NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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CHRISTOPHER LUTYENS

THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 1930-1987

INTRODUCTION

The Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, 1930-1987, an oral history project, was implemented under the auspices of the Newport Historical Society and the University of Rhode Island Sea Grant Program.

Through question and answer format, the tape-recorded transcribed interviews document the fishing industry from the point of view of its complex traditions and changes. They provide a body of unedited primary source material focusing on priority issues of local concern and those beyond the geographic area under study.

Interviews were conducted by Jennifer Murray of the Newport Historical Society and were transcribed at the Center for Oral History, University of Connecticut. Narrators include representatives of the floating fish trap industry, the inshore and offshore lobster industries, the inshore and offshore dragger industries, the swordfish industry, the wholesale and marketing sector, and fisheries conservation and management.

Oral history enables us to learn about our heritage from those who usually don't write about it. It supplies what's often only hinted at in written historical documents. Readers and researchers using these oral history memoirs should bear in mind that they are transcripts of the spoken word and that the narrator, interviewer, and transcriber sought to preserve the spontaneity and informality inherent in such historical sources. The Newport Historical Society and the University of Rhode Island are not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoirs nor for the views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

Copies of tapes and transcripts are available for research at the Newport Historical Society. Copies of transcripts are also accessible at the library of the University of Rhode Island, Narragansett Bay. As stated in the release form which accompanies each transcript, the memoirs are to be used for scholarly and educational purposes only.

CHRISTOPHER LUTYENS

Christopher Lutyens began his work in the lobster industry in Southwest Harbor, Maine at age sixteen. He came to Newport one year later after reading an article about Newport's offshore lobster industry in the magazine, National Fisherman.

Mr. Lutyens has worked in both the inshore and offshore lobster industries in Newport. He offers valuable information about the work of lobstering, lobster boats and equipment, lobster grounds, catch size, and the condition of the lobster stocks. He expresses concerns about the future of the fishing industry in Newport, R.I. and the effects of waterfront development and tourism on Newport's fishing industry.

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The best part of an offshore lobster trip
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Tape II Side II

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Interview with Christopher Lutyens by Jennifer Murray for the Newport Historical Society.

MURRAY: [This is] Jennifer Murray. I'm talking with Chris Lutyens for the Newport Historical Society's Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport from 1930 to 1987. Is it alright with you if I tape our interview?

LUTYENS: Certainly it is.

JM: Let's start out with where were you born?

CL: I was born in London, England in Queen Charlotte's Hospital.

JM: How about your parents' names?

CL: How about them? First names, last names?

JM: Both.

CL: My mother's name is Sally Brown Lutyens. She divorced my father in 1964. My father's name is David Mansfield Lutyens. He lives just outside of Boston in Concord, Massachusetts. My mother lives in Bangor, Maine.

JM: Where did you grow up? For the most part, where did you live, or did you move around a lot?

CL: I grew up, for the most part, in Southwest Harbor, Maine. I moved to Newport at the age of seventeen in 1977.

JM: Where did you go to school?

CL: I went to two years of high school at Mt. Desert Island Regional High School at Mount Desert Island,

Maine. Then I got out of school the earliest possible moment and went to work at age sixteen.

JM: What did you do?

CL: I went lobstering.

JM: How did you happen to do that?

CL: Well, Southwest Harbor is a little fishing town, [with a] bunch of little inshore boats, not like around here. I mean, you have your inshore fleet around here, too, but up there that's the only type of fishing they do -- close to the beach -- because the continental shelf and deep water come right in close up there. It's a whole different type of bottom. The deeper water comes much closer to the beach. So there really is no offshore fleet out of Maine. I got a job as a stern man on one of the better boats in Southwest Harbor. I was making a good living for my age. Back then I thought I was all set, boy, making eight thousand dollars a year. That was big money. I came to Newport mostly from reading about the offshore lobstering fleet in a publication called "National Fisherman." They used to have stories every now and then about the boats and the fleet out of Newport. Back at that time, Newport was pretty much the biggest producer or lander of lobsters from offshore anywhere, right here at Ronnie Fatulli's. I don't know what they do now versus then, but they were landing about ten

million dollars a year in lobsters right here at this pier (Ronald Fatulli's) back then.

JM: Do you think it's more or less now?

CL: I think it's a little less. A lot of boats have moved out of Newport. The fleet was bigger back then.

JM: What did you do when you came to Newport? Did you go to work for someone else?

