

Interview #18

Date: February, 2006

Location: Point Pleasant, New Jersey

INTERVIEW

RES: And where were you born?

I: Pt. Pleasant, New Jersey.

RES: You come from a fishing family?

I: No.

RES: Was it a big family?

I: No. I have 2 sisters.

RES: How much education were you able to get?

I: I went to high school, and I went 2 years to college.

RES: Okay. Are you married?

I: Yep.

RES: Do you have any kids?

I: No kids.

[]

RES: And what's your status now, are you owner-operator, or...?

I: Yeah.

RES: And how long you been doin' that?

I: ...you guys with these questions....I guess uh...

RES: Well, when'd you start? I mean if you were born in '64, how old were you when you got on the water?

I: Well, I worked for a guy when I was like 10 years old, but I was just like hired....not hired even....I was the slave. I was the slave.

RES: Of cleanin' fish, or baitin', or what?

I: Well, we used to go pickin' nets and stuff...we had a rowboat off the beach. I guess I got my own license when I was about 12, and I don't know, when I was about 20 I got my first boat out of the inlet. Before that we had rowboats.

RES: Have you always fished out of Pt. Pleasant?

I: Yeah, ever since I was 20.

RES: Have you always been a gillnetter?

I: Yep. We used to go to Cape May in the spring.

RES: Okay. And you always been an [] gillnetter?

I: We go everywhere.

RES: So you could do some offshore stuff as well.

I: Yeah, we go shark fishing in the summer, long line, and a little tuna fishing with a long line in the summer.

RES: So how did you get started in the fishing industry? How did you end up as a slave on the...?

I: Ah, the guy came to town and he was nice...it was fun to out on the boat and catch fish with nets, you know, it was fun. I mean, we did it. He always gave us a couple fish to take home. It was great.

RES: Who's 'we'? Like you and your buddies that were...?

I: Whoever was around, yeah.

RES: Neighborhood kids?

I: Yeah, whoever was around. It was just somethin' that we did. It was just a thing that you could do, and now you can't do it no more, so...

RES: What do you mean?

I: Well, I was a kid, I went out...when I was 12 years old and I wanted to go gillnettin' I went down to the state and I bought my license. You can't do that anymore.

RES: You mean a kid can't, a 12 year old kid can't go...

I: Nobody can. You gotta buy one from someone that's already got one.

RES: So, what do you think that means for the community.

I: It means it's the end. The end of the fishery. When those permits are gone, it's all over. They got a restricted number. That kind of stuff has nothing to do with conservation. All's it has to do with is restricting fishermen.

RES: Why do you think they're doin' that?

I: Conservation has to do with the number of fish that you catch. Not how you catch them, where you catch them, or why you catch them. How many. That's the way it should be, based on science. But it's not based on science.

RES: What do you think it's based on?

I: Well, you see it all the time. The National Marine Fisheries, all they do is they fight lawsuits by the environmentalists tryin' to shut us down. It's not necessarily the fisheries that ever comes to want to shut us down because we're catchin' too many fish. It's all these environmentalists that just don't want you out there.

RES: When did that start?

I: It's always...that's the way it is now.

RES: When you were 12 that wasn't the case.

I: No. 'Til about 6 or 7 years ago, anybody could walk in and buy a state gillnet license. And all of a sudden they say, "well you can't do that no more, you gotta...there's a moratorium...nobody else..." It's just out of control. Spiraling out of control. The youth is really suffering. You know, the kids.

RES: What do you mean? Are they leaving or are they just want to go into fishing and they can't?

I: Well, if a kid wanted to go into fishing he's gotta come up with thousands of dollars to buy a license from somebody.

RES: You were talkin' about the youth and not bein' able to get into the fishery and...

I: Oh, yeah. The poor kids you know, I mean, when I was a kid, I filed for my thing and I got my license, you know. I think it's American that everyone should have the opportunity. I don't think they should limit the opportunity. You know, just because you were there before the kid, how does he have any control over that? He wasn't born yet.

RES: Yeah.

I: It's ridiculous. You know, if there's 1,000 guys out there, well then, everyone can only have 10 f-----in' pounds. 10 pounds, or whatever the limit is, you know.

RES: So, you'd rather just have a hard [TAC] and then total [] catch and then, whoever wants to get in the fishery can catch...

I: That's the American way.

RES: ...a piece of the pie.

I: You know, free enterprise system. That's the way we're supposed to be. I don't know where they come up with this individual quotas and, if you didn't do it before 1932, you're not allowed to do it, and I don't know where any of that came from. I mean, management is not supposed to be about that, in my book, anyway.

RES: Well, how's that affect you? I mean, you got your license. You're still able to go fishing.

I: Yeah, well, it affects me...my license is worth money where it wouldn't be.

RES: But, in a way, that's a good thing. At least economically, right?

I: Well, it's good for me. It's not good for the future of the industry.

OTHER GUY (OG): What it means is that it's bein' phased out.

RES: What is? The industry?

OG: Gillnetting in particular, I think. Gillnetting has been targeted for years. I'm surprised we've actually lasted this long

I: Look at the way it is in this state. We're not allowed to keep any striped bass. None. None. You're not allowed to have any. It's the most abundant fish in the ocean, and you're not allowed to have any. So how can that be by any other reason than political corruption and the fishermen getting screwed out of what they should get? The federal government gave 'em a quota...a commercial quota, and they gave it to the Sports and the Trophy Fish instead of givin' it to us.

RES: So, you think the corruption is at the recreational or the commercial recreational...the charter guys that have more influence on where the fish go than...

I: Sure they do. They just don't want us out there period. Last year they took shad away from us for no scientific reason.

RES: That was just last year?

I: Yeah. Last year, the shad, they took that away. Well, about 5 years ago they made us fight for a shad permit and we got one. And then they took it away from us last year. Not the permit.

They took the...you know...they said there was no quota. They said we're not allowed to catch 'em in the ocean, 'cause we're...they call us ['the ocean intercept'?] fishery. But if you're in the river below us, the Delaware, or the Hudson River above us, you can keep as many as you want. But we're not allowed to keep any, 'cause they're in the ocean. They don't know what river they're goin' in. Now, is that....what is *that*? I mean, that's like a lame excuse for f---in' management, to me.

RES: I've heard that complaint actually from a couple people now.

I: It's outta control. Outta control.

RES: What did that mean for you like if you lost access to the shad fishery, was that half of your income or a tenth of your income, or , I mean what...?

I: Well, in the spring to our small businesses here, the gillnetters, shad come first, you know. And after a long winter, you don't have nothin' in the end, and all of a sudden now, you can't keep your shad because...because why? There's no shortage of shad. Just because they don't have them in the Connecticut River....they've polluted them out. It's pollution. Once again, it's pollution. Pollution kills all the fish to begin with and its just fishermen getting a bad rap. Now [they're sayin'?] everything's healthy. There are plenty of fish. I mean there's more fish now than there's ever been.

RES: Is that true for all species? For fluke?

OG: When we were growin' up they were so small we called them postage stamps. Now, they're all good size.

RES: And when you were growin' up what time period are...I didn't get your information.

OG: 50's, 60's.

RES: 1950's and 60's?

OG: []

I: Flounder. That's another thing they're screwin' with us.

RES: How do you mean?

