

**Interview with: John Curzake (JC)**  
**Occupation: Fisherman**  
**Port Community: Point Judith, Rhode Island**  
**Interviewer: Azure Cygler** Error! Bookmark not defined.  
**Date: October 4, 2012**  
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**INDEX [minutes: seconds]**  
**Brewed Awakenings, Narragansett, RI**

Interview

[00:00]

AC: For the record my name is Azure Cygler and I'm here with John Curzake.

JC: Yep.

AC: And the date is October 4, 2012 and we're here at Brewed Awakenings Coffee House in South Kingston, Rhode Island. And John if you could just, for the record, give me your name and state that you agree to do this interview.

JC: My name is John Curzake and I agree to do this interview.

AC: Okay. And just give me a little bit about yourself. Your vessel's name and your homeport? To start.

JC: The name of my vessel is the *Emelia Rose*, named after my daughter and my homeport is Point Judith, Rhode Island.

AC: Okay. Now you are in a sector or in the commonpool?

JC: I'm in a sector.

AC: In a sector. Which sector?

JC: Thirteen.

AC: Thirteen okay. And how old are you, if you don't mind my asking? For the record.

JC: 48.

AC: 48. And to begin, with that context of who you are, a little bit more in terms of how you came to be here in Rhode Island if you're from away and....

JC: I was born in Rhode Island.

AC: Okay.

JC: [I] went to the University of Rhode Island and fished during the summers. And that's how I ended up being a fisherman. I didn't, my major was accounting, but [I] just liked the fishing.

AC: But that must come in handy, accounting, for you...

JC: It doesn't hurt.

AC: ... with the books and....

JC: Yeah, no. I do all my own books and things like that.

AC: Okay! And you have, you're married?

JC: Yes I am. I've been married 23 years and we have 3 children.

AC: Okay are they, any of them in the fisheries?

JC: No. No, ones at University of Rhode Island and then the other two, one [is] in high school, one [is] in middle school.

[01:39]

AC: Okay, girls or boys or...?

JC: Two boys are the oldest and then my daughter's the youngest, she's in middle school.

AC: Okay. And just tell me a little bit more about what types of fishing you do? Inshore, offshore...?

JC: Mostly inshore fishing, day fishing. We do, in the winter time we have to head out 60 or 70 miles but it's still, we only fish the day and then we come home.

AC: And for which species?

JC: Fluke, offshore. And inshore we do whatever they'll let us do. I mean we'll do everything inshore: scups, squid, a lot of lobster bait, fluke, whatever's open.

AC: Okay, and using which types of gear?

JC: All trawl nets.

AC: Trawl nets? And has that always been the case? Have you...?

JC: I tried, I did the scalloping but they... I didn't meet the criteria so... [I got] shut out of that.

AC: Was this the general category?

JC: General category, yeah. 400 pounds a day.

AC: Okay.

JC: But like I said, I didn't meet their criteria. I got my boat, the boat, at the time I had gotten the year that was the cut-off year, so the permits were no good.

AC: Okay and just maybe back up a little and tell me, you know, when you got your first boat and kind of the progression to where we are now? You can kind of summarize your history in terms of your vessels.

JC: That's tough. I think I bought my first boat in, I think 1996, it was called the *Miss Judith*. It was a 78 foot wooden dragger. I wasn't really ready to become a fisherman or run it. I remember out in Alaska they had shut off the permits, so I decided if I was going to maybe do this for the rest of my life, I better get a boat because the permits were going to be worth a million dollars and the boats were going to be worth nothing. So I bought the boat simply to get the permits and then that boat went down. I was selling out of that boat, I was going to buy a lobster boat because I had my third child and the daycare lady didn't want to watch the third child. So I said to my wife, "I'll buy a lobster boat and I'll fish when you're not working and then that way my gear is fishing even when I'm not there and then I can take care of the kids." And so that was 1999.

AC: Wow.

JC: And that didn't work out that well. I wasn't a very good lobsterman and so I went back dragging and bought this dragger, the original *Amelia Rose*, I bought in 2004 or 2005, something like that.

AC: Okay and then just recently you [have] gone through a...?

JC: And then in December that boat caught on fire and now I have a new *Amelia Rose* that I bought in January up in Boston.

AC: Okay. So finding vessels to buy, in this day and age, in this current state...?

JC: I was very lucky. I mean, it was the first boat I looked at.

AC: Wow, so they're out there.

JC: The price had come down on it. People had seen it and I think they said that they were asking \$100,000 more than the.... I mean, I wouldn't have bought it for \$100,000 more, but for some reason the price had gone down and I looked at it and it was everything I wanted.

[04:49]

AC: Did you know the person that was selling it?

JC: No idea. [I] just happened to be online looking.

AC: Wow.

JC: [I] took my first mate up there with me and we both looked at it and we both said "This is what we've been looking for" you know, kind of. It wasn't set up for trawling, but the hull, the... just the layout of the boat was, was perfect.

AC: Okay. Now how, how long did it take you to recover from that December fire? If you want to give me a little more details about the boat going down and how, how long did it take you to kind of jump back in to being actively fishing? Because that's a pretty huge life event.

JC: I mean, I remember, you know my wife that, that night, I was still shaken up. I mean, nothing, we were fine, nobody got hurt but it still shakes you up a little bit, of what could happen. And she said, "Why don't you take a week off?" And then the next day I got online and started looking...

AC: Oh my goodness.

JC: ... just out of curiosity. 'Cause I'm now at home, I don't have a boat to go do [anything]. So I got online and started looking and I think 2 days later I went up and looked at the boat and then a week later, I owned it. And then we had to start... it wasn't ready to come, it had been sitting out of the water for three years so we had to do some work and get it surveyed. I think we were fishing the boat by February, very early February we had put the trawler gear on it and had all the work done on it.

AC: So only a couple months, and you were back at it.

JC: A couple months. I got to say it was, it was me and we had had, I put fire alarms in the engine room and stuff like that. And I haven't done it yet, but I'm going to put a whole, big

fire system in there, because that's where the other fire was. And we weren't alerted to it because we didn't have anything in the engine room.

[06:28]

AC: I see.

JC: The first trip out we had the muffler, we ran and it made a little bit of smoke and the fire alarms went off, you know 5 minutes outside the gaff, the fire alarms went off and it turned out to be nothing, but I got to say, it shook us a little bit. We turned the boat around and got down there and nothing was wrong.

AC: And did you keep all the original crew? Did they stay with you?

JC: Oh yeah.

AC: (laughs) Oh goodness gracious! Even after that non-event which could have been an event? They still stayed. Wow.

JC: Yep. I have very good crews, I have to say. The one thing I always lucked out on is having really good crews.

AC: Okay.

JC: Top of the line, top notch every time.

AC: Has it been the same people that have been with you over time, or...?

JC: No they've come and gone. I've stayed in touch with them, you know, a lot of them... the bait business is a tough business. In a small boat you're putting 20-, 25,000 pounds of bait on there. And these guys, a lot of them are in their 40's and it's... or they'll have their own little boat that they want to fish in the summer. And so if I can hire a kid for the summer, I'll take them back in the fall, but like this time, the kid I hired is 25, but he wants to stay year round so. Whoever stays for the bait season....

AC: They're in?

JC: They get to stay [for] the whole year. They have the option to stay all year.

AC: 'Cause that doesn't get any tougher than that in terms of...?

JC: That's the worst season for me, yeah.

AC: What is the bait species? Is it...?

JC: Skates.

AC: Skates.

JC: Yeah.

AC: And just winging them? And then...?

JC: No, we're not winging them. We're just putting them in barrels and putting them down below and....

AC: Okay.

JC: And just for the lobstermen, they usually string them up.

AC: Okay. And how many crew on the boat?

JC: Just one.

AC: Just one?! And yourself, you've always been the captain?

[08:06]

JC: Yep, I mean, I've had guys who can take the boat here and there but very rarely.

AC: Okay. [Do] any, any other people in your family fish? Commercially?

JC: Not really. I mean, my brother-in-law. He's, I mean, that's where I started. I started with his father. So he has a boat, but as far as my brother, no. My father fools around with a little lobstering, he's retired, you know. And my brother does a little lobstering but he's got a real job, so....

AC: And where in Rhode Island did you say you're from? Was it...?

JC: Originally?

AC: Yeah.

JC: Pawtucket.

AC: Pawtucket! My son was born in Pawtucket.

JC: Really? Memorial?

AC: Pawtucket Memorial. So... you're, yeah! So you just kind of made the transition down to the Point one day?

JC: Well my parents have a summer house down here.

AC: Okay. So you sort of loved it?

JC: Like I said, I was lucky to, to have my sister date a guy whose father owned a swordfishing boat. It was a regular, it was an eastern rig dragger but we swordfished in the summer. And he, he took me every year.