CL: Yes. I came here on a Tuesday night with a suitcase. I got off the bus and I walked around. I got a room here, at the Seamen's [Seamen's Church Institute]. Wednesday morning I walked the docks and I got a job at Newport Offshore (which was then located where Newport Onshore is now). I got a job with Frank McCaffrey with the Narragansett Shipwrights. We were building a fifty-four foot Wess System dragger for a guy, ironically out of Southwest Harbor, Maine. He was having it built down here.

JM: That's a coincidence.

CL: Yes, kind of. But I got a job right there the first day in Newpi [Newport]. The rest is history. I worked six months, I guess, from November until about April. In that time I met a few people who knew other people in the offshore lobstering trade. They hooked me up with the right guy. I got a job on Paul Bennett's Anna Fee, which is now called the

Michael J., owned by the then-skipper. He owns it now. He bought the boat from Bennett.

JM: Who's that?

CL: Tom Kroger. I went to work for them. I worked one full season on that boat, as low man on the totem pole there. I was a bander cook. But I gained enough experience in that one year where I landed a site with Ray Palombo's Jeanne-Ann, which was a bigger boat and a much better operation. That was a good job for me. I worked there for two years.

JM: What did you do?

CL: I was the engineer deck hand. There were two deck hands, a bander and a captain. I was the engineer first mate on that. Those were the last really good years offshore -- lobstering.

JM: What years were those?

CL: That was '80 and '81. I can bring you right up to date. After two years on the Jeanne-Ann I was getting a little weary and I decided to get my own inshore boat, a very small twenty-one footer. I got off the boat in December of '81, which coincided with the time that my bare hull had been finished. I had ordered this twenty-one foot bare hull, and I brought it down from Maine. I had it built in Southwest Harbor. I finished that off in the winter, spring of '82 and started fishing in April of '82 -- inshore -- right out here off Ocean Drive

down to Sachuest Point. I fished two years with the skiff and had a really good time. That was basically when I established myself as a small businessman. I was able to keep my head above water. I borrowed all the money to do it. I bought brand-new equipment and a brand-new truck, and I went into hock for about twenty-five thousand. In those two years, I was able to pay it all off, which was very important to me, and also live in Newport comfortably. In November of '83 I had a little accident with the boat and I rolled it over and went for "the big swim." At that point, I got the boat back, luckily. I salvaged it and it wasn't bad at all. The Coast Guard saved the boat for me.

JM: What happened?

CL: The only way I was able to make money with a boat that size was to really go crazy and work every day, regardless of the weather. So I used to go out in a lot of weather that I shouldn't have been out in and it just caught up with me one day. I pitch poled as a matter of fact, about three miles off Seal Rock. I had a survival suit so I put that on in the water and floated around for a few hours. Finally some boat was fishing off of Seal Rock. I had drifted in with the incoming tide and I sort of made my way over to this guy. I said, "Hey," and he rescued me. It was pretty rough out that day.

JM: What time of year was this?

CL: This was November; November 10th I think it was, 1983.

JM: Did you go out on November 11th?

CL: No, the boat got wrecked. The boat was sunk and then the traps I had lashed to it -- I was bringing in gear that day and had a lot of pots stacked on the back of the boat. I was going fair wind in a following sea. Then one of these big ones just snuck up on me. I didn't see or hear it in time. I went end over end. The pots dragged the boat and the boat sank. The pots must have beat around on the bottom and they fell off. The lines I had lashing them down either chafed through -- I can't remember -- or they just came untied or something. Once the weight of the pots freed, the boat came back up because the air was in the bilge. The boat was upside down. At that point, the Coast Guard was out looking for the boat. They happened to spot it and they rescued it for me. I got it back. So it was really a blessing. It could have ruined -- I won't say my career -- but it could have ruined a good record that I have now. The difference is, say, of having a fender bender and just taking your car and having it worked on, versus getting drunk and totalling out your mother's car. I got the boat back and it was relatively unharmed.

It was just water damage. I had the ability to repair it myself. So I didn't lose the boat and I didn't have to collect on insurance. That's what I'm trying to say. I didn't have to utilize my insurance policy, so that made a big difference. I licked my wounds at that point and I went to work for Paul Bennett on the Hedy-Brenna, which is a local highline lobster boat here in Newport. We had a really good winter, that winter of '83 and '84. He started training me to run the boat as skipper. I think I made nineteen trips with him between November 20th and April 15th. Finally, towards the end, I realized that the personality differences between Paul Bennett and myself didn't allow the situation to work out in the long run, so I gave him a couple weeks notice and said, "I can't work for you anymore." We were always at each other's necks.