I: Well, flounder season is always open March 1st. I mean, it's just been that way forever, and uh, now it's not going to open until March 23rd. I don't see how that really affects anything. When you go out March 1st there's about 10 guys on the whole east coast that flounder fish from March 1st to March 15th. I'm one of 'em. I go every year. I take the whole month of March off and go flounder fishing because I don't have nothin' else to do in March.

RES: What do you mean, "take it off"? You leave here or you go out fishing?

I: Well, I'm here. I'm here. This is where I go flounder fishing, see. This is my boat, in the backyard. All the little business owners down here, you know, there's a few people that start to stick their heads out and come buy some stuff March 1st and go flounder fishing. Getting ready to go the weekends. Most of 'em only go the weekends. It's very cold. The weather's terrible then. And I don't see what they're savin' by not opening it until March 23rd. All the businesses run out of...don't have anything to open for.

RES: You mean the tourism business, restaurants, & day shops, and all that kind of stuff?

I: Right. All that stuff. And then, come March 23rd, you know, you got other stuff comin'. I mean, the people can go out and they can catch some stripers, and stuff's around at the end of March. So why not [] flounder season late, and nobody's even fishing in the beginning, I mean that's like conservation in itself. Let these shops and stuff get some revenue in March. You know, I mean, it's tough in that time of year. Just like the shad, it's tough for anything in that time of year. Anything related to the fishing, you know.

RES: Let's keep goin' with your season. When you began you started off with shad, you said...

I: ...that's the first thing that comes in.

RES: ...and when are you on the water by...the end of February?

I: March.

RES: Early March.

I: Middle March. Mid-March.

RES: Mid-March.

I: Mid March. Usually between March 15th and April 1st. That's when they come, you know.

RES: And then you're concentrating on shad?

I: Shad, and then weakfish.

RES: And when do the weaks come in?

I: Right around the same time, you start to trickle a few weakfish in there. That's why we still fish now in March and April. We usually start April 1st, but we used to start a lot earlier, but now it's...lately we've been startin' April 1st, butNow we keep the weakfish and throw the shad back, and the shad are all dead. I mean, you know....

RES: Is it hard to separate out?

I: Well, actually, we use sink-nets for the weakfish and float nets for the shad, so we don't really catch that many, but you know...

RES: You get a few on the margin but....

I: You're allowed 5%....of your catch to be shad.

RES: On board the boat?

I: On board the boat, for the day, now, with the restrictions or whatever they want to call that. So I mean, if you get 10 fish over that, you're throwin' 'em back. They're dead. Shad don't live in the net. It's over. I've heard horror stories of guys catchin' lots of 'em, I have.

RES: On purpose?

I: No. Just the by-catch, like stripers. What's left, you gotta throw the stripers back, the shad back. Weakfish, you can keep a few weakfish. They're gonna close that next year 'cause the beach replenishment chased 'em all away from the Atlantic seaboard. And uh, what else will there be? There won't be anything else. Bluefish. Nobody even like to eat them. The most marketable fish in the area is stripers. I mean it was the biggest market fish in New Jersey.

RES: Did you fish 'em?

I: When I first started fishing we could keep 'em outside of 3 miles. We didn't really venture out there too much, but we did catch a couple out there and keep 'em.

RES: But for the most part, you stayed inside 3 miles... limit?

OG: You caught 'em on the beach, actually.

I: Yeah.

RES: Okay, so shad, weaks, blues, stripers, on occasion. You mentioned tuna and shark, longlining. Was that something you did in the beginning, or was that something you got into later?

I: Later. Later.

RES: So, in the beginning you didn't do that.

I: In the beginning we just fished nets right along the beach out of the rowboats. We anchored them out and they picked 'em up in the morning. Sometimes we rode out, when we saw like XXXX said, schools of fish.

RES: Yeah. And when...when you turned 20 you got a larger vessel then?

I: Yeah.

RES: What kind of vessel did you get?

I: That was a 28 foot skiff built in 1949.

RES: You got a 28 footer. What made you decide to do that?

I: Just what I wanted to do. I always wanted a boat, and there was a guy sellin...

RES: So that was going to be your livelihood rather than...

I: Yeah. That was it. That's what started this whole mess.

RES: Was it hard...to get started at this time? Like financially...

I: Cost me \$3,000 for the boat, and it had nets with it. Came with boat and nets.

RES: Even in 2006 dollars, that's not very much.

I: No, it's not. I mean, and for a kid it was a good opportunity.

RES: What other opportunities were around Pt. Pleasant?

I: None. None.

RES: What would a kid have done if he couldn't go into fishing?

I: Drugs.

OG: Whatever his father did.

RES: Money business, or....

OG: My father was a police [].

I: Everybody seems to think it's easy.

RES: What? Fishing for a living?

I: The whole business, yeah. It's not easy.

RES: Why?

I: It's just not easy. There's been....

RES: I mean, you mean physically it's a lot of hard work...

I: Since I started gillnetting there's probably been 50 different boats with different captains that came around and now they're not here anymore. They didn't make it.

RES: How many were there when you started?

I: When I first started gillnetting in Pt. Pleasant there was....

RES: Say when you started on your own...1984...

I: Right. It was probably 8 skiffs in Pt. Pleasant that gillnetted. 8 or 10.

RES: And by skiffs you mean a 20 foot.

I: Gillnet boats. No, gillnet boats. Period.

RES: So you said, 8 or 9?

I: 8 or 10. 9, 10....

RES: Somewhere in there.

I: There was a couple in Shark River. There was 2 out of Belford. I think there was probably 4 or 5 in Shark River.

RES: What was the rest of the fleet here in Pt. Pleasant?

I: Most of the boats here were draggers.

RES: Draggers?

I: Yeah. Scallopers and clammers.

RES: And did the gillnetters hang...did you guys hang together at that time?

I: Yeah, we all tied up together. There was a...

RES:you knew each other and...

I: 4 or 5 boats that abreast. Yeah. Everybody knew each other. It was a very friendly environment and everyone had a good time.

RES: Like, what about...was there any social organization, like a club, orwhat about a political organization?

I: No.

OG: They used to have a bunch of local guys tie up at the dock. I remember when there was.. all of us tied up on the []....they kicked everybody out.

RES: And when was that?

I: That was before my time. There was even more skiffs then.

RES: Really? So, when you entered, it was almost declining.

I: The end of the era when I entered.

RES: The end of what? The gill...

I: I was one of the last ones that ever came and stayed.

RES: The inshore gillnet fleet.

I: Right.

RES: So, if there's 8 or 10 there now, and even more before then, and even more before, how many are there now?

I: 3.

RES: 3 of you guys?

I: 2.

RES: 3 vessels, you mean?

I: 3. It was 3, in Pt. Pleasant. 4 and one guys like a part-timer. And there's one guy that just started this year. But the one guy started this year and the other guys not going to go anymore, so we're still 4.

RES: Where'd they all go?

I: They just went out of business. That's what I'm tellin' you. It's not necessarily....but the people think you know, you go out, you get a license, you go buy a vessel, you put it out there and you make money.

RES: It's not that way.

I: Not necessarily that way.

RES: But, I mean, they went out of business...did they go get a scallop license if they could, or did they go get a clam thing, or did they leave fishing all together, you know, go work in?

