull barge buoyancy issues, needing a tow boat with higher pilot house; Barge names are numbers—too many daughters to name after them; EPA regulations about fuel with no sulphur; Difference between boat diesel and home fuel; Government presence in too many places now; Issue of nitrogen from wastewater; Boat fueling process;

[25:02]

Boat fueling process (cont'd.); Used to fuel Coast Guard lighthouse; Fuel hoses description; Fuel amounts boats take; Today's fuel prices; Not a lot of boat business when no more days at sea; Other customers besides boats;

[30:08]

No special clothing for fueling boats; Boat tanks and ballast when fueling; Tankerman's license to drive tow boat; Company has three employees; Daughter is bookkeeper; Tow boat operation; Harbor weather conditions;

[34:51]

Harbor weather conditions (cont'd.); Weather conditions that will snap the stays; Boats under twenty-six feet to avoid Coast Guard regs about engineers, etc.; Each barge two large engines; Also keep barrels to supply other things like hydraulic oil, oil tank lube; Keep other object on boat that they might need—flashlights, duct tape, etc.; Hard work competing against bigger companies when he started out; His business too small for seafood coop to put out of business;

[39:59]

Long-time customers, some are sons now skippering their fathers' boats; Government regulations and interference; Business hours; Festival good job of showing people the skills things take; Change in fuel prices before and after OPEC; Reminiscences of social life as a young man; Still enjoys being involved in the business every day;

[45:06]

No intentions of retiring; Remembers Roosevelt's visit 1934; Trolley memories; Beer ten for a dollar after got out of Navy, socializing with friends; Brother Paul died a couple years ago from kidney failure

[End of interview]

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

JGF: This is Janice Fleuriel. Today is Sunday, September 28th, 2008, at the Working Waterfront Festival. I'm in the Harbormaster's House in New Bedford. And I'm going to be interviewing Jack Saunders who I believe is the owner of Pier Oil.

JS: Right.

[Sound check]

JGF: Alright. So normally, we just ask people to start if they would by talking a little bit about your personal background, when you were born, and whether your family had any involvement in the industry or how you came to this area.

JS: OK. My mother and father were born in Newfoundland. They came from a fishing family. I was born in 1927. My father owned a couple of boats, the Emily H in the '20s, and the [?Catherine] Saunders in the late '30s.

JGF: And was that Catherine Ca... or Ka...?

JS: C.

JGF: C. OK.

JS: Catherine. That's my grandmother.

JGF: OK.

JS: And the boat was taken by the government in 1942.

JGF: Oh...

JS: They made a mine sweeper out of it.

JGF: Wow!

JS: Yeah. She was lost down off Cape Hatteras around 1944 in a bad storm. A whole crew got lost.

JGF: Wow. Was that then as part of fishing or part of the mine sweeping.

JS: No it was part of the U.S. Navy.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Wow. Huh.

JS: I came down to the dock probably in 1940. I was lumping. And going to high school, all summer, my brothers and I lumped on the dock.

JGF: Wow. Starting at age thirteen then?

JS: I was fourteen.

It was 2.50 a day. People in the mills only made thirty, forty cents an hour. Fifteen or eighteen dollars a week. You know, in 1940.

They started a lumpers union in 1940. And we joined for two dollars, to join the union. And I think it was a dollar a month.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Hard times.

I went in the Navy in 1946. I graduated from high school, I went in the Navy. And I came out in 1948. And I went fishing with my father for five years.

JGF: What kind of fishing?

JS: Big hundred foot dragger. My father's boat named the Mary and Joan. Named after my two sisters. I stayed with him five years, and went to work for my brother Paul who owned a small tanker.

JGF: OK..

JS: Fuel tanker.

JGF: Huh. OK.

JS: And he sold it out to eh seafood coop here in New Bedford in 1960. And I went on my own with trucks. And then, a couple of years later I bought a fuel barge, up in Gloucester. And..., I'm still here fifty-eight years later.

JGF: Yup. Wow.

JS: Still doing the same thing.

JGF: Still doing the same thing.

JS: I don't pull the hoses anymore, but I'm here every day.

JGF: OK.

JS: [Chuckles]

JGF: Yeah. Alright. I'm going to ask you more about Pier Oil. But before we get to that I had a couple questions from what you said.

When the government took the boat, was that compensated?

JS: No, they took—well I don't know if you call it compensated, but they took about a dozen from this port.

JGF: Yup.

JS: They were like hundred foot draggers. And being wood, they—either they couldn't... You couldn't have a steel boat because it would attract the mines. And a wooden hull, that's why they were wooden.

JGF: Wow....

JS: Yeah.

JGF: So but your father didn't get paid for that boat by them?

JS: They compensated them so much a month.

JGF: Oh, I see. It's like rental.

JS: But he never did get the boat back.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Wow. Huh! I hadn't heard about that until yesterday. In all the five years, that was the first time that got mentioned. And now you have that story. Wow...

Did he feel like... I mean, I'm wondering how he felt about it? Was he just figuring it was just his part for the war? Or was he pretty upset?

JS: Well... There was no—They just took these boats. You know, they requisition them or whatever you want to call it.

JGF: Right.

JS: And we were ten of us in our family.

JGF: Hm.