JM: How far offshore would you go with that boat, the Hedy-Brenna?

CL: He fishes about a hundred and twenty-five miles off, on the edge of the continental shelf.

JM: Is that the furthest you've ever gone?

CL: No, the Jeanne-Ann used to fish farther down the east edge of the continental edge. So we were going up to about a hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy miles in that boat from Newport, approximately a hundred and thirty miles south of

Nantucket.

JM: How long of a trip do you take when you go out that far?

CL: Usually, depending on how much gear you're hauling and what boat you're on, it's always eighteen hours out and either two or three days of fishing, sometimes four. The Hedy-Brenna usually fishes four days. It's a day out by the time you get all ready to go and leave, four days fishing, and then a day back in. So [it was] six-day trips on the Hedy. We were making five-day trips on the Jeanne-Ann.

JM: How many people are on the crew on an offshore boat like that?

CL: Usually there were either three or four deck hands and a skipper.

JM: And you share whatever money is made on the trip?

CL: Yes, it's on a percentage basis. Usually, on a lobster boat offshore, the fuel expense, the bait expense, and the food comes off the top of the gross stock, after which you would divide up the remaining net into usually sixty/forty or fifty-five/forty-five percentage, with fifty-five per cent going to the boat owner and forty-five percent going to the crew, divided up in various shares depending on who's who. The skipper usually gets fifteen per cent and then there's either three deck hands at ten per cent or three at eight percent and a bander at

like four per cent. Sometimes the crew pays for the bander out of their own pocket, but usually the shares are around fifty-five/forty-five after fuel, bait, and food.

JM: What was considered a really good trip then? You had said that '80 and '81 were the last really good years.

CL: Yes, '82 was the last good year. You have to understand one thing. Lobstering is pretty seasonal. They're only around in force about four months out of the year, from the end of August until the end of December.

JM: This is offshore, too?

CL: That's primarily offshore. Inshore, off of Newport, has a much different cycle, as say as close as Buzzards Bay, and the west end of Vineyard Sound has a totally different fishery. The lobsters show up off of Newport in July. It's different wherever you go. But offshore, generally, the fall -- from August until January is the best fishing.

JM: Why is that?

CL: It's cold water currents coming from the Gulf of Maine and things such as that. It's a big, wide ocean out there. There are a lot of lobsters on the bottom. They're all related, but they're different -- I won't say cultures -- but it's like the difference between the deep South and the mid-

Atlantic region and New England. They have different types of people. They're all humans -- Homosapiens -- or whatever. The lobsters are all Homarus Americanus, but there are different types of lobsters from different bodies of water, different bottoms. No one really knows for sure what goes on, but there are distinctive differences.

JM: Like what?

CL: To the west, from Baltimore Canyon up to Atlantis Canyon, most of the lobsters don't exceed a pound and a half. They're all a pound to a pound and a half and a lot of little shorts. East of Atlantis to the west wall of Hydrographer's Canyon, the lobsters are still pretty small, but you get a few big ones mixed in now and again. Now, this is one dividing canyon, which is approximately due south of the Great South Channel, which divides the east part of George's Banks and the West shoal south of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The Great South Channel funnels a lot of cold water down out of the Gulf of Maine or a lot of warm water up from the Gulf Stream, depending on the time of year. East of Hydrographer's, the west wall of the canyon and the east wall of the canyon are about three or four miles apart -- average. On the west side is all small lobsters and the tide runs about a knot, knot and a half -- tops. The east wall is like a

dividing line. You get over there, the water is colder, the lobsters are much bigger, and the tide is usually running about two or two and a half knots. It's a lot more tide. So from the east wall of Hydrographer's, east, down to the southeast parts of George's Banks, the farther east you go, the bigger the lobsters get, and you generally don't see any pound or pound and a half lobsters down there. They're all two pounders -- two and a half, three, five, ten. That's where all the big ones hang out. Then you go into the Gulf of Maine and it's a whole different story altogether. They're all big ones up there -- in the deep water. It's a funny thing because there's a whole fleet of boats that fish out of southern Maine that steam all the way to the Northern Edge. Their prime fishing is in February and March, where down here nobody catches anything in February and March off-shore. It's a whole different population of lobsters that are coming south out of the Bay of Fundy or east of Nova Scotia and it's relatively untapped up there. They're a lot bigger breed, a lot darker shells, a lot harder -- rugged. But the weather is so harsh up there in February, it's tough to fish.