I: All of the above. All of the above.

OG: A lot of the small boats got into scallopin' , which surprised me. [] ...was never any skiffs scalloping...so much bigger boats....[]

I: Yeah. That's more of a new thing too.

RES: Well, now they're getting' \$9, \$10. \$11 a pound for scallops.

OG: Yeah, that's right.

I: Sweet, huh? We were talkin' about that. We never saw them on the beach.

RES: Scallops?

I: We both lived on the beach our whole life, we never saw scallops.

RES: Really?

I: I never saw one.

RES: You mean like, a full one?

I: I never even saw a scallop

OG: I saw 3 of 'em this morning. Like I said, I picked up one, it looked perfect.

I: The only scallop shells you ever see on the beach are the little bay scallop shells. I never ever saw a big scallop shell. Now they're findin' scallops....

RES: What do you think is goin' on there? Are they just getting thicker, or are they...

OG: Seems to be to me...I mean I hear these, got these skiffs goin' for scallops. To me, it's unreal. They just use the smaller dredges, smaller gear, and they're gettin' 10 bucks a pound for scallops. It's unheard of. [Unprecedented?]

RES: When you started, what was Pt. Pleasant like? Tell me about the town, 1984, or the late '70's. How was it different?

I: Small.

RES: Small?

I: Small.

RES: You mean population-wise?

I: Now...

RES: What did a fishing village mean? Everybody fished, or that was the economics, or...

[].

RES: So smaller. How important would you say fishing was to Pt. Pleasant was at that time. Economically, you said it was very important. What about sort of, culturally I guess you'd say...did it feel like a

I: When I first started fishing I felt like you know, fishermen were good people and stuff, and now, it's changed and now you're a piece of shit.

RES: In your own eyes or you mean in the larger community?

I: That's the way people treat you. All these sport fisher boats that are out here, they run over your nets, I mean, they don't even care, like...

RES: You mean, they do it on purpose?

I: Oh, you know they do. I had to cast their lures off the jetty of the inlet and hit the boat, and wrap them in the rigging, and I mean... they cast their lines at you, they throw shit at you, it's unbelievable.

RES: Why?

I: 'Cause they hate us.

RES: Why? I mean are they []

I: We're catchin' all the fish!

RES: 'Catchin' their fish?

I: Yeah, we're catchin' their fish, and they don't even know, like, they know nothing about it. They just see us, we're catching all the fish. That's all. The netters. It's just, it's just the way it is.

RES: So you think they're misinformed?

I: They're *definitely* misinformed. Definitely.

RES: What about the environmental groups? Is that sort of the same thing?

I: I don't mind them groups. They just, they're outta control, you know. They're radicals. It doesn't matter what's right to them, they just want what they want.

RES: And what is it that they want?

I: They don't want you to hurt any seals, they want you to save all the sharks, they don't want anybody to touch anything. Every time you touch something they want you to release it. You know, catch and release has just about ruined the striper fishery. Even now, that everyone says the stripers, they don't even fight anymore. They're all used to getting released. They got no spunk in 'em. Terrible. Terrible! Yeah, terrible! I'll get released! I'll get released! They don't even run anymore. You catch some small ones sometimes they give you a good fight.

RES: They haven't learned yet.

I: Yeah, the big ones, they just lay like a lummox.

RES: So, there is definitely more gill netters back then but how many, like, you mentioned some of the other fishing vessels that are out there: clambers, and scallopers....

I: There was a lot more of them too. There was a lot more scallopers. There was more draggers.

RES: Do you think there was more, like, if you counted all the vessels that were....

I: I would say over the years the fleet has been reduced by about 40 to 50 percent.

RES: From 1984...

I: Probably.

RES: ...to ...

I: In my eyes, I'd say the fleet has been reduced...except lately there has been a rash of day scallopers comin' out of the woodwork, you know, but I would say that in the '80's there was...there used to be fleets of 10 and 12 scallopers out there when we went out there, you know. When we first started monkfishin' you couldn't even set your nets. You would just, they would just ruin your...you would just lose all your stuff, anywhere from the Klondike to the mudhole. I mean there was just fleets of 8 to 10 scallopers everywhere. It was outta control.

RES: When you started?

I: When I first started, yeah.

RES: So, if there's been a reduction in 40 to 50 percent, is that...where did the fishermen go? I mean, are there more crew on the boats, did they move away, did they retire, did they...?

I: No, actually there's less crew, 'cause they came up and all them scallop boats they had 8 or 10 crew members they would go out for trips so many days, and

RES: Now they're capped to 6 or 7, or whatever it is.

I: So you have about 5 or 6 guys and you know, they're only allowed so many days, and I don't know.

RES: I mean, do people move away?

I: They took them guys all out, and now they let all these day scallopers in. The scallopers, all they do is plow the bottom. I mean, you wanna know why there's no fish, and bait and stuff on the bottom, there's no grass, it's just plowed right level. The scallopers that are out there are outta control. They had 'em under control and there was some good stuff happenin'.

RES: What do you mean?

I: Well, with all the restrictions on the scallopers in the '90s...

RES: Closed areas, you mean?

I: Closed areas, all that stuff. Now even the closed areas they let them go in there. So what good is a closed area if the government's gonna give you a trip in there?

RES: Yeah.

I: What good is that?

RES: Yeah.

I: It hasn't been closed that long, you know.

RES: So, you don't think those things are workin' or you think they're just not workin' the way they should? It's hard for you to tell when you're not after the scallops.

I: I don't if it's workin'. It doesn't seem to me like it could be working.

RES: You mentioned monkfish. When did you get into that?

I: 1988, '87. When we started sturgeon fishin' we started catching the monkfish with the sturgeon, and that's how it really started.

RES: You started targeting sturgeon?

I: Yeah. We all had sturgeon permits in state for awhile, and then they took them away.

RES: Was that before or after []. I guess that was before they started.

I: Yeah, that was the first one. That was the first permit they made us fight for, the sturgeon. And then every year they just kept shrinkin' it and shrinkin' it, and shrinkin' it. One year...one of the last years we were allowed 3 fish.

RES: 3 sturgeon.

I: That was our permit, was good for 3 fish. And then the last year they issued it to us they issued us the permit for 0 fish. I don't know why they did that, but....

RES: Hey, that's just to irritate you that they do that.

I: I don't know why, I don't know why they do what they do. They're under a lot of pressure from the environmentalists, and the radical sport fishing groups, you know, they just

RES: What year was that sturgeon taken away from you, do you remember?

I: '96, maybe. Maybe.

RES: What did that mean? What did that mean to you like, in terms of income? I mean, how much would you depend on sturgeon? Was it [really] important, or was it kind of like, that would help you to...

I: Once again, in the spring, when everything comes you know, if you had some of the big [] sturgeon that's out and you got a couple of them, at least they were a couple bucks a pound, you know. I mean, you didn't make a lot of money on 'em, but it was important when you're not makin' *any* money. If it's 100 bucks, it's 100 bucks, you know.

RES: Yeah. So it's hard to say if it's 50% or 5% or 1%...

I: Oh no, it was probably only 5%. I mean, it wasn't a lot of our....

RES: But it could turn a crap trip into a decent trip.