JS: There were poor times you know, right aft—during the Depression, in the 30s. And... So he went fishing, you know, captain on other boats.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

[04:58]

JGF: Wow... How did you enjoy the fishing work while you did it?

JS: I liked it when I—I like the water.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Yeah. I was nineteen or twenty years old when I went with my father.

JGF: Yeah... [shutting door to cut down on background noise]
JS: They got a poor weekend, the worst weekend we had this summer.
JGF: I know. It's probably the worst we've ever had for the festival. Unfortunately, but.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Hopefully... You know... At least it's not—it doesn't seem like a *total* washout today. But...
JS: It's supposed to get—later on today, I think, the sun is supposed to come out.
JGF: Exactly. So that will be at least [laughs] a nice way to wrap things up.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: OK. Now how did you enjoy the lumping work that you did? Did you enjoy it? Or just the money? Or...?
JS: Well, it was the money. You could get an ice cream cone—a three-decker ice cream cone for a nickel up in Kresges. Or go to a movie for a dime. Yeah.
JGF: So that was good money for a fourteen-year-old boy.
JS: Yeah. Big money. Yeah.
That went home—most of it went home. Yeah.
JGF: Oh, OK. Right. To help out the family. Hmm.
What were your hour—like, was that long—I know, it seems like today the lumpers have to show up whenever the boats come in and, work whatever hours.
JS: Well they generally started at eight o'clock after the auction, the fish auction. The fish auction would go on for..., you know, seventy—sixty, seventy years. But they..., they had the big fish house around here. Sold them to them. Went down with the boat. And, worked all *day*. Yeah. That was a lot of money for us. Yeah.
JGF: Was it very hard work at first? Or were you already in pretty good shape?
JS: Yeah. We were always down the dock with my father when we were seven, eight, nine years old I think. Yeah.
JGF: Yeah. So...
JS: Good days.
JGF: Good days. Yeah?
JS: Work hard.
JGF: What made you decide to sort of going into the oil end instead of staying in, say, the fishing end?
JS: Well I went fishing for—I tried it for five years. And then my brother, my brother needed somebody.
JGF: Oh, OK.
JS: And I just...
JGF: Yeah.
JS: ...went to work for him. Which I was glad. And..., the seafood coop started in '80. They sort of captured a good part of the fleet. It looked like, bad, for the other companies. And..., they were, you know, a big coop.
JGF: Yeah.
JS: At that time, there were Norwegians and Newfoundlanders.
JGF: OK.
JS: Yeah. Portuguese didn't come... You know, they were down here with smaller boats, but... They came over in the '60s. And the government gave them—what do you

call it?—they gave them a lot of money. There’s a word for it... They gave them around sixty percent subsidy.

JGF: OK.

JS: To build... That’s when the steel boats came in. We didn’t *have* any steel boats in here. All made up in Maine, and... Yeah.

JGF: Hmm.

JS: Yeah, that’s when the..., big fleet, the boats—the steel boats came. Everything was wood around here.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Yeah.

[Sound tech arrival/introductions]

JGF: So you were talking about the steel boats coming in, and... What did you think of the change to those boats? Did you like the wooden boats better? Or could you see the benefits of the new boats?

JS: Well, the... The wooden boats went out with the old-timers who *built* them, and caulked them. *Made* the boats. They became extinct.

JGF: They just didn’t pass on their skills...

JS: No. Then fiberglass came in town, so. People who built the little dories, and the sailboats, and everything. That ended too. With fiberglass.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Huh... So it seems like we lost a certain set of knowledge of skills in that change. But do you think that the change to the newer materials was good overall, or...?

JS: And right now, they won’t insure a wooden boat here.

JGF: Oh...

JS: Because they know they were built in the thirties, forties, fifties, and they were just old

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah, when they-- As soon as they go out and we get a bad gale of wind, they start bouncing, and cracking. They open up, and...

JGF: Yeah.

[10:00]

JS: And.... Everything here now is steel.

JGF: Yup. Do you feel generally steel is a more seaworthy boat? Or if a wooden boat stayed...?

JS: Well they made them—they’re seaworthy, no doubt. With all the restrictions the Coast Guard puts on them, you know, they have all kind of *tests* to make them. You just can’t make one like a bathtub and throw it in the water and tip over, you know. They make them—they go through a lot of tests today.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: And they got these good architects and they design them, and...

JGF: Oh right.

JS: You know, for stability.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah... It’s a pretty high-powered business now, it seems like.

JS: Yeah... So, if they go up in the air they get..., you know, they start getting wishy washy. So they make sure that the foundation..., you know... They try to keep everything down, you know, close to the deck we'll call it.

JGF: Right.

JS: The higher it goes, the..., you know, the tendency to tip over, if you don't... If you don't have enough ballast in the boat.

JGF: Uh huh. And that was the same whether it was wood or steel, or...?

JS: Well the wooden boats, they're like seagulls. You know, they just...

JGF: Oh... Yeah.

JS: [Roll up] on top, yeah. But that goes back to Columbus, you know. [Chuckles]

JGF: That's right. [Laughs]

JS: And they knew how to build them boats. You know, to make them stay afloat.

JGF: Right.

Oh there was a question I had... Oh. Did you—they talk about eastern rig and western rig, and where the house is, whether it's forward or aft.