AC: He did? And how, that must have been an amazing experience.

JC: It was great for me. You know, I went from washing dishes in the summer to going swordfishing. That's....

AC: Wow.

JC: That's pretty good.

AC: And then the fishing was decent back then? Would you actually catch...?

JC: No, it was horrible.

[09:16]

AC: Oh, so you would....

JC: It was absolutely horrible, but still, it was still better than washing dishes.

AC: Were you doing those long trips out to like the Grand Banks?

JC: Yeah 7 days. No, no, no. Georges, 7, 7 day, 7, yeah 7 day trip was an average trip.

AC: Okay. Was this, did this...?

JC: This was an old eastern rig. We had a coal stove, that was it. An ice box, an a-track tape player. That was it.

AC: Now, did this coincide with when the Rhule's were, the Rhule family was swordfishing in the area? Or was this a different...?

JC: It was us. It was like [the] captain's brother on the *Roann*. It was a bunch of eastern rigs doing that, I remember that....

AC: Okay.

JC: *Ocean clipper*, you know. It was a bunch of old eastern rigs that still went and did it. It was kind of like their vacation from, from dragging all winter, you know? So....

AC: Okay. Very cool. And what, how old were you roughly?

JC: I started when I was 17.

AC: Okay.

JC: My last year of high school, I think I started.

AC: And none of your kids really expressed interest in...?

JC: In fishing?

AC: Fishing or...? Did they dabble in it all or...?

JC: I've taken, or I took them last summer. I actually had one, my oldest son lobstered one summer, dragged another summer. This year he worked on one of the head boats, you know, charter boats. So, he's done the summer thing, you know? I don't think my wife really wants them to come fishing with me, you know? So she, I mean she's very good, she makes sure they get their education, she keeps up on that. That's, that's what she does.

[10:55]

AC: And what's her, does she work full-time as well or...?

JC: She works, like 30-something hours a week.

AC: Oh yeah.

JC: She's a pharmacist.

AC: Pharmacist, in the area?

JC: Yes.

AC: Oh cool. And tell me a little bit about your neighborhood. Is, is that considered a fishing community or...?



JC: No, not at all.

AC: Okay.

JC: Not at all. We bought that when the housing market crashed and we got a really good deal in a nice neighborhood.

AC: Which town is this?

JC: It's in Wakefield.

AC: Wakefield. Okay. So people....

JC: There is a couple of fishermen, there are a couple of fishermen in the neighborhood. One just moved in, moved from Long Island here and I think one of them is just moving out now.

AC: Okay. So if you talked to your neighbors about what you do they would sort of give you this blank stare and, and not be able to...?

JC: No, they love, I mean you know what?

AC: They get it?

JC: It's always a topic of conversation. I have, you know, neighbors who are, an accountant and a surgeon, and stuff like that. And you know, it's... they have boats. They do rod and reel fishing. They're always interested in what's, you know "What's out there?" and when am I going and "When can you get me some bait?" and stuff like that.

[12:04]

AC: Oh! Oh, I see! There's the connection. (laughs)

JC: Nah, its, I mean they, they... it's a great neighborhood. I couldn't move into a better neighborhood, people as nice. Nobody ever moves because we all hang together, you know? It's a very tight neighborhood.

AC: But you didn't move there to be...?

JC: Originally? No. It was just us and it was, it was one of those big developments.

AC: Yep.

JC: Because things had crashed, they weren't building. So it was like, we had the last house there, just dirt roads.

AC: Wow, very cool. And then in terms of your social networks, John, do you find your friends, in your spare time, which might not be much, but do you feel like you socialize with other fishermen or do you sort of...?

JC: Never.

AC: What do you, tell me about your friends. Are they non-fishermen?

JC: Pretty much non-fishermen, you know?

AC: Okay.

JC: I'm very, we're very family oriented.

AC: Yeah.

JC: The kids play sports, I mean it's....

AC: Okay.

JC: It takes all your time if you're not fishing, you're driving them to this or that, or going to this or that. And we have a very small group of people who they try to have pizza together every Friday night and a few beers, and then that's about it. None of them are fishermen, no.

AC: Okay. And same for your wife? Do you feel like she just, fishermen's wives are not people she spends time with?

JC: No not at all.

AC: There's just not a connection?

JC: I don't think she knows any.

AC: Okay. And in terms of your longer-term life plans, I know you've gone through a huge upheaval with the boat, but do you feel like sectors have at all influenced those longer-term life plans, like when you will retire? Do you think of those sorts of things differently because of sectors? Has, has being in a sector changed your perceptions there?

JC: I... I didn't want to join a sector. It was... either you join, or you're done.

AC: Okay.

JC: You know, I don't want to say that.... I think we were strong-armed would be a good....

AC: Okay.

JC: To say.... With the bait fishery, they wanted me to tow a net with [a] hole in the bottom, a Ruhle trawler, to catch bait. It's impossible.

AC: Okay.

JC: Because it's a hole in the bottom of the net and then the whole Days at Sea, you have to be able to go bait fishing and... if you join a sector you can go hourly, how many hours a day you use. If you don't join a sector, everyday you go counts as 24 hours. Now I'm just outside of Point Judith fishing 10 hours a day. I can't just get 25 days and say I'll lose my bait business, which I worked hard to get. I've worked to get these guys to come get their bait from me. So I have to... I'm very reliable. If you'd ask them, they will tell you. You know, I don't just go get it and put it on their docks. I do everything I can to make sure they stay with me.

[14:44]

AC: Okay. So do you, maybe I should back up a little bit. In terms of joining the sector, the landings of bait species like skate didn't count towards...

JC: It doesn't count towards...

AC: ... any allocation....

JC: ... allocation. It just was the fact that I was able to tow my net and go on hourly instead of a daily, instead of losing a day every time I went out to catch a skate.

AC: Okay.

JC: And there was no groundfish with the skate. I mean, they, they just came out with a new rule now that when we go skate fishing, we don't have to call it a groundfish day because, you know, I have 80% coverage from observers. And there was not a yellowtail or a blackback or a codfish anywhere where we were bait fishing 4 months out of the year. You couldn't fill a basket for the month with...

AC: Wow.

JC: ... flats. It's just straight bait.

AC: Is that, in terms of an ecosystem perspective, is that good or bad?

JC: [It] always has been.

[15:37]

AC: It's always been that way.

JC: The flounders, the flounders would come in and then they would leave and then there'd be nothing but skates there.

AC: Is it a day or night thing as well or...?

JC: It used to be nights. It seems like it's changed.

AC: Okay.

JC: You know? Used to be at nighttime was the big hauls but it doesn't seem that way anymore. It seems that you get a big haul all day long if you want.

AC: Wow.

JC: I mean big.

AC: Good for the bait business.

JC: Yeah.

AC: Maybe for the bottom of the ocean being filled with skates that....

JC: I don't know what it does.

AC: No.

JC: Yeah. I'm not a scientist.

AC: Are there studies looking at that at all? Have you been involved in cooperative research too?

JC: I do cooperative research.

AC: But not in that terms of...?

JC: No, I just fill out the daily reports. I'll take guys fishing.

AC: Okay.

JC: I'll give them fish samples. And now they're trying out some new equipment. I'll take them to do that.

AC: Okay. And a little bit more about your sector. You said sector 13, but there's also sector 5 in Rhode... in Point Judith. Why sector 13 versus 5? Or...?

JC: (laughs)

AC: Or if you want to comment on that, just curious.

JC: I would say... I like the people in sector 13 better. How's that?

AC: Okay, okay. So they approached you, or you kind of went to that sector and said...?

JC: I didn't really look into sectors that much at all. One of my friends was in sector 13.

AC: Okay.

JC: [I] talked to him about it and....

AC: Okay.

JC: [I] just decided to go there. It's a smaller group that I communicate with...

AC: Okay.

JC: ... than sector 5.

AC: Gotcha. And do you, are you on the board of directors or anything like that?

JC: I strictly use it just so I can skate fish. I mean my groundfish landings, with the permits I have are so low...

AC: Okay.

JC: ... they're just about nothing.

AC: Okay.

JC: [I] strictly do it so I can keep bait fishing.

[17:25]

AC: Okay, interesting. Are there many other people bait fishing alongside you? Are you...

JC: It's uh...

AC: ... one of the few?

JC: ... like four boats that do it as a, to make a living, you know what I mean? Some guys will save a few barrels but there's like four of us that supply most of the lobstermen.

AC: Wow.

JC: I do a lot of the inshore fleet. And my brother-in-law does, there's a bait company down there that services most of their offshore fleet. He works for....

AC: Is that the same Andria's? (17:57)

JC: That's Andria's.