I: 5% percent here, 5% there. Yeah, right. On one day, it might be 80% of the catch if you had 2 sturgeons and it was \$400 worth of fish, if they were 90 pounds and it was...

RES: Yeah. It'd pay for your fuel at least.

I: Yeah.

RES: Were you targeting those, or that was incidental?

I: Um, no...we went after them for awhile. Some of the guys in Barnegat did real good on 'em for a couple years.

RES: Early '90's?

I: Yeah. Right around 1990.

RES: Do you think that it was good to close that fishery, or was that, it just should have been...?

I: Well, I think it started to turn into a free for all. There was a lot of guys fishin', tryin' to get a lot of nets, and they could have capped it or something, but, there's plenty of sturgeons out there.

RES: So, you think that they needed to do something but it shouldn't have been a total closure?

I: Right.

RES: Somewhere in between.

I: I think their science is just wrong when they say it's going to take so many million years for them to spawn, or somethin'I think they said it took 8 years for them to get this big or something like that...or...I don't know....

RES: That doesn't ring true to you.

I: No.

OG: [Did you ever eat caviar?]

I: I only had it once.

RES: What did you think of it?

I: But we couldn't get anything for it..we couldn't sell it.

RES: So, when did regulations start becoming a problem for you?

I: Regulations aren't necessarily a problem for me. I mean, it's just somethin' you gotta live with, I mean...it costs us money every year. I mean, you know, the striper regulation has been in effect since I've been fishing, and frankly, the stripers went down to a population level probably near extinction in the early 1980's or late '70's and early 80's.

RES: And you saw that?

I: Yeah. I was fishing during that, and we always managed to catch a few and throw 'em back.

RES: And they're you see them as thicker than ever.

I: Oh, now it's the most abundant fish in the ocean. There's no doubt. There's no doubt.

RES: Do you think that had anything to do with regulations?

I: No.

RES: That's natural.

I: I think it's natural. I think it's 'cause the bays and everything, you know. When a fish comes into the bay and it lays its million eggs, if there's habitat, and there's good water for eggs to survive, you're gonna have a lot of fish come out of one fish. One fish returns, it could rejuvenate the whole creek. The whole bay. The whole river, like. I think a lot of environmentalists and scientists have got away from that theory and it's really hard [] fisheries. It really has.

RES: So you say some regulations don't hurt you but some do? Is that what I'm hearing you say?

I: I'm sayin' everyone believes that you need regulations, but the way the corruption fits into the regulations like our state here, with the...you're not allowed this, you're not allowed that, when there's plenty of fish out there. There's no reason why you shouldn't be allowed to have 'em, other than someones getting screwed, and right now it's me.

RES: So, if I understand what you're sayin', you don't object to the idea of there being regulations...

I: No. Not at all. I think every fisherman will tell you that there's, I mean, there's greedy assholes out there that'll try to take everything they can.

RES: You just think the way they're being applied is corrupt, 'cause there's problems with who's influencing who.

I: It's very discriminatory.

RES: To who? Who's being discriminated against? The commercial fishermen, or the gillnetter, or...?

I: Well, commercial's being discriminated against and the recreation is being discriminated for, and now they're just realizin' that all the stuff, they can't stop them now.

RES: They can't stop who? Government can't stop ...?

I: Look what they did to this poor fisherman in the state last year with the stripped bass laws. You were allowed one fish between 24 and 28 inches and one fish over 34 inches. If you caught anything between 28 and 34 inches you had to throw it back. I stripe bass fish all the time with a rod and reel. I catch maybe 3 or 4 fish over 34 inches a year. So that just made it so I could never bring anything home that was worth eatin'. The 24 to 28 inch fish, I mean you can't feed your family of 4 with it. It's not enough. When I go fishing, I go fishing to catch fish to bring it

home to eat. I don't go out there playing games, to catch and release, torture the fish and send it on its way just 'cause I want to have fun with it. I want to eat it. That's the bottom line. I think that's another thing that...people come down...what about the guy from Pennsylvania comes down outta the mountains...comes down here for a trip, he's here for 2 days out of the year, and he's gotta only take one fish? Why can't he have some days there, you know? He's not comin' anymore. He's not using that resource. Why can't he be able to fill his freezer and pay for his trip to come even if he's not sellin' it, which would be against the law, but for himself to eat?

Make it worthwhile, so he could take something home. It's ridiculous. I don't think it personally matters if you go down the bay and you catch 6 fish or 4 fish today. I don't think that...I don't think that hurts populations one bit.

RES: Well, I 'm not sure I understand you. It doesn't matter how many fish you catch? Or it doesn't matter how many you catch given that you're only catching 4 or 6 total per year?

I: Well, I don't think like the recreational limits on fish...I don't think that really does anything, except give them a chance to make revenue on ticket sales. Because when you go out there in the bay, if there's a lot of fish around you can catch a lot of fish. But tomorrow, when you go out there in the bay, there ain't gonna be a lot of fish around. You ain't gonna catch a lot. But somedays, you will.

OG: You only get a few good days a year and stripers are the most [] ocean fish in the state, bar none.

I: It's the truth. I mean they all think you're gonna go out there and catch...how many days do you go out there and you don't even catch one? And then when you go out there and you catch 5 you gotta throw 4 of 'em back. Makes no sense.

RES: So, usually one of the questions that we ask is about the way things are managed. You kinda talked a little bit about this but, what do you think about the commission and the council [] processed.

I: They're corrupt.

RES: Corrupt?

I: They're corrupt. I've been to council meetings. I was at a council meeting, a state marine fisheries council meeting when I first started fishing, and I believe it was XXXX stood up there, in front of the place, and we asked him to give us limited entry so we could get some stripers.

RES: So who is 'we'? Was 'we' the commercial fishermen?

I: Yeah, there was a group of us there. There were 6 or 8 gillnetters there, there was a bunch of people there, and a couple of us asked to have limited entry so that we could get on maybe, you know with a control group. We could get our little share of stripers. And he said he wouldn't

propose that because it would be political suicide. That's what he said. I believe it was XXXX. I don't know...I'm not sure...I'm pretty sure it was him, or XXXX.

RES: Meaning that he and everybody else would jump down his throat if he did that.

I: Right.

RES: So, you would actually be in favor of some sort of limited entry system then?

I: We have it! That's what we got! But we're still not allowed to get any stripers! It's not even limited entry. There's *no* entry!

RES: What do you think about what's goin' on in the monk fishery?

I: The monk fishery?

RES: Yeah. Are you depending on that one a lot now?

I: That's our biggest thing. That's what gets us through every year.

RES: Yeah. I've heard that from other people, that's why I ask about it. I mean, is that...?

I: The bottom line is, with all the other restrictions that's what gets us through every year, you know. Yep. If they cut us down next year to 12 days it's gonna be tough. Especially if...you know they keep takin' fish away. They say they're endangered, endangered. They say the stripers are fully recovered. Why don't they give us some? They take everything away...why can't they give us somethin' that's there?!

RES: Sturgeon, shad...

I: [] what about []

RES: Blues, or weaks, or anything like that. Do regulations hurt you in those fisheries, or did you ever really target those?

I: I catch a lot of bluefish and weakfish every year and bluefish, um, several years ago they changed the date and made it so you can't keep them after November 8th.

RES: And what happens....does that affect you, really or...?