JS: Well the western rig came out with the pilot house forward. And the eastern rig were the—the pilot house was aft, the engine room there, and the people lived forward, in a galley, they called it. And they went down through what they called the dog house. The entryway to... You know, the waves would come over, just go right past it. And they slept there. And they cooked there. And then... Yeah.

Now today they're all..., they're all—most of them are all... They're eastern rig boats but pilot house aft, and the bunks and everything are back there.

JGF: Uh huh.

JS: And the forward part of the boat... There's not—the cook is on the main deck. He's got a galley and everything, you know.

JGF: Oh. OK.

JS: Yeah. We'll call it the eastern rig now, but... Western—eastern and western.

JGF: Right. Did you—you were on the... Which kind?

JS: Eastern.

JGF: Eastern?

JS: Yeah?

JGF: And did you think that was a better setup, or did you....?

JS: Well, at the time it was a good sea boat. You know, boats were built by the craftsman. You know, they knew how to put a boat together. Yeah.

JGF: Right. Right. Yeah....

How was it working under your dad as a captain? Did that go well?

JS: My father was a pretty quiet man. No... Worked six hours on and six hours in the bunk. Six and six, they called it.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: They have eight and four—eight on deck, four on the bunk. They have nine and three... Nine and three is tough. Nine on deck and three in the bunk. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah. That would be. Huh. And that was never in place when you were there?

JS: Well that was in place on the scallopers. But the draggers were always six and six. Yeah.

JGF: And when you were doing it, would there have been many regulations like today? About like, how much they could catch of a certain species or anything?

JS: No... No. No. There was a lot of fish in the ocean, too.
Now the Russians came here in the sixties. And... That's what ruined Georges Bank.

JGF: Huh.

JS: They came here with maybe three hundred and fifty boats at one time. They had a big mother ship with fuel on them. They had a hospital ship there. They... They took like a checkerboard. Forty or fifty of them would go for a mile or two. Fifty would come this way a mile or two.

JGF: Yeah....

JS: And when they cleaned the area out, they'd go to another one. A, B, C, and... And they took everything, whatever was on the bottom they took.

JGF: They were dragging?

JS: Yeah. Yeah. Whatever—Everything was valuable. For them people.

JGF: I heard that they used the entire fish somehow or other.

JS: They what?

JGF: They used the whole fish, like.... Somebody yesterday said...

JS: Yeah, they... The liver they made oil out of it. You know, special oils. The gurry—what they called, they'd grind it up and make fertilizer, or... Well today, the scallops, the people in Europe they want the whole scallop with the guts and everything in it.

JGF: Oh...

JS: It's a delicacy over there. They eat everything. And we just, take the scallop, and put the rest of it overboard. Yeah.

[15:02]

JGF: So now someone yesterday said—I guess he was fishing at one point, when the Russians... And there'd be seagulls all around the U.S. boats, but none around the Russians.

JS: No. Never see a gull, because nothing went overboard.

JGF: Yeah... Wow.

JS: They had a big, a big net that goes from here maybe a hundred feet away. Chock full. Forty, fifty, a hundred thousand pounds. And they pulled it up on a ramp. On a..., like a..., you've got the ramp out here for the disable people. They pulled it up and then it went down below. And everything was saved. Everything...made oil out of different things, and..., fertilizer. Food. Yeah. They froze everything.

JGF: So did you think the 200-mile limit was a good thing?

JS: Yeah. Too bad they didn't start it, you know, ten years earlier. Yeah. But they tried... Like, the Grand Banks. My father fished on the Grand Banks, years ago. And they thought that was a never-ending thing, the Grand Banks. But, you get hundreds of these big Norwegian, British, Icelandish, every... Chinamen, Japs. Everybody came there until they took every fish out of the ocean.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Yeah. It's been closed now for about twelve years. The Grand banks.

JGF: And where are they compared to Georges Banks?

JS: Well, the Grand Banks are off Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Iceland. And, Georges is right off the east coast here. Hundred and fifty miles.

JGF: Yeah.

So what year was it again that you got your fuel barge?

JS: 1962.

JGF: 1962. And you bought it up in Boston you said?

JS: Well a guy had it for sale up in Gloucester. He owned his own dock up there. And he just had his customers come to his dock. And at that time there a lot of boats—foreign boats—coming into Gloucester. He thought he was going to get a lot of business pulling up alongside them and pumping oil into them. But it didn't materialize. And..., he wanted to sell the boat.

So I didn't have any money either. I borrowed twenty thousand dollars off Atlantic Richfield. [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs] Is that the company? The oil company?

JS: Yeah. Yeah.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah. We were selling oil for fourteen cents a gallon.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Yeah. OPEC came in in 1970. Or '72 I think it was. And..., that's when they..., they sent all their kids to Harvard, and Princeton, and, Oxford. And they came back, and said, "Grampa, you know these Yankees are really *screwing* you." And they formed OPEC. Got together, and now it's five—four dollars a gallon.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

Is that true for the boat oil too? It's...?

JS: Well, right now... It went down a dollar in the last month and a half. We were selling it as high as four-fifty a gallon here. And just recently we were down to three..., probably three-fifty and three-twenty. And that bounced back up in the last couple of weeks. To three—by twenty cents a gallon. Yeah.

But they claim it's all those people on Wall Street. These people...