AC: That's Andria's, okay.

JC: My brother-in-law and my friend Charlie, they supply a lot of the bait for them.

AC: Interesting. Okay. But you kind of do your own venture in that you deliver the bait, you said, to the docks?

JC: I, yeah, I, I keep my boat on the lobster boat dock and what I'll do is... and there's another dock on the way out, I'll stop so they don't have to bring the barrels to me.

AC: Wow!

JC: Pick up their barrels, they'll leave them on the end of the dock, pick them up.

AC: Free delivery.

JC: I'll, I'll leave them on the end of the docks for them. Some guys I'll, if they're out fishing and say they have their boats half way up the dock, I'll drop, you know, whoever's near that dock, I'll drop it right there so they don't have to hand truck it very far.

[18:36]

AC: Okay.

JC: [I'll] drop it wherever they want. Some guys just leave their boats out; I just put them right on their boat.

AC: Interesting. Very cool. Now, so your groundfish landings are lower than, are lower than in the past because of events that's happened in your life...

JC: Well...

AC: ... such as the boat fire.

JC: They shut the, they shut the flounders off to nothing.

AC: Okay.

JC: That's draconian at best. Yellowtails, I, I got, codfish, I got. I think it amounts to 4,000 pounds.

AC: Okay.

JC: So....

AC: Is that because during those 10 years...

JC: Well, I didn't....

AC: ... you were doing other things?

JC: Yeah, I was doing other things. I, yeah, I bought that lobster boat.

AC: Yeah.

JC: And I had permits but they were sitting in a permit history, so therefore... nothing. I was running 'X' many, when I was lobstering at the time, I would run a boat with a friend of mine, I had pretty good landings. But it doesn't count towards me, it counts towards him, you know?

AC: Ah, 'cause you were the captain, not the owner.

JC: Right.

AC: Okay, I see. Now so then do you lease, when you're doing bait fishing do you just lease out your groundfish allocation?

JC: No, because....

AC: How does that work?

JC: In November, I'll start chasing fluke where there's some yellowtails, so I have to have some.

AC: Okay.

JC: So that I can keep doing that.

AC: Okay. So it's enough, but being in the common pool wouldn't allow you to do that?

JC: It would. But then again, I'd have to fish with a hole in my net.

AC: Okay. I see.

JC: You know, that's just....

AC: So you have gear restrictions?

JC: I still like, there's not a lot, less guys [are] lobstering in November but I still have to go catch bait.

AC: Okay.

JC: So therefore I'll call in a bait day, change to fluking, get some skates on the way home and I'll catch a few yellowtails at that time of year. So, it's either fish with a net with a hole in it, which I'm not going to catch anything, you know, or join a sector.

[20:38]

AC: 'Cause in a sector you can fish with whatever gear you want.

JC: Well you can fish a 6 and a half inch, you don't have to have a hole in your net.

AC: Legally.

JC: Yes.

AC: Okay, okay. But in a common pool they restrict to you to the Ruhle trawl?

JC: Ruhle's trawl or there's another trawl....

AC: Really?



JC: Yeah. Oh, when you're fishing in the areas that I fish, which are, you know, inside of... I don't know how many miles out the line is.

AC: Okay.

JC: But that's where I'm fishing.

AC: Okay, gotcha. That's where you've traditionally been? That's your, those are your grounds.

JC: Yeah, it's a forty-six foot hull, I mean, it's....

AC: Right.

JC: I'm not going to Georges for a trip.

AC: Right.

JC: Plus, I like to go home.

AC: Yeah, you like to be home at the end of the day.

JC: I do.

AC: So that's been a conscious choice to not do offshore trips, not get a bigger boat, 'cause you want to be...

JC: I want to go home. I don't want to....

AC: ... with your family.

JC: I never.... I think the last two trips I did offshore, actually had gotten out. The second kid, I got out of the fish business and was doing mortgages for Fleet Bank. And [I] did a couple trips after about 10 or 11 months. My wife [said] "You got to give it a chance. You got to stay there a year and at least give it a chance." And I started doing trips when I could, 3 day trips, and I'll leave Friday and be back at work for Tuesday or something.

AC: Oh!

JC: But both times, something happened at home, the furnace went, whatever it was. And back then we didn't have cell phones and stuff like that. You didn't find out stuff 'til you got home. And I just didn't want to, I don't like that, you know? I mean I worry about my

family when I leave at 10 o'clock at night. If I'm, got a fire going in the woodstove, I shut it down 'cause I don't want to worry about it. I don't know if that makes me, just....

[22:17]

AC: That makes you a good, good family man.

JC: Oh there's a term for it, but whatever it is, anyway...

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know.

AC: You care about your family. You know that's a common, a lot of gentlemen I've been speaking with, especially in this area in Rhode Island, maybe it's because we're good people in Rhode Island....

JC: This is a nice port, this is a very good port. I mean....

AC: Yeah, they're good, family-orienting....

JC: Yeah.

AC: So that's wonderful. And did some of the, kind of the opinions about other sectors, is it, some [are] working better than yours? Do you feel like...?

JC: I don't pay attention to them, I really haven't.

AC: You don't. Okay.

JC: My only...

AC: You focus.

JC: ... focus is, I just wanted to stop. I wanted to tow the net and I wanted to get the Days at Sea. And that's the only reason I joined. I don't have, no idea what's going on.

AC: Okay. So they don't, not forcing you to come to meetings regularly or...?

JC: Nope. They know why I'm there. You know, I explained to them why I'm there and then, I mean, they call, "Do you want to buy some yellowtailers? Do you want to buy some codfish?"

AC: Yep.

JC: You know you add your fuel to the fact that you're paying for fish that you have to go look for, you're not making a whole lot. You know? Not for the wear and tear and the fuel and everything. Unless you knew it was going to be there.

AC: Well tell me a little bit more, you, we were talking before the recording about the maintenance costs and how that's such a huge expense. And you having redundant parts and just tell me a little bit more about that, owning a vessel and how that's much more than what we see.

JC: That's the fishing, I mean, that's just fishing business, I mean, you're riding high one day and the next day you need to do \$10,000 worth of repairs, it doesn't take much. It doesn't take much to rack up a bill like that. Last week, an oil cooler, which isn't an expensive thing, let go and filled the hydraulic system with water. So I was, oh tied up for two or three days. [I] had to take every line off the boat, blow air out of it, drain all of the oil, 75 gallons of oil out of the system, replace it. It's not like buying diesel; it's a lot more expensive. Run the, run everything for 10 minutes and then drain that oil out and put another 75 gallons in, at the end it had to cost me \$1,500, \$2,000 over a..., you know, that's just the way it goes.

That's dragging. I mean it's, when I was lobstering, [I] just had a pot hauler, not a big deal you know? But with these things you have net drums, you have winches, you have takeout winches, you have electronics, wires, you know doors, nets all that stuff. Now, lobster traps are expensive I know that. Keeping them up can be expensive and losing them can be expensive, but the dragging, the maintenance is a huge, huge part of it.

And as I was saying I try to keep spare, a spare hose for every hose. I'm working on, I'll have a spare, well I had spare alternators, spare starters. You know, a lot of people don't carry inventory anymore, so you can't just go get a starter, you have to order it. It takes days to get there. So now you're out fishing, out of fishing for days while you're waiting for a starter. Just putting this new boat together, just to get a winch to pull the net aboard, took two weeks. Because nobody, not even the company that makes them, had them in stock.

AC: Was it U.S based? Were you able to get it through the U.S or...?

JC: Yes, yes, so uh.... Actually, it might have been Canada. But I bought it from a place in Massachusetts.

[25:44]

AC: And when you bought the new *Amelia Rose*, was she just gutted completely or was there...?

JC: She had been setting for seining.

AC: Oh! So you basically had to...

JC: Well, no they....

AC: ... redo it?

JC: Somebody had set it up for dragging before. And the guy had a tractor trailer load full of stuff.

AC: Oh.

JC: A gallus frame, which wasn't quite sturdy enough for what I wanted to do but it was [a] good start.

AC: Wow. And that came with the boat?

JC: He said "Here's the truck, just get it empty," you know? But it was stuff that I don't use, you know, it was a net that I wouldn't, shrimp net, we don't shrimp down here.

AC: Yeah.

JC: The other groundfish net was set for up North with big rollers on and stuff, I don't use that. But some of the winches were on board, that was huge, you know, the main winches. The gallus frame, we just tweaked to make what we wanted and stuff like that.

AC: But it was still roughly how much to get, get her on the water and running after you purchased, after the purchase price?

JC: Well, I think I got her fishing for, I think the first bill I got was for \$30,000.

AC: Okay.