I: Oh yeah, big time! Right around Thanksgiving we used to catch a lot of big blues, and around Thanksgiving...right to Christmas almost sometimes, and we get a good couple...

RES: A nice bump of money at the end of the year.

I: Yeah!

RES: Part of what we're tryin' to do is describe these effects...

I: 50% bluefish. That's our gig. We always....

RES: Now or then?

I: Ever...forever. 50% bluefish. That's what we always say.

RES: Well, one of the things we ask about is the changes in your gear over time. Have you had found that you have gotten more gear or different types of gear or how is that...like the practice of gillnetting?

I: We use like different gear for every fish we go for. We got lots of different stuff, all the time.

RES: For example, some people say they used to fish with, you know, they'd have 10 [] whatever, and that was it. They'd just use those and were able to make a living off of that and now they've got you know, high nets and low nets and big mesh nets and...

I: Yeah, everything, yeah.

RES: ...and that's been a major cost for them. That they've had to diversify their nets. Is that true for you?

I: That's true. Nets is our biggest expense. Gillnetters use...I mean, if you don't have a good net you're not gonna do nothin'. Gotta have good shit.

RES: And why is that? Is it 'cause you're into new fisheries like monk or?

I: The nets gotta catch.

RES: That's always been the case, right? I mean they had to catch 50 years ago.

I: Its always been the case but it used to be when you went there you could keep everything you caught. Now your goin' for little specific things. You're goin' for bluefish, or you're goin' for weakfish, or you're goin' for this. We're very high-tech now.

RES: And like shad you can't keep bycatch in a lot of cases. You're saying you...

I: Yeah, well, we got away from them with like I say, we're using the bottom nets instead of the top nets, you know. Like when we go shad fishing we use the top surface nets.

RES: Right.

I: Very highly specified in the nets. You know, I mean gillnetters, basically, we catch what we want to catch. We don't have a lot of bycatch a lot of times. You know, we don't have it, we don't have a lot of crap. Now stripers are tough because usually like in the fall when we're

lookin' for weakfish it's the same thing like. It's the same size fish so you got the same size net, and when they hit it they get you like.

RES: All the same bait too, right?

I: Right.

RES: So, does that need to get more specific in target certain sizes or certain species? Is that because of the market, like you can only sell certain sizes....?

I: I think it's a by-product of the regulations. I mean, if you look at the long run of it, I think it's more of a by-product of the regulations.

RES: So, they put a slot limit on you and they put a gear restriction on you, or what have you....

I: [] Right?

RES: So you can't...you get a 22 inch and you have to be 24....it's no good to you.

I: Yeah well, those are hook and line size limits on the stripers I was talkin' about.

RES: Yeah. No, I was just usin' numbers as an example.

I: Right, exactly. You gotta throw that fish back. And you don't even want it, so , I mean, with us, you know with gillnetters you gotta pick everything out of the net. I mean, you gotta....

RES: Right. So you guys don't want to have that anyway.

I: And the stuff's fine, it breaks. It doesn't last.

RES: So, one of the questions with this limited entry thing that I'm trying to figure out is on the one hand is good, for people in a way, that are in the fishery 'cause it means that nobody else is going to come in, and they're not going to overfish the resources they've been fishing. Like you've been saying, give me a little piece of the striper. And on the other hand, like you're saying, it's a problem for new entrants, for a kid, you know, if he's 18 and he wants to get into fishing, he can't do it because it's a million bucks to get into scallops, or whatever it is to get into.

I: Yeah, whatever it is, you know.

RES: So, what do you do there? I mean.

I: You do the right thing. The American thing and just open it up to everybody.

RES: Open it up.

I: I think if someone wants to go out on their surfboard and get their 10% of the quota they're welcome to go. Let 'em go.

WOMAN (W): But we got screwed on this limited entry crap with the monkfish permits because nobody kept a paper trail prior to '95, and all the records that were kept were destroyed.

RES: What do you mean?

W: Like remember honey, when we got the categories A and B and C.

I: Right. We didn't have enough landing.

W: So, when we had to prove our landing, we got a reprieve from one of the guys, who said it was cool, he understood, we had lost our gear, we didn't finish this one year. The co-op only had so many...a limited paper trail, but he knew XXXX as a fisherman, but the federal government came in and said pooey on you, it's not good enough. So we wound up with a different category than we felt we deserved.

RES: Which lessened your days and...

W: Which lessened..yeah.

I: The limits, yeah.

W: Our limits. And it was really unfair.

I: And we had the landings. We had...

RES: It was a matter of producing the paper...

I: Well, like if you go by the livers, 'cause for every monkfish there's a liver, and back in the old days we used to come in and we'd sell fish for cash. You know, so we'd come in with 600 or 700 pounds of monkfish tails, and the tails would go to a cash buyer, and the livers would get packed across the dock. So you'd have 600 pounds of livers, or 60...whatever the weight was in the livers, right? So, and I had all those livers...them [] but they wouldn't let me have that, 'cause it wasn't monkfish. But they wouldn't give me that, you know, the credit for that. I thought that was pretty rude.

W: I fight with them all the time. I personally...

RES: Who's them? Being fisheries managers, or...?

W: I mean, when we changed our boat, with our permits, right? The permits can only move with the boat, really, in a lot of cases, and we have a 40 footer, 39 foot boat. If he wants to buy a bigger boat he's screwed.

RES: Yeah. Why?

I: We're not allowed to grow.

W: He doesn't have...

RES: ...you're capped on your ...?

W: Yeah.

OG: You're not allowed to grow at all.

I: 10% .

OG: That's what it is....10%...certain amount of horsepower, so...

RES: And is that not worth it, the 10%?

W: It's a major investment.

RES: For only 10% growth.

I: Yeah, you're talkin' 4 feet, you know. This big, right (laughs)? What are you gonna do? Buy a new boat?

RES: Yeah. Well, they did that in Newfoundland too. They put a restriction on what you could do, and that really affected guys.

W: But their attitude was, [with the permit?] remember, I had just gotten the tuna permit and then our new boat was goin' in the water , and the girl says to me, "It's only \$40." I'm like, well then you pay it! It's only \$40. I wanted to transfer the permit, you know. Oh no, you can't do that. It's stupid things that just irritate me.

RES: How much time would you say you spend doin' paperwork related to fisheries?

I: XXXX does all the paperwork.

RES: How much? Hours, days?

W: Too much. A whole day, a month. A whole day a month.

RES: And what does that consist of, like opening letters, or figuring out what's due, and what...?

I: Logbooks.

W: Well, he has a logbook....

RES: Logbooks?

I: I fill 'em out on the boat and she makes, you know she....the ...after you get the pack out ticket you add the correct weight and stuff.

W: Here's the pack out ticket, and his log book, and the settlement from the co-op...

I: She coordinates it all and make 'em all go to...

W: Well, there are several different reports...

RES: Before you send them on to...?

I: Right.

RES: What do you have to report every month?

I: Everything.

W: Landing, gear, fish, [], area, []

I: Where, when, how....

RES: And who does that all have to go to?

W: There's southeast region, northeast region, there's the state.

I: Everyone gets a copy.

RES: So 3 reports?

W: Well, [] report, southeast region, northeast region, []...

I: Depends on what you're into, at the moment.