JGF: I keep hearing about the speculation behind it all.

JS: They talk, you know, it's always supply and demand. But, now after all the movements made out, they said it was these people, with the money. Hedge funds they call it.

JGF: Right.

JS: And futures.

JGF: Right.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: It's crazy. Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: So... What did your barge look like? You probably had one when you started? I don't know if you have more now, but.

JS: Well we have two right now. I had one built over here in Fairhaven in 1987.

JGF: At Kelly's?

JS: No. This fella—he's dead right now. Harry... Well anyway, he built me—he built me the barge. And this John Fitzgerald, builder over here in Fairhaven built me the tow boat. And... And four years ago I built—The Coast Guard... We have about five more years, and everybody's going to have to have a double hull.

JGF: Oh.

JS: So I built a double hull barge.

JGF: Oh good for you!

JS: Yeah.

JGF: You knew it was coming?

JS: Well... I just wanted to build one.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: I'm not going to live forever. And I figured, my daughter runs the business. And, people I had working for me, for years, give them a job.

JGF: Yeah...

[20:00]

JS: And I built one. And... Then we found out there was so much buoyancy in the thing, due to Coast Guard regulations I couldn't use my tow boat. So I had to build a new boat along with it, with a higher pilot house. So you could see, you know.

JGF: So with the extra buoyancy the barge doesn't go so low to the...?

JS: Yeah.

JGF: What's the difference in like, [?how many]?

JS: When we're full we look about half full. [?] too much buoyancy. Two and a half feet on the bottom. But the barge is fifty feet long and twenty feet wide. You know, a big area like that, it's trying to push an inner tube down in the water.

JGF: Right. [Laughs]

JS: Then on the sides, it's two feet. So it's a lot of buoyancy to push down. But... It looks good.

JGF: Nice. Is it steel? Or...?

JS: Yeah. We have it over here on the state pier, both of them.

JGF: Oh, you do?

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Well, I'll have to look when I go back and get my car.

JS: You can peek right from that building right here. You can see... Yeah.

JGF: Do they have a name on them?

JS: Well, when I bought the first one it was Barge number 449. The next one was 450. And this one is 451.

JGF: OK. So if I see a boat with a number painted on it...

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Interesting.

JS: I have five daughters so I couldn't put...

JGF: [Laughs] Unless you wanted five boats, right?

JS: No.

JGF: You couldn't even split those names up evenly.

JS: Couldn't pick a name.

JGF: Yeah. [Laughs]

So... How much... Well, can you explain what the kind of oil is? Compared to say, car oil?

JS: It's diesel fuel. It's the same thing as home heating fuel.

JGF: OK.

JS: But now recently, they took the sulphur from the EPA claim that burning the sulphur in it, goes up in the [?unisphere] or somewhere and it's doing some damage. So... We pay around twelve or fifteen cents a gallon more to have the sulphur taken out.

JGF: Wow...

JS: And I really don't know what they add... The sulphur is the lubricant that makes the injectors work in the diesel engine.

JGF: Huh.

JS: And, they put something back in there. Like they took the lead out of the gasoline?

JGF: Yeah.

JS: They put something in there. The lead was the lubricant for the gasoline, mowers, and whatever you have. But...

JGF: And... Did you get your oil from—would it be a southern company, or....?

JS: No, this global oil company right next door.

JGF: Oh, OK.

JS: Yeah, they got tanks right here. They lease this property of these people next door. And put in tanks for home heating. And tanks for diesel fuel.

JGF: OK.

JS: See the home heating and the diesel fuel were the same thing for a hundred years. What you burned in your house you burned in your car, or truck.

JGF: Huh. Interesting.

JS: And now... They didn't want to strap the homeowners for this extra twelve or fifteen cents a gallon. So they're letting them use what they call the home heating, with the high sulphur.

JGF: Oh... OK.

JS: Yeah. Yeah, they're tough, that EPA. You know? Regulations.

JGF: Right. [Laughs]

JS: They catch you throwing a matchstick overboard now, they fine you. You know? People throwing junk out of their car, a cup or something. If a cop was coming by they'd probably get arrested.

JGF: Yeah. [Laughs.]

JS: [Laughs]

JGF: Yeah it's inter—It seems to me like what happens—my husband runs a wastewater plant, so he gets plenty of EPA.

JS: No kidding.

JGF: I mean, the intent sometimes is good but sometimes trying to follow through with them is a nightmare.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: And you can't even get anyone to explain everything correctly to you on their end. And then that's where it gets really...

JS: Yeah they have some awful regulations. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: Nitrogen and stuff like that, going into the water and, supposedly it's killing the fish. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Out in Fairhaven there's a, a [?] Mattapoisett... Fairhaven has the treatment plant. Mattapoisett wants to use—put some of their..., but they dump it right into the *river* right here. Right inside the dyke. And they claim—now they claim it would be too much nitrogen. Kill—well not, *kill* the fish but, it won't do them any good. Clams.

JGF: Yeah... And the way I've heard it too is..., some of the fishermen have said that that causes algae and it prevents the fish from using them as spawning beds.

JS: I don't know.

JGF: Yeah. That's one theory, but... It's an interesting, complex thing.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: So you have your two boats and you don't actually have a pier or tanks yourself? You just have the boats that you go fuel them up at the other tanks?