JM: What kind of person would it take to stand that?

CL: I don't know. I'll let you know a year from now because that's where I'm going next winter. With

this new boat I'm probably going to fish the traditional grounds that I fished. See, I didn't go beyond the Hedy-Brenna. After I got off the Hedy-Brenna in April of '84, I latched onto this guy who bought out a company called the Continental Shelf Fish and Lobster Company. They were one of the first corporate-owned -- that was [the group that owned] the Iron Horse and the Iron Lady. One of the original investors bought out the other six investors and took both boats, which were both in relative states of disrepair. I mean, they were pretty beat. There's a whole sort of saga that goes along with all these boats and the people who ran them and worked them. Like Paul Bennett used to run the Iron Horse and then he bought the Anna Fee. Then he got the money saved up and he built the Hedy-Brenna and he got off the Iron Horse. Then the Iron Horse started going downhill and he couldn't find the right guys to run it. So I got in on the Iron Horse at the end, when the boat was ready to sink. I spent the whole summer and fall of '84 on that boat with a crew that I assembled. We took seven months and totally revamped the whole boat from top to bottom. We spent a quarter million dollars in restoration. By the late fall of '84 we were ready to go fishing. It was a little bit late, but we did set gear in late November and December. We ended up

fishing steady from that point until I got off the boat. The new boat was called the Neptune. I ran that until January of '86. At that point, I was a little burnt-out, so I got off the boat and gave up the command. There were a lot of reasons why I got off the boat. It doesn't really pertain to the history of fishing. Then I went back to the inshore boat for '86. It's called the Arduous -- the original hull that I had sunk. I saved the hull. Towards the end of '85 I was having a boat builder put a new deck and cabin on it, and I did a lot of work to it after I got off the Neptune. I fished that this past year -- this summer and fall. I had a good time doing that. Now I'm ready to go back offshore again.

JM: It's good to have that balance.

CL: Yes, I can come and go as I please. But this is the next big thing for me because this is a five-year commitment, anyway [working on a new boat].

JM: How far offshore do you go in the inshore fishery?

CL: I was fishing about ten miles out. Not too far.

JM: Did you go by yourself then?

CL: Yes, I was fishing by myself.

JM: About how many pots is that?

CL: I was fishing four hundred -- little, tiny wire ones not too much bigger than that box [8" by 24"].

JM: Why do you pick that specific size?

CL: The way my boat was set up, it didn't have a lot of deck space. It also was displacing more water than it was designed for, with a lot of added equipment and weight that I had put on the boat. So I couldn't really go with a wooden pot. The wire is the wave of the future nowadays. The wood is becoming obsolete, mostly because of its maintenance -- the cost of maintaining the pot and also treating it with the chemicals you need to treat it with to stop wood-boring ocean worms from destroying it during the summer months. Dipping is becoming illegal. It is illegal because you're dealing with hazardous chemicals. There are no facilities. You know how property is. You can't just go buy a piece of property and dip lobster pots on it. So basically, everybody is trying to switch over to wire traps. You remember when I dipped the old pots in my mother's yard up there.

JM: I remember seeing them but didn't know what you were doing.

CL: I was very careful, but they smell. When you dip them in this big vat of chemicals and stick them out to dry, the fumes permeate.

JM: I never noticed.

CL: It was a relatively light batch I mixed up, but you're dealing with heavy metals [such as] tributeline oxide and tin. [They are] poisonous,

carcinogenic to say the least. If you get it on your skin, it burns a hole right through your skin. So I chose the wire, not necessarily for those reasons, but mostly because of the size and weight. I'm going with all wire traps with this new boat of mine now.

JM: How do you find out, when you're in an area, where to set your pots out?

CL: It's all just -- I won't say years of experience -- I'll say it's a big ocean out there and there are a lot more places where you can set lobster traps where you won't catch anything than there are where you will. Generally, you try to stay as close to the continental shelf as possible, between the depths of two hundred fathoms up to forty fathoms. It slopes off very gently out here and it takes thirty miles to get to twenty-five fathoms from Newport out. Then you hit a little ledge called Coxes Ledge halfway between Block Island and Noman's Land off Martha's Vineyard. Then you've got to go another forty miles to the southeast before you get to forty fathoms. Then you only have to go about eighteen or twenty miles and it drops from forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, to a hundred. It starts dropping off very slowly. Then once you hit seventy fathoms it drops right down. Within five miles you go from seventy-five fathoms to a

hundred and fifty. Once you hit a hundred fathoms, it just drops right straight down -- a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, five hundred.