W: Frickin' ridiculous, and none of it's computerized. Some of it [], some of it [].

I: And they don't even look at 'em. The only thing they know...

RES: It's not just one form you can fill out and be done with it. You gotta do a days worth of crap.

W: Oh, I'll show my logbooks. They're this thick. There's a stack this big of logbooks.

I: And, they get the information right out of the computer at the dock anyway.

W: And then we have to give them...

RES: It's just a waste of time.

I: Just a waste of time.

W: And for the shark and for shark, swordfish, and tuna, we have to do our costs. We have to send them how much money we've spent on fuel, how much we've spent on ice, what we paid the crew, how much the bait costs.

RES: That's for [] longlining, eh?

I: Everything. They want everything. They want it all.

RES: Well, that's a whole separate management deal, right, those guys? Their council.

W: And it's insane. It's absolutely insane. It takes up all day, sometimes a little longer. It takes a day, and it's extremely stressful.

RES: So what would you do differently?

W: Computerize it.

RES: So how would that work? Like, you guys come in with uh, whatever's in your hold...

I: Whatever we pack at the dock...

RES: ...at the dock, they just...

I: Listen, you gotta pack your fish for the licensed dealer. The licensed dealer always punches it into his computer and sends it in the truck. That's where they should get the landing from.

RES: Right, 'cause then it says it all, and it's all...

I: Ridiculous.

OG: But now you can get a program pretty simple and easy where it...

I: Sends it right to 'em.

OG: And it sends it to 12 different people, boom, boom, boom! []

[]

RES: There you go. Then you can add it up, you can aggregate it, you can...

I: If they want the information, why do we have to supply it to them? They want the information, we don't need....some of us don't....I can't even hardly write my name, for cryin' out loud!

W: Then at the end of the year we have to report all of our federal...

I: I mean it's [], you know? There's been guys go out of business because they couldn't fill out their logbooks.

RES: People that you knew?

I: Yeah. Sure. They never filled out their logbooks and,...old XXXX, he lost all his...

RES: So they got pinched afterwards 'cause they didn't...

I: No, they didn't get pinched. They just...if you don't fill 'em out and send 'em in then they don't renew your permit, and then they just let it go. It's like one of them, couple of them guys that didn't make it, you know. There's reasons why they didn't make it.

W: BUT if they don't send you the permit renewal, and you forget that it's due,

OG: It's your fault.

W: It's our fault. Just last night we had that conversation, right? And I have to go look up when, we have some due in April, some due in May, and....

OG: XXXX lost his seabass permit.

W: ...and it's insane. It's anything that they can do to jam us, they'll do.

RES: Why is it like that? I mean, why do you think....is it because of this pressure you're talkin' about from [] groups and environmental groups?

I: I think so. They're just tryin'...

RES: 'Cause everybody needs fish right?

I: They're trying to dwindle the number of boats.

OG: The thing that scares me the most was that, I dunno, maybe it was a year ago, in the newspaper it had a big article and the bottom line of the article was, "if you want to eat deer meat you don't go to a store and buy deer meat. You go out, hunt and kill your deer. Now you got deer meat". And what it was was kinda saying "we don't need commercial fishermen". If you wanna eat fish ...

RES: You gotta go get it.

OG: ... you go out, catch one, and bring it home and eat. That's what I got out of it, and that was right in our local newspaper.

W: Well you know that statistic that 75% of the fish caught here, or, 75% of the fish consumed in the United States is imported...

RES: Yeah.

W: ...and most of our fish is exported. Who's making the money? Because we're not. We make the same [] on a pound of fish that we made 10 years ago.

I: Alright. He's got more questions. He's gonna run out of tape.

RES: Well, actually no, I go plenty of tapes. I will get out of your ears, I'm sure that ...

I: Oh, don't worry about that, I just don't want you to run out of...

RES: No, I got....that's actually one of the questions we ask about. We don't ask for numbers in terms of like, how much, but, your profitability over the years. Has it gone up? Has it stayed the same? Has it gone down?

I: Pretty much stayed the same.

RES: Well, I hear 2 things. Has it ...down, or stayed the same? She said down, he said

I: We got the same prices now as we always got.

RES: Yeah, but your profits, I mean 'cause costs have gone up, I think. Fuel, for sure, and insurance, in a lot of cases....

I: I'd say the mean price has gone up maybe, of fish. Just judging, you know, sometimes we get really good money. Like we got 80 cents a pound for bluefish and mackerel and stuff. [], you know what I mean? There's times where you get a good price, but the bottom line is sometimes we still get the same prices. You know, the government, maybe if they're not going to let us catch the fish maybe they gotta give us some money for the fish. You know, maybe they gotta make it so we...instead of getting' 10 cents for our bluefish they give us 60 cents, or somethin'. Make it worthwhile.

OG: Well, what I see what's happened is the government, through regulations, is causing more people to work on one species at one time. Well, it's supply and demand. If you got 20 boats and all 20 boats have to work on one species for the month of January, well, what's the price of that? Goes right down the tubes. They buyers know it. The markets know it.

RES: So, you're gettin' glutted in blues or weaks or whatever...

OG: Right. You know, open season on bluefish January 1st. But that's all they can fish for. So we know on January 2nd, we got 20 boats comin' in landing with bluefish. Well, everybody down the line knows well, "we ain't gonna pay no money". Now, not only beatin' the death outta that one species...

W: I got [].

RES: And then you can move around.

OG: You're killin' the price, where...

RES: So the price for blues is crappy, but [], whatever it was...

OG: Well, you always have 3 or 4 boats which they []. Couple boats flukin', couple boats maybe squidin', [].

RES: That's flexible.

OG: Yeah. Well now, they're stoppin' you from that. Everybody jump on the fluke, you know. Well, they know, come January 1st, January 3rd everybody's landin' with 75 boxes.

W: It's a commodity. Whoever comes in first, wins.

OG: You know, if you just happen to get in on the first and everybody else come in on the 2nd, well, then you're gonna...might do a little bit better. That's where I think the regulations are hurting everybody.

RES: Marketwise.

OG: Yeah. It's just...and you're [] hurting all the fish. You know, you targetin' one species. But, you got no other choice. You wanna make half a paycheck or you wanna make no paycheck?

RES: What kind of fishin' do you do?

OG: I'm not anymore. I got kinda...little...I wanna say smart but when I had my son I needed benefits.

RES: Took other work?

OG: Yeah. I'm in the union of electricians. Thank god! I mean, I'd love to go back fishin'. I love it. I miss it to death, but, the other one pays the bills.

RES: Speakin' of markets, how about how your catch has been marketed. Has that changed over time? Like how it's been distributed and gathered and all that.

I: No, not really.

RES: How do you do it?

I: We pack our fish and they sell 'em.

RES: They? The co-op?

I: The co-op sells 'em, yeah.

RES: So, you've always done that?

I: Yeah.

RES: Do you like that system?

I: I'm not a seller.

W: Yeah.

RES: Yeah, it's good. They take care of most of the...

I: It's over.

RES:...hassle? What about...a couple more questions on infrastructure. Has that changed a lot? Like, is it...are there more docks and ice, and all that kinda stuff, or is that...?

I: It's roughly the same.

RES: The way it's always been.

OG: It's always been just the co-op around here.

I: Yeah, it's the same. It's been around the same.