[25:02]

JS: We've got twenty-five thousand gallons we swim around *with*.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Yeah. We go, wherever they go. Down the [?], go over to Fairhaven, or go up the river. Yeah.

We used to fill the Coast Guard light house for years. We filled that one until they abandoned it. People—three people lived on it, you know, for three weeks at a time.

Coast Guard people.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: You know, maintaining the light.

JGF: Right.

JS: That's about as far as we went. A couple of times a year. They had a regular little home out there. Bunks. And a galley.

JGF: So... It wasn't a home on a boat? It was a home in a lighthouse?

JS: Well the lighthouse... The Coast Guard had quarters out there for sleeping, and eating, and fishing.

JGF: So you would just dock the boat?

JS: Well we'd go out there and put a couple lines out and fill them.

JGF: Yeah. How big are the hoses from your boat? Do they have to be very long?

JS: Well... We generally just pull up to the boat. Maybe we put out ten or fifteen, twenty-five feet of hose. If another boat is inside them, we just crawl over that boat with twenty-five feet more. But they generally—They generally, you know, like around here, two or three abreast all the time. A lot of times if you can't, if it's too far they'll sneak around underneath the bow of the boat. One guy goes aboard, and takes the hose. You know, all kinds of ways you can get to them.

JGF: Are the hoses very heavy to haul?

JS: No. No.

Well, you see pictures of people dragging a hose up to fill your house.

JGF: Same old thing?

JS: Same old..., yeah. Some are pretty close to the street, the fills, you know, are twenty, thirty feet away. Some of the fills are in the back of the home. Sometimes you gotta' pull out a hundred and fifty feet.

JGF: Yeah. Huh.

And it probably varies, but, how much do you end up putting in a boat? At a time?

JS: Well we put in as much as five, eight thousand, ten thousand gallons. And we do small boats, like..., a couple of hundred gallons, three hundred gallons, five hundred gallons.

JGF: Yeah. Wow.

JS: Yeah. Scallopers take around anywhere.... They..., on these, closed area trips. You know, multiple scallops out there. It's like, probably a four or five day trip, they're so full that, a couple of tows to get the deck full. [?] They don't have to steam, and drag a lot. They don't burn much, a couple of thousand, three thousand gallons for a trip.

JGF: Oh...

JS: Yeah. They got to go ten, twelve, fourteen days, you're going to burn, seven, eight, nine thousand. Yeah.

JGF: Huh.

JS: So... At three or four dollars a gallon, it's a pretty good bill. Thirty-five, forty thousand dollars.

JGF: Yeah... [Laughs] I mean, every bill you send your customers must be pretty hefty.

JS: We got to get a Brinks truck down here sometimes to take the money away.

JGF: Would you say that's like one of the biggest changes you've seen then, in your work? Is just the price? Or are there other changes that...?

JS: Well, the price is so crazy. It changes every day now. Years ago it changed—In the summertime, every little one or two cents off, they called it a summertime discount. Nobody's using the heating oil in the summertime. You're not selling much. You know, home heating people. We sell a lot in the summertime.

And now..., a lot of these boats, their time is all done until next March.

JGF: Now? They're done?

JS: Right now. All these scallopers. Maybe they get a trip at—they'll save a trip or two for Christmas. And outside of that a lot of them are all done until next March. And the draggers—our draggers are in *worse* shape. They only have fifty-two days a year. A *year*. And they're knocking that down. Supposedly they're going to put that down to thirty-five. So they're going to kill them people.

JGF: Yeah...

JS: They'll be out of business.

JGF: That's only like five trips, right? At the most.

JS: Yeah. Not even that.

JGF: So is your business fairly seasonal then? Do you do much otherwise, outside...?

JS: No, we work all year.

JGF: Where are you sending your oil when the boats aren't running?

JS: Well, we've got a clam company up here in the north end, that we fill the... Kind of keeps us going.

JGF: That's good.

JS: For the tough times.

JGF: So that's an inshore kind of thing? Or no?

JS: Well, they go offshore, you know, for these—what they call mahogany clams. They bring in *thousands* of bushels. It's like a one-and-a-half, two-day trip. But they make, about three trips a week.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: They got a plant right up here. Multimillion dollar plant. They make—people like Snow's, or Campbell's Soup—people like that buy them. Make chowder.

[30:08]

JGF: Yeah. So the guys that work directly with the hoses, and the oil? Do they have to wear special clothing or gloves these days?

JS: No. Oh, when it rains like these days you put oil clothes on [laughs].

JGF: OK. But not because of the oil.

JS: No. Dungarees or any old... Shorts in the summertime.

JGF: Right. Huh.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Just whatever. Yeah.

And you had mentioned boat ballast earlier. When they fill the tanks, do they have to be careful—Don't some boats have more than one tank like on either side?

JS: Yeah. Yeah they all have multiple tanks, you know.

But they have—We pump like a hundred and fifty gallons a minute. And, they got big vents. And they... A lot of the boats will tell, you know, they only want it up to—say, they have a sight glass. To tell themselves how much oil they got left for the trip. As it goes down, they can see. And a lot of them hold so *much* fuel, like fifteen, twenty thousand gallons, that they don't want it full. "When you get up to this mark here," you know, "quit." So one of us will go down, you know, and watch the mark when you think it's coming. Within an inch or something like that, we shut it off.