JC: And then I had to go get another net because mine was on the back of the boat, the one I had been using. And I had just brought one off that had been destroyed, so I had another one built. And I was actually able to, first day I took the boat out we went out with a grappling and found, and got the other gear back.

AC: Oh! You did?

JC: Five minutes.

AC: Oh my goodness!

JC: Took me five minutes. The numbers, the guy who picked me up wrote down the numbers where he picked me up and I charted 500 feet behind that and set the grappling in and in five minutes I had it.

AC: Now, has this, just curious, did the gentleman who picked you up has he become, have you become closer to him? Does that sort of event draw you closer to people or...?

JC: You know what? We were very close. We were always very good friends.

AC: Okay! So you knew him!

JC: And then when this whole sector thing came down, fluke sector and all that, he was, we were on opposite sides. And I hadn't talked to him for over a year, just because it always got to that point in the conversation and it, it, you know what? It's torn the port apart. It really has. I mean, socially, people just "I won't, he's..., I won't, hate him, I hate him, I hate him, he's this, he's that..." It wasn't like that before, you know? Half of me wondering when he went by, is he going to turn around, because, you know. 'Cause I haven't talked to him in a while, I just totally shut him off.

AC: Wow.

JC: I didn't want talk to him anymore. I mean, not that I ever doubt that he would have turned around. He's a very good person, he's one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet. I would never really doubt him, thinking....

AC: But the rifts are so big.

JC: Yeah. It's turned that, it's just torn that port in half.

AC: And what's the philosophical difference? What does it boil down to, that as, what's the point where you...?

JC: It's just....

AC: How things should be managed or...?

[28:29]

JC: Yeah. How things should be managed, and then now you just can't, you know, buying fish.

AC: Okay, so it has to do with...?

JC: And, and or not, maybe the way they shared up on the, you know, the history and all that. And some guys who have fished their whole lives and just bought new boats ...

AC: Okay.

JC: ... with new permits, they got nothing. And, and stuff like that.

AC: Okay. Is this relating to the fluke sector, the state fluke sector...?

JC: Both.

AC: ... or for federal? For both?

JC: Both.

AC: So just the philosophical grounding of sectors themselves and how they divvy up...

JC: Divvy up.

AC: ... allocation.

JC: Right. I mean, as far as the fluke sector goes. I would have made out great, as far as weight. But it doesn't fit the way I fish.

AC: Okay.

JC: And so I didn't join. It doesn't.... I have to be able to discard, because sometimes when I'm skate fishing...

AC: Yep.

JC: ... fluke will move in overnight.

AC: Right.

JC: All of a sudden I got a thousand pounds of fluke, now what am I going to do?

AC: Right.

JC: Now I have to go buy fluke. So I can go catch a 10 cent skate?

AC: I got ya.

JC: My brother-in-law doesn't.

AC: But you wouldn't have made out buying the fluke?

JC: I would have had great landings. I mean, my landings of fluke, that's all I ever used to chase.

AC: Okay.

JC: So my landings are great, so I would have got a great share. But again, I don't think it's fair to a lot of people, so....

AC: Got it.

JC: I'm not for it.

AC: Okay.

JC: I want to see everyone down there make money. I want to see everyone.... There's not a lot of guys left, I want to see them all be able to make it. The guys that are left, it's like you said, you can walk around on that port at night, you don't have to worry. It's, it's a bunch of, it's good guys, family guys. To see them not be able to fish....

[30:12]

AC: What would allow them to fish? Going back to Days at Sea or in terms of management?

JC: A decent Days at Sea.

AC: Okay.

JC: You know, I'm not talking, down to 25 Days at Sea. That's not going to help anybody.

AC: Okay.

JC: I don't even care if... I think they went down to, I think I went down to 50-something or 60. And as long as it was hourly, we were still having a good year.

AC: As long as it was hourly meaning?

JC: Instead of a day, instead of losing a day every time you left port.

AC: Oh so, the clock.

JC: The clock.

AC: In terms of the clock.

JC: Yeah, the running clock.

AC: Running clock, got it.

JC: I'd like to see everybody get a few Days at Sea. I don't want to see, some guys were down to like 5 Days at Sea. Well what good is that going to do them? You know?

AC: Have you seen...?

JC: There's no jobs in this country. I don't know if anyone's noticed that. I would love to hire another guy. I really would. I can't afford to keep the guy I got if I hire another guy. If I could have a little more fish, I could hire another guy. Keep people working.

AC: Got it.

JC: You know?

AC: Has that changed the infrastructure in the port? Have facilities closed down since sectors started?

JC: Oh yeah.

AC: Or have you.... So you've seen things change...?

JC: Oh I don't know. Since the whole thing started, I wouldn't say just the sectors.

AC: Okay.

JC: Yeah.

AC: Whole thing meaning, over the last...?

JC: The fluke cuts, the Days at Sea cuts.

AC: Okay.

JC: The... you know fishermen like, like to spend money. They like to have good gear. If their... when we're making money, we're going to the net shop and we're getting our gear fixed. Instead of fixing it, you know, having the crew fix it. It keeps people working is what it does.



AC: Like the grub for long trips. Stores are employing...?

JC: Everything, everybody. I mean, if I... I was going to bring my billfold just from doing the boat, it's this thick. That's all people working.

AC: Oh my God. Wow.

JC: You know, it's... the welders working and there's a lot of things I'd still like to do to this boat. And I will over time, but I've got to have the money first. I don't go out, I usually try to make the money and then spend, you know?

AC: Yeah.

JC: I don't take loans out if I can help it.

AC: Okay.

JC: I don't think I have taken a loan out in years. When I have the money, I go do the work. I mean, and that has a lot to do with my wife having a good job. I don't have to take paychecks all the time. I'm, I'm not putting other guys down who take loans out, because in this port, there [are] whole families.

AC: You do what you got to do.

JC: Right. I have a wife who can support the family if I really need her to.

AC: Does she, does she have health insurance through her job?

JC: Yes.

AC: So it covers your whole family.

JC: Right.

AC: That's a huge....

JC: That makes, that's what makes my life so much easier than a lot of guys. That's what I'm saying, I don't have to 'cause I'm lucky.

AC: Right.

JC: If I had to pay for my family through this boat, I have no idea what things would be like.

AC: A lot of folks I've been talking to have a similar situation; that their wives have either gone back to work strictly for health insurance and those sorts of benefits, because of some difficulties that their husbands are having due to regulations.

JC: Oh I don't think you could ever compete. I don't know....

AC: But there's, that's a similar view... the wives are pulling a lot of weight in terms of...

JC: Which is why I should be home more, I mean, you know? It's a team effort.

AC: Right. And boat insurance? Is that something you have? How is that, how does that work for you?

[33:33]

JC: I have to pay for....

AC: You pay it.

JC: I pay for an extra man. You know, I have three-man... because if I don't want to take the boat, I have to have two-man insurance.

AC: Oh!

JC: If I do take it, then it doesn't insure me. You can't get insurance for yourself. So, I pay for the extra guy. It's just not.... It's like, I think, I might pay \$13,000 on insurance.

AC: Okay. Did that help during the fire?

JC: They paid.

AC: They did.

JC: And then, then they investigated and called back and said they would insure the new boat.

AC: Wow.

JC: And they didn't even raise it, not even a penny.

AC: Oh that's good.

JC: It's still the same amount of money and everything else. The investigator, not only did he investigate that, but he came and looked at the new boat and he really liked it, you know, the layout.

AC: So he's, these boat insurers are like experts in vessel layout?

JC: No, they hired a, someone else a marine, from a marine investigator to come down and, and...

AC: Well how...?

JC: And he just happened to be.... He didn't come down to check out the new boat, I happened to see him when I was looking at it and I said "Hey," you know "come check out the new, this boat I want to buy and tell me what you think." And he went through it and he was impressed. And then he called the insurance company and gave me a recommendation, which was very nice of him.

AC: Yes that is.

JC: I didn't pay him a dime. He called them and said, "This new boat is a nice boat." And he actually now he's... he gave my first mate rave reviews. You know, because he, he was a good fisherman. And after he talked to him for a while, he said "These are the guys you want to insure, right here."

AC: Good. So that's nice.

JC: That was very nice.

AC: Less of a worry...

JC: Yeah.

AC: ... to know that your insurance is stable...

JC: Yeah.

AC: ... as an expense.

JC: Yep.

AC: In terms of, sort of, your income, would you say, and you don't have to give me numbers, but percentage wise, in terms of the household, would you say you're contributing more or less than you have in the past? With your wife being practically full-time.

JC: It's different every year.

AC: It's different every year. Okay, tell me a little bit about....

JC: Different. This year I'm not going to bring home much.

AC: Okay, tell me about that dynamic and what makes it different and how that's changed in the last year or two for you. Just to give us some perspective.