W: But then you have [], right? Don't they pack?

I: Yeah, and the clam dock does a little bit, and it always has, you know.

OG: I'd say, if anything it's went down. That's a []. That's for sure. I mean years ago you had Swedes...

I: Yeah, you had Swedes and Carlsons...

OG: Carlsons, which aren't there anymore.

I: Right.

RES: So, it used to be 3 docks where you could ice and fuel and all that?

OG: It used to be 4 at one time.

RES: 4?

OG: You had the coop, clam dock, Swedes, and...

I: There used to be a couple guys that did private packing. They packed themselves, and stuff. You don't see that anymore. Well, you can't now, you sell to a licensed dealer.

W: Well, and the [] tried. They tried for 20 minutes, the fishermans supply, to pack out, right?

OG: [] dock too, that ain't there no more. He was the biggest [exporter?]

RES: So, what do you see in 10 years? For you it will be retirement?

W: I hope so. He can't work like this forever.

RES: You mean the hours, or you mean the hassle of the regulations, or you mean...?

W: All of it.

RES: ...profits? Or all of the above?

W: All of it.

I: Look how much grey hair I got from them regulations!

RES: So you think you'll be done in 10 years?

I: I *hope* I'll be done in 10 years.

W: I think the real scenario

I: I hope my business will be in business for 10 years.

W: And we'd like to have somebody run the boat, eventually.

I: There's no certainty in the future, you know. They give you permit and all they do is take it away. That's something they can take away once they give it to you.

W: It would be nice to have somebody run the boat, and for us to

RES: Hire a captain?

W: Yeah.

I: God, that'll work!

W: Well, we've talked about that, you know.

RES: It's expensive.

W: Yeah, but [as long as you're getting both shares. You...have your boat?] and you still have your permits. That's your major investment, you know.

RES: Yeah. So you treat it that way.

W: It'd be like a supplemental income.

RES: Yeah.

I: And you know, limited entry with the permits being worth money, that's just a big joke because they just keep...there's no certainty in the permits. They keep puttin' restrictions on 'em and changin' this and changin' that and changin' this.

OG: Which deflates the value of the []

I: Yeah. Who's gonna buy somethin' that doesn't have any secure future?

W: Well, we were gonna buy a permit a couple of months ago and it was like how can we buy this permit when we don't even know if...

RES: ...if it'll be valuable in 10 years or 5 years, or whatever.

W: What'd the guy want? He wanted 60 grand or something for the permit, right?

RES: For what? For what permit?

W: That's the tilefish permit.

I: Oh that one! Yeah, that was a lot!

W: And then it was like, what are they gonna do with tilefish, you know? Plus it's considerably more risky fishing from my point of view.

I: Especially us, with our little boat.

W: ...out in the deep, you know.

RES: Are you still...I should've asked that. You pointed to it earlier, but how big's your boat now?

I: 39 foot now.

RES: You went from a 28 to a 39. Was there anything in between?

I: Oh, there was another one. 37.

RES: Why'd you get bigger?

I: Opportunity.

RES: But, was it a safety issue, or was it a production issue. Like you needed more space to...

I: No, no, no. We just had that boat and this one...all of a sudden we found this boat up there...it was cheap and we could get it and rebuild it, you know.

RES: Yeah. And when you rebuilt or refinanced, whatever, you decided to go bigger.

I: Yeah, well...it's just the boat that we just happened to be able to get at the time.

RES: Did you buy the biggest that you could get at that time? Like one of the things we're interested in is whether or not boats have gotten better on the whole, or some people are getting power boats.

I: Boats have got bigger I guess, right? Everyone wants a bigger boat but...when I got my 2nd boat it was a bigger boat. I was a creature of opportunity. It was cheap. And then the next boat was another el cheapo we just managed to get, and it was a good deal, so we got it and fixed it up, and got it, you know.

RES: What about your work schedule? Day to day?

I: We don't have any.

RES: What do you mean?

I: We don't have any work schedule. Another creature of opportunity. We're out there when the weather's right.

OG: 7 days a week.

RES: Right. But, I mean, is that...you go out when the weather's decent, when you can, and when the fish are runnin' or available, or whatever, but have the hours that you work in a given week changed over time, or is it pretty much the same? Like, for example, some guys talk about

scallop trips are longer now, or shorter now than they used to be. They used to go out for 7, 8 days, 9 days, whatever it was, now there's...

I: Yeah. Well we used to go out and what we would do is we'd go out and we'd go, we'd pick our monkfish nets, and we'd go out and set some tilefish line, and then we'd pick our monk nets on the way in, and we can't do that anymore now 'cause we gotta call in and call out and use the clock, you know. We're on the clock on the days at sea, and you can't like...like we used to go bluefishin' and monkfishin' at the same time sometimes, and we'd stay out you know...

RES: You'd set your monk gear and then go get other stuff.

I: Well, the monk nets usually stay out, you know. So you be fishin' for bluefish and before you came in you'd haul your monk net, but that's against the law now. So you can't do that anymore.

OG: Which [] costs more fuel to...

RES: [] in, order out.

I: Well, you just don't do it.

OG: You lose the tides.

I: Yeah, you just never wind up doin' the other thing.

OG: 'Cause there's not enough time then, runnin' in and out.

RES: So, now you just gotta go out, set, leave 'em, come back.

I: You can't waste your time when you're monkfishin', 'cause you're on the clock. You only got so much time.

RES: So would you say the average number of days you work in a given week has gone up or down, or is it about the same [] doing it?

I: It's about the same.

RES: About the same. You're doing it differently.

I: Yeah. No matter what the regulations do, we just do something else. We have to work. We cannot not work.

RES: You're always workin' around whatever...

I: We're always workin'.

RES:...challenge regulations present.

I: We're always doin' somethin'.

I: Well, like I said, that guy told us that time it would be political suicide to introduce that, you know. I mean, that's not management. No matter what you say when you go to them meetings they go behind closed doors and do what they want anyway.

RES: So you feel like it's a waste of time to

I: It's a waste of time.

RES:for the average commercial fisherman to show up.

I: It's a waste of time. They got their agendas all made up.

OG: It's just a steppin' stone....

I: That's it.

OG:... to clear them, you know. Let 'em give their opinion, but we already got it made up.

RES: We had our public meeting, we listened to the fishermen...

OG: Which that I think is the biggest crock of shit. They [don't know?] any scientists, this and that. Ain't one of 'em stepped one foot in the ocean. But they got all the answers. And they don't come and go up to guys like XXXX or whoever that's spent, you know, I'm a sport fisherman too, I'm on both sides of the fence. The shit they pull on these [dogfish?]. When there's nothing left in the ocean because the dogfish ate 'em all but they said there's a shortage of 'em.

RES: Shortage of dogfish.

OG: Right. Now, you can't get away from 'em. Not only are they destroying gear, the hook and line fishermen, they get 200 dogfish around a piece of ground, what's left? They're eatin' every little thing that's that big. Gone! Like that!

I: And the only reason they stopped 'em from catchin' dogfish was because there was guys dogfishin' here in the spring of the year and they were catchin' a lot of stripers in their nets. And they got wind of that and said, "oh, there's a shortage of dogfish". Yeah, that's right. We can't have them catchin' them anymore.