But you have to... You can't wander away while you're filling a boat.

JGF: [Laughs]

JS: You've got to stay there with that hose. You know?

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: How long does it... Again, it probably depends on how much you put in, but...

JS: Well, you put in five thousand gallons it might take forty-five minutes.

JGF: Forty-five minutes.

JS: Yeah. Pull the hoses back and off you go. Somewhere else. Yeah.

JGF: So the boats—you just fill them through one place and the tanks have a way of evening themselves out?

JS: They have—the have crossover valves, lines.

JGF: I see. Yeah.

JS: If you put it in this one, it crosses over and fills the other side at the same time.

When we go and get—We go pull over here, when we want to get fifteen, or twenty thousand gallons, it goes in one pipe. And it goes into the four big tanks. They're four seven thousand gallon tanks. It goes in evenly as we're putting it through one pipe. Comes up even. Yeah.

And they're all rigged that way, the boats.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

And who drives the barge? Do they have a special license for that kind of boat?

JS: Yeah, you've got to have a Coast Guard, tankerman's. Yeah.

JGF: OK. Mm hm.

JS: It's a two-man outfit. Whoever's in there first... There's no, like, bosses. Not with our [laughs] company anyway. If you're there first, go ahead. If I'm there—if I'm out on deck, I pull the hose. Because it doesn't make any difference.

JGF: So everyone's licensed to drive, or do whatever?

JS: Most of them. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.
JS: Outside of when you're breaking a new guy in or something.
JGF: Yeah. How many employees does the company have?
JS: My company. We have three.
JGF: OK.
JS: We've been two men on the barge for sixty years. You know, both people have a license. Both people are qualified to run the boat. You know, there's two of us. You get along, you get along. You don't, well, big problem then.
JGF: So you're still on the barge?
JS: NO, I'm on the shore right now. I'm all done pulling a hose after seventy years of it.
JGF: OK. So you're the guy running the company now... And then, the other two are the...
JS: Yeah. My daughter is the bookkeeper. And that's about it.
JGF: OK. That's great.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: And you also mentioned a tow boat. Did you say it was called a *tow boat*?
JS: Well we call it a tow boat or a push boat. Whatever.
JGF: And is that—Is that how the barge gets around? Or why do you have that?
JS: Does that—excuse me?
JGF: Is the tow boat how the barge... Why do you have a tow boat? What does it do?
JS: Well you got to push this—The tank and the two boat are two separate pieces. So on ours, we push it—we pull up on the stern of the barge. We're rigged... And push it.
JGF: OK. So the barge is not driveable on its own. I see.
JS: The barge. No. It's all by itself. We push it. Like these big barges you see coming in up to New York Harbor. They either have, you know, a tow on it. Or they got a big slot that they fit right into it. And they push. But those are big tug boats. You know.
JGF: Yeah.
So, is that very tricky pushing this thing around? With all these boats?
JS: [Laughs]
JGF: [Laughs] You just go slow?
JS: You got to know a little bit about what you're doing, you know.
JGF: Yeah?
JS: Yeah. But it comes. You do it five thousand times. Or fifty thousand times.
JGF: Right.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Right.
JS: You can do it in your sleep.
JGF: [Laughs] Do you ever run into—in the harbor do you run into severe, like, weather conditions that make it too hard to drive it?
[34:51]
JS: Yeah... Really... When the barge goes up, and the tow boat goes down, or push boat goes down, you can snap the stays. We got stays that hold us to it, you know?
JGF: Right.
JS: Wires. And, if you get a good and heavy sea and the barge goes up and you're going down at the same time. It pops them. You know, they [?drag]. But generally it's

only one, so you just turn the wheel hard over and you keep pushing until you get a new line out on the other side. And..., get out of there, get back to the dock before you bust everything up you know?

JGF: Yeah. [Laughs] God!

JS: Yeah we have some bad weather out on the river here.

JGF: Oh that's right. You go right up the river.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Hmm. Wow.

JS: But we're not rigged for ocean stuff, you know.

JGF: Yup.

JS: Because of that, bouncing back and forth.

JGF: Yeah....

JS: The big..., big hundred and fifty foot tugs that push, they've got so much power that they're always in that slot. You know, they don't bounce around like that.

JGF: Oh... OK.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Interesting.

JS: We're small. Well you have to keep them under, under twenty-six feet. For the Coast Guard. Otherwise you have to go into a bigger license. And then you've got to have an engineer. You've got to have deck people—It's crazy. So we keep it small. With a lot of power. Three, four hundred horsepower.

JGF: Wow.

JS: And... We have two engines, like two hundred horsepower a piece. For a little twenty-five foot boat. Which has got a lot of..., moxie.

JGF: Yeah [laughs].

So that has its own fuel..., fuel capacity [laughs].

JS: Yeah. It's a three hundred gallon tank for our own supply.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Yeah.

We have barrels. You know, people want hydraulic oil, different types of oil. We pump—we also pump that.

JGF: Oh... OK.

JS: So.

JGF: Do you use a separate container for separate oil?