JC: Last year when they said the fluke was all rebuilt and they raised the fluke quota, that, it doesn't take a lot to make a good year on a small boat. An extra couple hundred pounds of fluke a day is huge.

AC: Really?

JC: And I had that boat where I wanted it. So I didn't have the expense of, I had nothing break down on that boat and had no, no engine breakdowns, no mechanical breakdowns, all that stuff, I didn't even.... Even the net that I had rebuilt wasn't done yet, so all that money can come back to me at the end of the year, it's an S Corp, so I'll, at the end of the year I'll have to pay taxes on it. So I'll take what I want and start all over again. Last, so that year was a very good year except for the boat sinking. This year, I've got all these expenses. I'm not going to bring home a lot of money this year. So, I'll bring home maybe 20% of what I brought home last year, 25%. Last year I made more than my wife, this year I'm going to make a lot less than my wife. On average, I can stay even with her usually.

AC: Okay, but it seems, like you said it's highly variable, year to year.

JC: Yes, that's why you need to have another income in the house. Fishing income, is just, that's just the way it is. And if you're not a good saver, you'll get yourself in some real trouble.

AC: Right.

JC: If you're one of those guys that gets a \$3,000 and goes out and buys a car....

AC: Oh my gosh. Are people still doing that in this current state of fisheries and economy?

JC: I have... like I said, I have older guys, guys who have been around, so I don't....

AC: They're stable.

JC: They're pretty stable. Even my deckhand now, he's 25 but he's got a wife. He's got two kids.

AC: Okay.

JC: And he's my nephew, so I'll tell him, "Don't be stupid."

AC: Yes. You can be quite candid with him about...

JC: Yes.

AC: ... saving and....

JC: Right. He's a good saver, he always has been.

AC: Okay.

JC: I've had him on board on the lobster boat. I think he had a retirement plan that he started when he was 17 years old. I'm not worried about him.

AC: Got it. And is that nice to have your family around...

JC: It's very nice.

AC: ... in that way. I mean, that seems unique.

JC: It's awesome. You know, how could you ask for more than that or better than that? My sons come down, they can help. They're with their cousins. Call it a family success story.

AC: (laughs)

[38:13]

JC: You know, my other nephews come down, if I have work for them, they'll come down and do it. Whatever it is, help paint up, whatever it is. If they need money and I have work for them, I give it to them.

AC: Okay. And is that something that you talk about in like, at Thanksgivings let's say? Does your...?

JC: There's good stories.

AC: ... your father and your family do they is fishing a...?

JC: There's good stories and fishing stories and stuff like that.

AC: Okay. So they come up?

JC: I just told my father the other day. I said "We have a family success story, everyone's close."

AC: Yeah.

JC: My cousins in Pawtucket lived a block away, I hardly even knew them. You know, these guys all know each other.

AC: Wow. And how, how about in terms of your wife and you, do you, has your relationship, sort of, been strained or enhanced or...? With all these changes and over the last couple of years and how....?

JC: My wife knows a lot about fishing.

AC: How do you guys cope? Let's say, let's put it that way. How do you cope with all these changes?

JC: Just cope.

AC: You just do it? Okay.

JC: Yeah, I mean....

AC: Is she a listening ear?

JC: She's both.

AC: Or is she like, "Don't, I don't want to hear it."

JC: Nope, no, not at all.

AC: Okay.

JC: I mean she'll, she knows what's going on. You know? She'll say "Oh, what happened to this or what happened to that?" She's a good wife.

AC: And is that, that's something you appreciate and value?

JC: Yeah. [I'll] tell you 23 years, that's a good wife.

AC: (laugh) That's pretty good. If I make it....

JC: You know I don't have any real major complaints, I don't know if she does but....

AC: (laughs)

JC: Not that she's a not strong woman, she doesn't just go along with stuff. She has her own opinions. She makes them very clear. Yeah.

AC: And she, and when you were, when the kids were little, you kind of were able to be a part of their lives. It sounds like...

JC: A lot.

AC: ... more than a lot of people.

JC: A lot. A lot.

AC: Right. But there probably were times where she, you know, like when the furnace went, like you said....

JC: Yeah.

AC: But she just sort of found a way to cope with that?

JC: Called and had it repaired, but still.

AC: She made it happen.

JC: Yeah. I mean, she's [a] very self-sufficient woman.

AC: That's good.

JC: Smart, strong woman.

AC: Very cool. And how would you say, in terms of your well-being, where are you at in life now? So part of one of the things that this project wants to understand is well-being, which is your general outlook on life. Well-being includes a lot of different factors coming together in your life to make a whole, a whole picture of how you feel. So if you kind of look overall at where you're at in life, and where you thought you'd be at this point, how are you feeling with that? Would you say it's pretty good or...?

JC: It's okay.

AC: Yeah.

JC: It's okay. The fishing is just the one, I like it. I like to work. The regulations have really gotten me down. They've brought me down as far as I've ever been. Not in terms, I mean, I keep finding a way to make it work. But, now, so I've started the bait business and I'm doing more bait than I ever did.

[41:06]

AC: Yeah.

JC: Now they're going to cut the lobstermen 25%. Well that's going to cut me again. So not only have I lost my scallops, my blackbacks, a lot of my fluke and everything else, now I'm going to get cut on that, which is what I was using to supplement some of the other stuff that got cut off. No matter where I turn, no matter how I find a way to make it work....

AC: They're right behind you.

JC: They're right behind me to make sure that I don't make it work. That's discouraging. I mean, I like to think that I work hard at this. That I come up, and I'll do.... [I] was not a big fan of scalloping. I only did it one day a week. But it was what I had to do to supplement my income to keep my deck hands, stuff like that. And then they took that away so now I have to come up with something else.

AC: Now, why was that taken away? Was it...?

JC: I didn't have, I didn't meet the criteria. Again my permits were in a permit history, so by the time I took them out, I didn't meet the criteria. But I'd already set the boat up. I had the dredge. I made it so I could switch the boat from dragging to scalloping in 15 minutes.

AC: I was going to say, that sounds like it would be a huge endeavor, but it's not.

JC: Nope. Just get done, bang.

AC: Wow.

JC: We had everything set up and clipped right on. Moved what we had to move, made it so everything came off and then the dredge could come aboard and land.

AC: Were you able to sell the dredge gear?

JC: I haven't sold it yet. It's on, it's actually on, in the paper now.

AC: Okay. So you're, that's, you're not going to reinvestigate that option later. It's not, not an option?

JC: No. Well, it's very expensive to get into.

AC: Okay.



JC: I probably should have, right when they came down with the stuff, invested the money, but I was still making money.

AC: Who's to know.

JC: At that point, I switched to the fluke and the bait and stuff so I was just going to go with that.

[42:55]

AC: Now can you then, if there's less lobstermen say, in this area due to the 25% cut you were mentioning, can you sell to other ports or is that just a big stain in terms of...?

JC: If they wanted to come down and get it, but I'm not, I'm not... for 10 cents a pound I'm not traveling to Massachusetts at \$4.00 a gallon. It's not....

AC: It's not worth it.

JC: It's not really worth it.

AC: Okay.

JC: Maybe Stonington, Connecticut, but that would be about it. 'Cause it's kind of not far from here.

AC: And how far offshore, you might have said this, in miles do you fish? What would be the farthest offshore roughly?

JC: 70.

AC: 70. Okay so that's....

JC: But that's not for bait.

AC: Right. That's when you go...

JC: That's for fluke.

AC: ... fluking. Okay. That's very interesting. Do you feel like, and I might be interpreting this, so if I am that's okay to not answer it, but did you, do you feel like some of the strains in the port between people, like you were mentioning, the strain that's, that's been put on everybody, that's influenced your well-being? You were saying, you're feeling okay...

JC: Stressed.

AC: ... but you're still under stress.

JC: The stress, it's very stressful.

AC: Because....

JC: Trying to figure out what you can.... Instead of fishing, when you know there's fish there. Trying to figure out what you can piece together. "Oh good, I can have 100 pounds of fluke so I'll go over here. Then I can have 50 pounds of this." It's, and you're bouncing around and wasting fuel to catch that much fish, it's, it's ridiculous.

[44:24]

AC: And in the past did it used to be where you could talk to other guys about what to do? You know, strategize together, now... it sounds like...?

JC: No, I still help guys.

AC: There's still...?

JC: I mean, there's guys I, I still talk to.

AC: Okay. So there's still some...?

JC: But not as many. (laughs)

AC: Okay.

JC: You know, it's just, it's put a big strain on the friendliness of the port, the community of the port.

AC: And, and are those factions sector...?

JC: Mostly due to sectors.

AC: Sectors versus common pool? Like who are the, is it, is it, you know what are the groups?