RES: You think that was just an excuse.

I: Oh, it's all about stripers. It's all about it.

OG: And there's another thing that eats everything in the ocean. We're bass fishin' on the beach, rod and reel fishin', comin' home cleanin' fish, [] that bass, 12, 14 weakfish, you know this big. []. And you could tell exactly when the bay is emptying out, of all the baby sea bass, the porgies, the weakfish, 'cause all the bluefish and the bass along the beach are []. You get done and you empty out the box at the end of the day, the bottom of the box is paved with little stuff that they're just throwin' out. And the dogfish are the same way.

I: The stripers were eatin' the weakfish outta the net, a couple years ago. They were actually comin' up to the net and mauling the weakfish that were stuck in the net. Takin' pieces of 'em and eatin' 'em.

RES: 'Cause there's so many of 'em out there.

OG: You're protecting the predator. You know, you gotta have a little bit of control on everything. They're complainin' now there's no crabs down in the Chesapeake. Well, what happens when 2 acres of bass get in there and then crabs go in shed. There ain't nothin' [] that have to go in the shed. There ain't nothin' left. I mean, that's one of their favorite foods in the summertime is blue crab. Oh, they're goin' through, you ain't talkin' 4 or 5 pound fish. You're talkin' 25 – 30 pound fish. They eat a lot!

I: You know, when you play favorites it's not good in nature. It's really not good.

RES: And you think that's what management is done?

OG: It's done.

W: And you have to remember the water pollution...

RES: ...in the case of stripers.

W: ...the water pollution's been cleaned up. I mean, you know, they don't take that into account. They think all their conservation efforts and their management plans make a difference. How about that there's not the pollution that we had?

RES: Did you used to have problems with pollution right off of...?

W: Oh, yeah!

OG: I knew a guy he was in Maine...just all over... []

I: You know, in the '50's and 60's there was no EPA. What does it take to kill the fish population in this river, one day in March? What do you gotta put in there? A couple hundred gallons of bleach? One day, f----in' all gone, every f-----in' egg in the whole place, gone!

RES: Gone.

I: One load of bad shit. In one day. One little spill.

OG: [] ...Delaware River. And they had a product in there that they used for makin' water softeners. They took oxygen out of the water, 'cause that's how you soften water.

W: And we know that'll kill them.

OG: One 80 pound bag, my father said, if that ever got...they were right on the river...all their storm drains went into the river. One 80 pound bag got into the Delaware River would've wiped out the oxygen in the Delaware River and the Delaware Bay. An 80 pound bag of material.

RES: Some nasty stuff.

OG: Now they don't use that stuff because you know, now they, you know, this is back in the '60's...

W: But they can't say they're responsible for rebuilding the stocks. The fish with their management plan. It's bullshit.

RES: You attribute it to water quality, and natural, you were talkin' about...

OG: Cycles.

RES: ...cycles, or whatever.

OG: Cycles.

W: Yeah.

OG: With the bluefish, they put limits on them. They're comin' back...well, they never really left...but, you gotta see them. I've seen something this year I've never seen before, with them tearing up the fluke. You couldn't get a fluke in a boat, down over seaside there. And it was good fish. And there'd be 4 or 5 bluefish, and usually, you know, every now and then you'll see one, he's got a chunk out of his tail or somethin'. They'd eat 'em right up to the head! Gone!

I: I saw the porpoises wipe out the weakfish in the Delaware Bay..

OG: Oh, I've seen that!

I:...in the '80's.

RES: What do you mean, you saw them wipe out the...feeding on them and...

I: Feeding on them. [] Cornered them up in the bay.

OG: Porpoise is the only fish that will kill just to kill.

W: They chomp right through everything.

I: Chop 'em in half and leave 'em floatin'.

RES: They eat the guts, they eatin' the liver or whatever....

I: Lot of 'em they just chop the tail off and left 'em floatin' on the surface and they'd come back and get 'em later. The one boat picked up 800 pounds of halves that night. We picked up a couple hundred pounds. We thought we'd just bring some home and filet them.

RES: When did you see that?

I: Maybe 1990. 1988. 1992. Whatever the last year was we caught the weakfish down the Delaware Bay.

OG: Would have been '82.

I: No. It was like '88 or 1990.

OG: We [] see acres of 'em, just floatin'. They just grab 'em on their back and break their back. They'd be floatin' on top of the water. [] weakfish like that.

I: Yeah. 11 – 12 pound average.

OG: And you'd be catchin' 'em...we were rod and reelin' 'em at the time. You'd be catchin' 'em good for 2 or 3 weeks. Them porpoises come up the bay, you couldn't *find* a fish! When fish were there, [] wasn't eatin'.

I: That's what would happen you know, the porpoises would come in, and they'd come to the bay and they would chase 'em out every year. And then the last year they were there, them fish got so big, they couldn't run. They were too big. They couldn't get away from them, and they all got eaten. And that was the last year we caught the big weakfish in the Delaware Bay.

RES: And the porpoises, they don't bother comin' back in there now?

I: Of course. Porpoises love weakfish. They...it's always...I mean you go down south, there's always just fishermen who will tell you stories about how they could round 'em up and kill 'em all. They round 'em up in big herds you know. They circle 'em right up. Just run through 'em. Rip 'em right up.

OG: I've even seen 'em in Barnegat Bay that time. Remember? I mentioned it to you and the first thing you said they're probably eatin' weakfish.

I: They love them things.

OG: Like the dogfish, the worst thing with that is now, is the dogfish...first of all they use 99% of a dogfish. The meat, is used. They took....

I: They eat everything. The livers...

OG: ...the carcass was used. The guts, parts of the guts were used. The skin was used. I mean I think the only thing that really wasn't used was his eyeballs maybe. I'm serious.

RES: Yeah, I believe it.

OG: No, the spine...[]. The problem with that is, is all that stuff was exported. There was very little U.S. market for dogfish meat. Most of it went to England, stuff like that. Well, now all these guys invested millions of dollars in the plant, processin' plants, and this and that. And then all of a sudden they shut you down. Now these guys, they're outta business. Well, if you were in the business, now the government says to you 6 years later, "we're openin' up again". Are you gonna take 2 million dollars out of your pocket? Not only that, the people that you were sellin' 'em to now, they still need the product. They're gonna find it somewhere. So they've already found other places.

RES: That's what happened in Newfoundland.

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RES: End off the interview with asking if there's anything I missed. Like [] regulations, or things that you think are important to uh...

I: I think the commercial fishermen need a fishermans advocate.

[]

I: They're not doin' anything for the fishermen. They must be right in the pocket of the politicians involved with the corruption. I see one guy...one gillnetter, XXXX, he sits on the council down there...and now he's bought a dragger, so what does that tell you? He's sits on that one...a couple of them councils, and he knows the future of our business because he's...you know they're all goin' down together....down the same road together.

RES: Do you think he knows more than he should?

I: Sure. Sure, he knows more than he should. He knows, he knows what he'll never get. He knows the extent of the corruption.

RES: Or he knows that...you mean he knows the gillnet fisheries...?

I: Got the black mark.

RES: Yeah. Not gonna make it.

I: Yeah, he knows we got the black mark, or somethin'. That's the way I would figure it.

[]

RES: Well, anything else you want me to take note of?

I: No.