JS: We have two seven hundred and fifty gallon tanks, for two types of—the most practical oil that they use. And then if they—we carry twenty-five barrels of different things. For... A lot of people don't have tanks, lube oil tanks. We give them five gallon cans. They come also with five gallon cans.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: And we keep all kind of stuff on the boat. Flashlights, rags, tape, grease. That..., you know, things that they need...

JGF: Oh...

JS: That they can't buy offshore.

JGF: Oh OK.

JS: Lightbulbs...

JGF: So like a little general store, too.

JS: Yeah.
JGF: Oh, that's interesting.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Wow. Duct tape?
JS: Duct tape. Yeah.
JGF: You do? [Laughs]
JS: Yeah. They use a lot of that.
JGF: That's—Everyone always makes the jokes...
JS: They use that for patching their oilers.
JGF: Oh... OK.
JS: Yeah.
I bought a roll of that gorilla tape, they call it. The duct tape?
JGF: Yeah.
JS: You can't even get it off—it's so hard. You can't even—It's hard but it wears like iron.
JGF: Wow.
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Wow.
JS: They call it gorilla.
JGF: Gorilla tape.
JS: Like the gorilla glue they've come out with. Yeah. Real tough stuff.
They put that on a patch when they..., on their oilers, you know. Yeah, the oilers are pretty expensive now. A hundred and thirty, a hundred and forty dollars for a set.
JGF: You don't just replace them without...
JS: Well you can't replace them with Sears and Roebuck stuff. Because it's like paper, you know? That stuff.
JGF: Yeah...
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Yeah.
JS: They've got to be durable. Yeah.
JGF: Right. Huh. Interesting.
Well, I don't really have any more specific questions but I always like to end every interview with two. And the first is, is there anything I haven't brought up that you would have liked to share? Either about your own fishing days or about your business?
JS: Well... There's a lot of hard work when you're a small company. You're competing against bigger companies.
JGF: Oh... Right.
JS: Yeah. Yeah. There were five big companies here when I started.
JGF: Huh.
JS: And I sneaked through—I kept on going. Night times. And Sundays. And holidays.
JGF: Oh...
JS: Yeah.
JGF: So... The word sort of spread that you were always available for people?

JS: Yeah. Well, we had... My father, you know... My brothers were fishermen. Well, we knew all the people. We knew a *lot* of the people. We were brought up with them, you know.

JGF: Yeah...

JS: And... Just kept at it.

JGF: Right.

JS: All them companies are gone today.

JGF: Huh.

JS: Big companies.

JGF: Really.

JS: That this seafood coop put out of business. They couldn't get me. Because I was too small.

JGF: Yeah?

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Interesting.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: Huh. So I assume you've had a lot of customers—long time customers?

[39:59]

JS: Yeah. Some of these... We have a lot of rebels come up here in the summertime. We've had thirty, forty years of those. Their sons are skippers on the boats now.

JGF: Wow...

JS: Yeah the same people. Forty, fifty years ago. Yeah.

Well we gave them good service.

JGF: Yeah.

JS: Helped them when, you know, a little bit, when they're here.

JGF: Right... You said help them a little bit when they're here...?

JS: Well, sometimes, they needed a..., you know, a truck to go get groceries or something.

JGF: Oh.

JS: Or they needed, somebody to go to Boston for them to fill out these forms that... There are so many forms now that they have to have.

JGF: Yeah....

JS: If you catch lobsters, you got to have a lobster.... If you catch scup, you got to have one for scup. If you catch scallops... There's so many things that the government is poking their nose into. All the time, it's something different.

JGF: Yeah... Huh.

JS: And everybody's got the things underneath the hull, for the satellite to tell them if they're crossing the line.

JGF: Oh, the GPS thing. Yes.

JS: Yeah. Because they're illegally there. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah. It's not so independent anymore.

So the hours at your company today, are they still pretty varied based on when people need a fillup? Or...?

JS: Well, we start at quarter of five in the morning.

JGF: Yup.

JS: And, if there's nothing doing, ten or eleven o'clock we quit.

JGF: Yup.

JS: Everybody's got a telephone today. If we have to go back and do something, we go back. But we try to get everything done. You know, so we don't *have* to.

JGF: Right. Right.

JS: You don't leave things undone, you know, every day, so you've got a lot of things... No.

JGF: Yeah....

JS: And some days, if we have to work two or three, four o'clock in the afternoon, we... It's not too often, but. We've got a lot of boats we do. Yeah. Go have a couple of beers later on.

JGF: Yeah right. [Laughs] I bet. Interesting.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: I guess my only other question then would be, what would you want festival visitors who come here to understand about the fishing industry or the shoreside businesses that support it?

JS: I think one of the nicest things I saw here was, the rig with—showing the people how the net works in the water.

JGF: Oh... OK.

JS: Yeah. That was pretty interesting.

But... Shucking the scallops for people, who have no idea how it gets on your plate, you know. Until they see it. Is pretty interesting. Yeah. Filleting the fish. I don't think they had any fish filters here, though.

JGF: I don't know. In past years they've had them in the foodways tent, demonstrating.

JS: Yeah. But, people filleting the fish, they do that in seconds, you know.

JGF: Wow. That would be fascinating.

JS: Yeah. Seconds.

JGF: Huh. I don't know if they've ever had a contest around that or not. Yeah.

So, sort of like to gain an appreciation of the skills that it really takes to get the food onto their plate.