JC: That's about it.

AC: How do they put.... So the people who are in a sector and people who aren't in a sector?

JC: Well, no. Because I'm in a sector, but I'm...

AC: So different sectors?

JC: ... I'm pro-common pool. If they would just....

AC: Okay.

JC: If they would just make it so that we could fish. I mean, like I said, I think we were strong-armed into this.

AC: Yep.

JC: It's like....

AC: Yep.

JC: Join or you're done. They didn't really give you a choice. They didn't give you a choice.

AC: They being NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service).

JC: The choice was, yeah, either you join this sector or we're going to make things so miserable for you.... Oh, you have to cover your gear when you're steaming out, but not if you're in a sector. But if you're not in a sector, you make sure your doors are unhooked and that your net has a cover on it.

AC: Okay.

JC: ... when you head out to go fluking. If you, you know what I mean, things like that, what's the difference? I'm going to the same place the sector guys are going. Why do I have to, not that I disconnect my doors anyway (laughs)....

AC: Right.

JC: But why do I have to cover my net and stuff like that? You know, why do I have to go through all this just because I'm not in a sector? Am I not trustworthy? I mean I don't have any....

AC: Right.

JC: I think the only thing I've ever been written up for is because I was filleting fish at my dock one day and that was it.

AC: So you have no violations.

JC: I have no violations. You know? I'll put my reputation, as far as being a clean, a law abiding citizen, against anyone...

AC: Yeah.

JC: ... up there.

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know?

AC: And do you feel like that doesn't count for anything? Even...

JC: It doesn't count for anything.

AC: ... a good solid, you've obeyed the rules for all these years. You know?

JC: It doesn't count for anything.

AC: Done your....

JC: If I had, if I had been caught...

AC: Done your good....

JC: ... repeatedly thieving fish, then maybe they would have a reason to do whatever they do, but I don't.

AC: Okay.

JC: It's too much risk. I mean, I don't have a stomach for that.

[46:43]

AC: So what do you think the future is to be? Do you think that it's...?

JC: No idea.

AC: No idea.

JC: No idea. I keep trying to make a go of it. But like I said, luckily I don't have any loans out. But my other friend, the guy who saved me....

AC: Yeah.

JC: His boat rolled over a month later. And so he was in January with his boat rolled over, with him on it, in it. I mean he's lucky. I'm, didn't have that big of a deal. He went over with all his gear on and everything else. No radio contact, nothing. Luckily, the EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) went off and stuff like that and they found him. No survivor suit. He was in his full gear when he went over. Somehow... I said, "How do you get in a raft with your boots full of water and everything?" [He said] "You'd be surprised what you can do."

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know. When you have to.

AC: Adrenaline.

JC: Yeah.

AC: Whatever. Yeah, survival mode.

JC: He's just getting going again. I can't even imagine. He's been working on that boat for a couple months, a month or so. And I can't imagine how far behind he is. And he has to deal with this stuff too. You know?

AC: And is there no, sort of a hardship package that NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) or NMFS gives to, in situations like this? Or some sort of, you know, it seems like in other industries there's something to help.

JC: I don't, I never really looked into it.

AC: Never looked at it. Okay. There might not be, but I, I'm, [it] just occurred to me that that would make sense.

JC: They'd rather just see us go, "Boy, I'm not doing that again because it's too risky." I think that would be what they would rather see.

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know just put the permits in history and leave them there.

[48:14]

AC: Is there something about your life and history in fishing that you would want to share for the record that sort of, makes you feel like it was all worth it or that keeps you in it? Let's say that. Maybe a story.

JC: The only thing to say, I like it. I just like it. And I like what I..., if you have to get up in the morning and do something you don't like to do, it makes it a lot harder to get up in the morning. I could say there's times now that I can't sleep at night 'cause I want to get going. You know?

AC: Out of excitement?

JC: I just want to get on the boat and go.

AC: Wow.

JC: You know? It was even, I think even more so with lobstering. You know, just, it's, it's kind of like gambling....

AC: The smell of bait is pretty delicious, I have to say. (laughs)

JC: No, no. Just, it's, but it's kind of like, you know, it's the excitement of maybe I'm going to have a good day.

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know? Maybe I'm going to see something today. Or maybe I'm going to catch something, the big haul today. It certainly is a lot more exciting than writing mortgages or doing books, you know? But then there's day you go out there and you go, "Why I am here?" It's blowing, it's raining, just... stuff's breaking.

I think the first trip we, or the second trip we took out with this boat, the outriggers weren't quite up to snuff. And my first mate, who's a better fisherman than I am, he said it right out, he said, "Those thing are horrible." I said "Well, we're going to have to use them until I can afford to have new ones made." And sure enough, we got hit by a wave and that outrigger just went (crack) right in half.

AC: An outrigger did?!

JC: It just bent right.... So then we had to bring them aboard and roll all the way home and it was not a good trip. And I kept saying "Why am I here? Why did I come back to this?" You know, what for?

AC: Right. But it, it's always been full of those ups and downs?

JC: But then 2 days later for some reason you're ready to go again. It's always been like that. Just when you've had enough, if you took 3 days off, you go "Alright I got to go."

[50:13]

AC: Is it the physical, like you said, the unexpected potential big event or trip...?

JC: I think you just get used to it.

AC: You just get used to it.

JC: You get used to it. You get used to doing your job and then when you don't have it, especially in a job like fishing when you're busy and you're working all the time.

AC: Yeah.

JC: Vacations aren't even easy. You know? My wife was just reminding me a few years ago that we went to Florida in April, drove down, her family's, her mother's down there, and my parents were down there, you know. And my friend called me 4 days into the trip and said "Rhode Island opened the fluke to 3,000 for one more trip." And I piled everyone back in the car and drove home.

AC: (laughs) With grumpy faces the whole drive down?

JC: My wife's like... I'm like, that's 3,000 pounds of fluke and then that's going to be shut down 'til next February. I mean, shut down to 100, 200, 300 pounds, whatever it is, I got to make this trip.

AC: Were you able to make it?

JC: Yeah.

AC: Did you make it back in time?

JC: I got home at 9:30, put on my jeans and was on that boat at 10 o'clock.

AC: The same day? After a road trip from Florida?!

JC: I drove, and I drove, I think I drove 18 of the 19 hours, 18 out of the 20-something hours it took us to get home, I drove. [I] got on that boat and went.

AC: Wow.

JC: So. You know?

AC: And how, as physically, do you feel like it's taken a toll on you at all? Are you, you seem like you're in great shape and look young and....

JC: Hurts, it hurts, it hurts in the morning. It hurts in the morning, it does. The body hurts in the morning. But then it loosens right up.

AC: Has that always been the case or is it more recently?

JC: Oh, I'd say it happens a lot more since, from 40 on. You know?

AC: From 40, ah man. (laughs)

JC: I can remember my brother-in-law was older than me saying, you know "This is the age it starts." And sure enough, he was pretty much on target.

AC: Wow. But you're able to kind of push through it and it loosens up as you....

JC: You just do your stretches in the morning...

AC: Oh my goodness.

JC: ... and then you go to work and then you loosen up.

AC: Okay. Have you seen it amongst your friends as well, in terms of physical and even maybe mentals, just toll that, that...?

JC: I can't say for sure.

AC: Okay.

JC: Most guys don't let in on their pain.

AC: Okay.

JC: You know, that's fisherman's code I guess. I don't know. It's everybody's, every man's code. You don't let in on the pain. You know

AC: Okay. Fair enough. Yes. In terms of, maybe a couple more questions if you have a little bit more time, John?

JC: I'm just running errands today.

AC: (laughs) Okay. Have you seen any, within your port have you seen any sort of social issues in terms of, you know, behavior or abuse? Or is there some, is there a change in the port amongst people you know in that way? The people, mental....



JC: There's a lot more hate. There's a lot of hate in that port.

AC: Has that translated to any sort of activities...?

JC: It went from dislike to total hate. And it's all over the sectors. It's all...

AC: Dislike to hate. Wow.

JC: Dislike to hate. To, you know what? I have to imagine if some guys saw certain other guys going down, they might go pick up the deckhands. (laughs) I don't know if they'd let the captain on board. I mean that bad.

AC: Really? It's that bad.

JC: And just....

AC: Wow. And for, for fishing industry, which is always, you guys have always seemed to be, in any port....

JC: The code is, the code is if someone's going down...

AC: Yeah.

JC: ... you just haul back.

AC: So it's crossed over.

JC: I don't know that it....

AC: Well, it's, you're....

JC: It's in the back of my mind.

AC: It's that bad that you would contemplate...?

JC: Yeah, the hate is unbelievable, you know? And it's all over this.

AC: Has that translated into you know, more drinking? I mean are people abusing themselves in terms of...?

JC: I don't think, I don't think so.

AC: Okay. It's just personal interactions.

JC: I'd say the one thing that's not thriving down there is the bars. They don't thrive. It's different, it's a different port.

AC: Yeah.

JC: You know, if you're not on the ball, you're not going to make it in this stuff, so....

AC: Do you have a lot of....

JC: I'm not saying there's no drinkers.

AC: Right.

JC: 'Cause there's drinkers everywhere. But, it's reduced.

AC: But you're not seeing it more...?

JC: Oh yeah, not like when I was younger.

AC: Okay.

JC: Not like the good old days.

AC: Not getting together after...?

JC: Oh no.

AC: ... a hard day's work. People just flee in different directions.

JC: Yep.

AC: And go home, whatever they do?

JC: I can't even remember the last time I had, well not with this deck hand, obviously he's younger, even my old deckhand, I can't remember the last time I ever had a drink with him, went out after. But the best story, my father who's, he's in his 70's, he comes down every day to run the take out valve while we take out bait and he brings, he usually brings 2 beers with him.

AC: (laughs) Two?

JC: Yeah, one for each of us.

AC: Nice.

JC: And that won't, now it's getting chilly, so that will stop too. That's just for the summer.

AC: Maybe a hot, a hot toddy, something in a thermos.

JC: He always brings, yeah, he, a little cooler with a, you know an ice pack and 2 beers.

AC: Wow. And that's still happening, but that's family so...

JC: That's family.

AC: ... pretty different. Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

[55:00]

AC: I see. And is there anything you want to say about some of your history on the water...?

JC: I just...

AC: Or thoughts on that part?

JC: You know, yeah, it's, I think National [Marine] Fisheries [Service] has always hid behind the phrase "Best available science." It's the new catch phrase, it's the "I don't recall" of politicians. You know, where they say that every time they don't want to answer a question. It always comes down to best available science. I don't think they're using the best available science. If you want good science, you go to the people that are out there every day. Not some boat towing around a net in an ocean. It's the ocean! They have no idea. And if they're not catching, it doesn't mean there's no fish there. The fish move.

Last year, I almost would have agreed on the fluke and then we went farther east than we've ever gone. And sure enough, there they were. It probably had something to do with whatever was on the bottom and the warm temperatures and all that stuff. It's fishing. You have to go fish for it. And if you don't find them in this fathom, you try a different fathom. Or a different temperature. Or whatever it is until you find them. They're there. I don't agree with their numbers at all. I've always been able to find fish or....

You know maybe not, this, this, it runs cyclical. I'll admit the blackbacks have dropped off, but do they have to go to zero? I don't think so. I don't think they gave 6 and a half inch twine enough time. That would be the... again I'm not against, I think we needed regulations. I'll be the first to say we needed them. And that 6 and a half inch twine was the best idea they ever came out with. All of a sudden there's no little fish, which means

there will be fish the next year, and the next year, and the next year if you're not killing them. You know?

But, you put, I don't want to put down all the government employees. There are people there who helped me get this boat going. There are some people at National Marine Fisheries that I can't say enough good things about. There are some observers that I would hire on the spot 'cause they're good hard workers and there's some I wouldn't. But when you get them involved, you're too young to remember this, but when I was young, and I remember this history, the government took over the airline industry.

AC: Oh yeah.

JC: And destroyed it. They absolutely destroyed it. They had to go into deregulation because they wiped out every airline with their "experts". They're doing that to us; they're wiping us out. And, and this fisher's more responsible than a guy.... I fished responsibly, I liked the big twine. You know, I don't hammer on a spot for 4 days in a row. I'm a day fisherman. I bring in a nice product, [they're] putting me out of business. I mean, how you can go and totally shut down a guy for something he's been doing?

And I don't want their money. I don't want them to say "Well here, we're going to give you money to make up for that." I don't want their money. I want to go to work. And I just want it to be reasonable. And maybe they hire a few people with economics degrees, to say you can't shut down a fishery because now people are going to find something else. If they can't get flounder, they're going to go buy, whatever it is, tilapia or something like that. You know, a lot of people are eating tilapia now because there's supply of, of fish. And, and even the lobstermen are complaining. They're catching sea bass like crazy in their traps, and they can't have one pound. Fifty pounds of sea bass to a lobsterman, is a day, is worth a day's fuel for most of them.

AC: Really?

JC: So now they can go out, if the lobstering's bad and at least know they're not going to go behind, because they'll have, get to keep.... What's 50 pounds of sea bass going to do to the sea bass population? Something small like that. Connecticut's been shutting off the fluke since, I want to say, the end of July. Their small fleet's not even working. If they could have 200 pounds of fluke, why shut down? Why not say, "Okay, here's your quota, and when it gets down to this, you have to go to a bycatch over 200 pounds" or whatever it is. [It] keeps the guys working. It's, down there fish houses have nothing in them. If you can't, if you're going out every day, and if you know that there's fluke everywhere, now you know you're going to catch your 200 fluke, whatever it is, you're going to get your fuel and you're not going to go behind. So you have that basis and now you can go look for other fish and try to make a day's pay.

AC: Right.

JC: That's all it would take to keep a lot of these boats going. Not a lot. Just don't shut down. Don't shut down the flounder, just don't shut down the fluke, don't shut down the sea bass, or whatever it is. Give them a bycatch, give them something. And that will keep them working. That will keep the fish houses open. That'll keep the net companies working and the engine shops going. You know? It's not a lot to ask for, I don't think. And I think there's a lot more fish out there than they make people believe.

[1:00:20]

AC: So some of the industry based surveys that have been done, you don't feel like that information that's been collected by fishermen through cooperative research is being used or...?

JC: I don't think it's being used at all.

AC: Was there not enough of it?

JC: I would say somehow we got the skate one, the skate plan through where we don't have to call in a Day at Sea 'cause we're not catching any groundfish.

AC: Okay.

JC: That one seemed to get through.

AC: Okay.

JC: Seems like they think you're up to something if you're catching a lot of fish or catching more than them or whatever it is.

AC: I see.

JC: They're very suspicious of fishermen. And I... they're fishermen. Part of the drive for fishermen is their greed, everyone knows that, you know.

AC: Well and resourcefulness and innovativeness to...

JC: Right.

AC: ... find a path, see the, see the point you want to get to and you just find a way to get there. That's what makes you.... That's fabulous.

JC: I'm not disagreeing that I should have to change my business once in a while. If you're running a business selling skateboards, and then all of a sudden that's not popular but

roller skates are, then go put roller, you do roller skates. Whatever it is. I'm not saying I should never have to change, but the change shouldn't be 'cause their stopping you. It should be "Hey there's no yellow... there's no blackbacks around this year, I better go get ready to chase a scup or a squid." And what they're, what's happened is, alright, so now I can't chase the blackback at the time of the year that I usually chase them. Now I'm squid fishing. Me and about 40 other boats are all fishing the same area because everyone is shut down. So instead of having the fishing boats spread out over the ocean, the way that they do it is shut it down. And now they get the whole fleet fishing one area. And it happens all the time. Okay, this is open. Everything else is closed, what's that make fish worth? Nothing. You couldn't chase the whiting this summer because the squid was shut off, so everyone was whiting fishing. The things were worth a nickel. You know? These are economics. There's a supply, demand, always has been. Let the market guide some of this.

[1:02:16]

AC: Right.

JC: They, they don't take anything into account. I don't know if they have an economics guy.

AC: And do you think that...?

JC: It always has been that way. Yellowtails will be good for a few years and then they'll drop off. And they'll be again, back again in a few years. But you're not chasing yellowtails when there's none around. You know? No one's out there chasing them, 'cause there's none around. [You] can't afford to.

AC: Do you think that some of local movements and the sort of public awareness of buying local seafood and eating underutilized species, do you think that sort of a public awareness is going to help drive the management? In terms of maybe people will say, "I want to eat more scup. Or I want to eat more black sea bass." Or something that's maybe not as widely caught.

JC: Yeah, you know what people eat? Are the skate wings.

AC: Skate wings.

JC: People are asking me for skate wings. I guess they had something on a cooking show.

AC: Oh yeah. That's what I'm thinking. Can that help...?

JC: Somebody called me and said, "You know, I'd like to try the skate wings." "Well I can get you a nice fluke." And their like, "No, I want to try the skate wings." And [a] lady stopped me in the store the other day. I haven't seen her in years and she said, "Hey so-and-so gave

me some of the skate wings that you gave them and they were delicious." And I'm like... you know? So.

AC: Wow.

JC: That kind of stuff is catching on I guess.

AC: And I wonder if that can help drive the management, management decisions.