JS: Yeah. A gasoline... On the..., on the news last night, 1962, gasoline was thirty-three cents a gallon. In '72, '70 before OPEC came in, it was five for a dollar. 1970.

Gasoline. Five for a buck. You want to take your girl down to Horseneck Beach, could go in with a half a buck get three gallons of gas.

JGF: Yeah...

JS: Yeah. No more of that.

JGF: Did you ever do that?

JS: [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs] I think we have to have another whole separate interview. [Laughter] That's interesting.

JS: Buy a big—a nice big gallon of gin, you know, nice lemons. [Laughs]

JGF: Yeah... You're getting sentimental... [Laughter] That's interesting.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: So it sounds like you've been glad to be in this business?

JS: Yeah. I like to come down the dock every day. Its' something different every day. Yeah.

JGF: It sounds to me like—it feels a little bit like, I don't know if you ever saw the old Television show *Cheers*. But the bar where everybody knew everybody's name. It's like, whoever went there, you felt like you were sort of in your second home.

JS: Yeah. I get up at four o'clock every day.

JGF: Yup.

JS: Every day. My wife's, "Why don't you stay in bed?" Saturday or Sunday or something. You know? I got up about three thirty this morning.

JGF: [Laughs]

JS: Watching too many games last night.

JGF: Oh...

JS: Yeah.

But... It's nice to come down here. Yeah. Wintertime is tough. You know, down here.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

JS: After November, December you get a few bad months. But along comes April and you get the shorts out. Skivvy shirt.

[45:06]

JGF: That's great. So it doesn't sound like you have any intentions of retiring at all.

JS: [Laughs] No, I'm too old now to retire I think.

JGF: [Laughs]

JS: I'm going to be eighty-one next month. Yeah.

JGF: Wow. That's great. That's great.

Well it looks like the work keeps you young. [Laughs]

JS: Yeah. Forty years down here.

I can remember President Roosevelt in a touring car around Wells Square. In..., it was 1934. I was seven years old. I can remember there being, crowds, waiting for him to come by. One of the big touring cars, open air jobs.

JGF: Wow.

JS: We had the open air trolleys. You'd get on a trolley right up the street here and go to Fort Phoenix?

JGF: Yup.

JS: Go right across the bridge.

JGF: Wow.

JS: An open air trolley for a dime.

JGF: Wow.

JS: The trolley came from Fall River to Lincoln Park. And we had one going from here to Lincoln Park. Yeah.

JGF: Wow. I wish they'd never gotten rid of them. From what I hear they were a great thing to have.

JS: Well, you know, the ice company right next door here. Big, tall building. That was their plant for generating the electricity for the whole railway, the Union Street Railway they called it.

JGF: Oh... OK.

JS: That was their plant for making the—you know, like the big plant down below here was for gas and electric. They had their own generating plant.

JGF: Wow.

JS: Right here.
JGF: Wow.
JS: Big ice company now.
You could hop on a—take your bathing suit, hop on the trolley. Government when you got out of the Navy they gave you twenty dollars a week for a year. Fifty-two twenty club, they called it. I got one week, and went to work with my father.
JGF: So then they didn't give it to you anymore?
JS: I only got one. Well I wanted to go to work somewhere. Couldn't get a job anywhere. There was no jobs. Yeah.
JGF: Right. Huh.
JS: Beer was a dime a glass. Ten for a buck. [Laughs]
JGF: [Laughs] Wow...
JS: It's four or five guys... Nobody was working anyway, but everybody had a couple of dollars. Four or five, six guys sit down, everybody put a dollar in. You'd get sixty beers or seventy beers. It was seventy.
JGF: Wow... Hopefully no one took their girl for a ride to Horseneck Beach after that. [Laughs]
JS: Mm. Then you'd go looking for your girlfriend. [Laughter] Yeah.
Saunders, that's my brother's son. [Picture/clipping in Harbormaster House?]
Chris.
JGF: Oh... OK. And your brother is Paul you said? Is that that brother?
JS: Yeah.
JGF: I interviewed him like few years back.
JS: Yeah, he died a couple of years ago.
JGF: Oh did he?
JS: Yeah.
JGF: Oh, that's too bad. Hmm...
JS: Yeah, he used to be the Harbor Development Director, years ago. Yeah.
JGF: Did he take sick or something? Because I don't remember him...
JS: His kidneys let go.
JGF: They did? Oh dear.
JS: He went on the machines that... But around here when they go, after a couple of years they give up, you're so *sick* of those machines. He had one in his house. And he had to be on it about five times a day.
JGF: Ick. I know...
JS: A couple hours each time.
JGF: We had a next door neighbor who opted not to do that. He just...
JS: Yeah. That's what I would do, too.
JGF: Right.
JS: Might as well...
JGF: I mean, it doesn't leave you much time to live your life.
JS: They stretch you out for another year. Torture.
JGF: Yeah. Wow...
JS: Got one of them junkies up the street to bring you about five of them big pills. Take and go to sleep.
JGF: Yeah... Hmm.

JS: Well.

JGF: Well... Hopefully that doesn't happen to you anytime soon...

JS: [Laughs]

JGF:because you seem to love your work too much.

JS: Yeah.

JGF: So thank you very much for coming in.

JS: Alright.

[End of interview]