JC: They'll, they'll shut the skate wings off then, you know.

AC: Oh, yeah.

JC: Once they found out you're making money, it seems like they shut you down.

AC: And have you had been able to take advantage of any sort of business ventures in that kind of direction where you can...?

JC: I haven't done it, no. I'm busy enough doing this. You know.

AC: Okay, so it just takes time and energy to set up something.

JC: You have to have, yeah. You have to have a lot more time, like I said I'm very involved. Now maybe the kids are moving out, maybe I'll have more time.

AC: (laughs) Well college will be right around the corner. They'll be all....

JC: Oh yeah. Yeah, but then they don't bother you anymore. I haven't seen my college, my son went to college a month ago. I think I've seen him twice. He only lives 3 miles from the house.

AC: He's very busy dad. He's got this life.

JC: Well, you know, I'm trying not to... yeah. I want to let him, you know, do that. But still.... That's about my biggest gripe is just don't shut them down. Let these lobstermen have their 50 pounds of sea bass. Let me have a couple hundred pounds of fluke. They're easy to catch. There's a ton of them around. Like I said, I don't care what you read, or what the government's telling you, if they can't catch one, then they're just not very good at what they're doing. Look at everyone's reports. Everyone is catching them. Everyone's discarding. It's kind of a shame.

And, first thing we do when we dump that bag of fish, we don't get to pick at fish. We start throwing sea bass and fluke overboard that are alive, trying to keep them going. Striped bass this time of year live, in the summer time they don't live so well. We actually get

inside a black sea bass and they have an air bag in them and pop that air bag and throw them back in. That much effort to keep these things alive, we're not, I don't know what to do.... People think of fishermen, I don't really care what they think of fishermen. It's good hard work and there's a lot of good people in it. And good family people.

[1:05:16]

AC: That's right.

JC: I know a lot of times you look on TV and you see them all sitting in the bar and their rough and.... It's not like that anymore. You know, like I said, you can walk around that port all night and not have to worry. You know?

AC: Right.

JC: So. I don't know. Did I say enough? Did I get my point across?

AC: Yes. You, you.... I think you certainly did. Absolutely.

JC: I don't want to put.... Like I said, I always thought we needed regulations. I just think, as usual, they have to overregulate to keep their jobs or whatever. 'Cause why not just say, "Hey yeah. This is working. Let's do it." Why do stocks have to be rebuilt to whatever by 2000 and something? If it's working and things are going up, up up, who cares if it takes 100 years?

AC: Yeah.

JC: As long as they keep going up, up, up, up and as long as you can keep people working.

AC: Right, right.

JC: You know?

AC: It's different purposes behind it, it seems like. Now when you go to management meetings are they listening to this?

JC: I don't go anymore.

AC: You don't go.

JC: I can't, 'cause that does raise my blood pressure. You know, going to those meetings and listening to people who don't know a whole lot about fishing tell you about how it is. I went to one where they brought down Canadians who were in the sectors up there and were saying how great the sectors were and stuff like that. And there was a lady and I said,



“Did you bring down anybody who lost their boats? Did you bring down anyone who lost their job? Or did you just bring down the 4 guys who got 2 million pounds to land each and are as happy as can be?” And she said, “Well, these are the success stories.” And I said “I understand that. Why don’t you tell us about some of the guys who didn’t make it? Why don’t you tell us about the guys who lost their houses? Good people who lost their houses because they bought a boat 3 years ago and now you decide to change the rules.” You know? But they don’t, they don’t bring them. You’re not going to hear about that.

[1:07:14]

AC: And how many people have you seen get out since sectors started? In the Point, at the Point?

JC: I don’t pay attention that much. I don’t really know.

AC: Okay.

JC: You know, I should pay more attention.

AC: Right, there’s been sort of a trickle or...?

JC: Guys come and guys go. Guys sell their boats.

AC: Okay.

JC: A lot of boats have left the port.

AC: Okay.

JC: I don’t know why. I mean, they’re just not making it, the big boats, you know?

AC: Yeah.

JC: And there’s, and like I said there’s not going to be 2 or 3 guys who own the fleet? I can name 3 guys who own more boats than is, than you’d ever imagine. They’re buying up all the boats. There’s one buying up lobster boats like crazy.

AC: Just in the Point or you mean down in New Bedford?

JC: No, no. Their boats are leaving the Point. They’re going to New Bedford. There’s a guy in New Jersey, there’s a guy in New Bedford, there’s a guy in New Hampshire buying up lobster boats like they’re going out of style.

AC: Wow.

JC: 'Cause he's going to want to have all the gear. He's going to want to have, that's going to be a gear restriction, so he's buying them up. And I don't think that's going to be great for anybody, especially the consumer. You know, you have 4 guys controlling it, they control it. Three or four guys, they control what's coming in and they control the price.

AC: Yeah.

JC: So.

[1:08:28]

AC: Even though they'll have to employ people to work on the boat but it's not going to....

JC: But it's, they're not going to get their share. They're going to get hourly wage and....

AC: Yeah, yeah.

JC: It's going to be....

AC: It's not an independent business.

JC: You don't want people like that out there. I don't believe... that's a tough place. You want good guys on deck, you don't want an \$8 an hour guy running a hundred foot vessel through the zones where there are tug boats and tankers and the shipping lanes and all that. You don't want that.

AC: That's right.

JC: I mean I had a guy, I called him the other day, I was towing. I couldn't even get out of his way. He didn't even speak English. He was just some kid they hired and they put him at the wheel.

AC: Oh wow.

JC: And I couldn't get a hold of them. I said that's it, hold on 'cause we're going to get hit. And all of a sudden the captain came on, he must have woke the captain up and said "I don't know what's going on? This guys doing..." I had my towing lights on, he should have known I was towing. You know? And then the captain came, "Oh yeah, we're going to go around you, were all set."

AC: Meanwhile you're....

JC: Well, I asked him later “What the hell happened?” “Well I had this guy up there and you know....” I know the guy.

AC: Just on watch that wasn’t experienced.

JC: Just wasn’t experienced enough. [Do] you want that out there? That’s what you’re going to get.

AC: Right.

JC: You know, you have to pay, you want good people you have to pay.

AC: Yeah.

JC: Why would you go out there and do that if you can make the same money with a 9 to 5 job? And be home when you want to be home and get up on regular hours, without getting up at the middle of the night to go...

AC: Right.

JC: ... fishing. Out when it’s pouring and blowing, you know what I mean?

AC: But, it always seemed like it should be equivalent to, in the land perspective, to hazard pay. I mean you’re, you can’t make...

JC: No, I don’t want that, you know.

AC: But you need to be compensated at that level.

JC: You have to be compensated. You’re putting in a 12 hour day most days.

AC: Right, right.

JC: There’s no overtime. It’s on a ship.

AC: Exactly.

JC: So. I’d like to make enough money to make sure I can keep getting good guys. I feel better. I can sleep. I’ve had guys that make me worry when I go to sleep sometimes.

AC: When you’re on the boat you mean?

JC: When I’m on a boat. I couldn’t sleep. I had one guy, who was.... I heard a tanker I could hear the screws on the tanker. I came up and he was watching TV and I said “Are you

going to let that guy run us down?" And then he got all crazy, started throwing the autopilot on the boat. And I said "Just get out of, get out of my way before we get run down." You know, and I could never sleep after that, because I knew he got so into that TV, he wasn't watching anything else.

AC: Oh my gosh. Okay.

JC: I don't want that.

AC: And is there any other story that you would want to leave on? An experience you had out at sea or something that maybe...?

JC: I don't know what to talk about.

AC: Okay. You, you've covered a lot of ground. This has been, been excellent.

JC: Good. I hope it gets us somewhere. I think there's a lot of ways that can make this industry work.

AC: Yeah.

JC: Without, I'm just thinking of everyone else. I, my family's in it. My nephew's in it.

AC: Yeah.

JC: My kids might be in it. I don't want to kill the stocks. I'm, I want to keep things going.

AC: You have extra investment in terms of personal investment.

JC: I'm just not interested, I'm not even saying I don't want to make money, but I want to do it responsibly. I want to keep the oceans going. I want to keep it here for generations and generations and generations. I really do.

AC: Well I think you'll be a force in that for sure.

JC: I just, they [have] got to be smarter about how they, how they enact rules. But who's going to do it? Who's going to buy my boat? Which one of my kids is going to move onto this?

AC: Has to be a bit more appealing than it is now.

JC: I'd say.

AC: Yeah. Well John, I want to say thank you very much for your time.

JC: Thank you. I hope I didn't go too crazy.

AC: You did excellent.

JC: I don't want to get too excited. That's what I said to my wife, "I'm not going to have a coffee."

AC: (laughs) You did perfect. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

[1:12:09]