JM: There are lobsters that deep?

CL: No one's ever really fished deeper than two hundred and twenty-five or two hundred and forty fathoms because the strain involved with pulling the gear up from those depths warrants the use of rope twice as big as what we normally use. What we do is we fish strings of gear. They're one mile to a string, with fifty pots attached on short lines called gantions. There are twenty-five fathoms, a hundred and fifty feet, in between each pot. So if you're in a hundred fathoms of water, which is six hundred feet, that means you have approximately four pots hanging in a straight line off the bottom up to the boat. You don't generally haul straight up and down; it's at an angle, so say five pots. The weight of five pots, with the current running against it, and the line we fish is nine-sixteenths -- now you take six hundred feet of nine-sixteenths rope, and you pile it all up into -- there's a lot of strain on rope from current. You wouldn't think there is, but just that skinny line going for six hundred feet from the boat down to the bottom creates a lot of drag. With six pots on it -- there's five or six pots hanging on it -- there's that much weight and drag. The

boat is pitching in ten or fifteen foot seas and everything, and you're trying to pull this line up with a hydraulic hauler. Now, that's fine and dandy, but if you go to two hundred fathoms, that means you have ten pots off the bottom so you double the strain. You're talking a couple thousand, twenty-five hundred, three thousand pounds of strain on the line before it will snap. That's a lot of weight. You can't warrant fishing deeper water because if you did, you'd have to have five-eighths or three-quarter inch rope. Then, for the amount of time that you'd be fishing down there, it's not like you're going to have two sets of gear with two different size ropes. The price of the rope is phenomenal once you get over nine-sixteenths, because they sell rope by the pound. To rig all your lines with three-quarter inch rope so that you can haul in deep water, say one month out of the year when the lobsters move down that deep, doesn't warrant the expense because the rope is really expensive. Just one trawl, fifty pots, is about six or seven hundred dollars for the line. And there's other reasons why you don't fish down deep. The current is so strong, it just makes a mess out of your lines. You can't put enough weight in the ends of the traps -- the anchor pots on each end of the trawl.

JM: So people have tried to do it?

CL: I don't know. What happens is, in a hundred fathoms of water you have to use a hundred and fifty fathoms of buoy line to keep the buoys up because the current is running against the buoy line. Now, if you get down to two hundred fathoms, you have to use three hundred fathoms of buoy line. If you go deeper than that, you can't put enough buoy line on because you reach a balance where the more buoy line you have on, the more drag there is. The amount of current that the ocean produces just drags the -- you can't keep a buoy on it. You have to put a great, big, huge oil tank or something for flotation. They just don't make the equipment that's suitable for that type of current. It sucks them under. Every spring the Gulf Stream comes mosying it's way up the east coast. Sometimes it creates back eddies, which will come inside of the continental shelf, the hundred fathom curve, and it sucks all the buoys right down. The kind of buoys that I'm talking about that we use are seventy-two inch round polyform inflatable balls. You use two of those and then a big aluminum high flyer with a radar reflector on top and three seven by fifteen styrofoam buoys and then some window weights lashed on the bottom to keep that upright. There's a lot of buoyancy there, but these eddies will come in and

they'll suck these ends right down. And when those ends go down, that's it.

[end of side one, tape one]

There's a lot to know about offshore lobstering, and the gear and the equipment needed. But as far as the deep water goes, it would be nice to think we could fish in two hundred fifty, three hundred fathoms of water, but it's so steep at that point, it's like setting on the side of the Grand Canyon, so to speak. The amount of buoy line that you'd have to set just wouldn't warrant it. There are other fisheries that go on outside that two hundred fathom curve that we can't get involved with. There's longliners who fish or swordfish on the surface, and they're up and down, and up and down, and they're dragging their longlines. Whatever buoys we have there will get cut right off by them. Basically, we stay inside two hundred fathoms. I know this one guy tried to set on some little islands that were quite a bit further off the edge where it was up and down to a thousand fathoms -- six thousand feet. Then there would be like a little pinnacle that would come up, maybe a two mile island that came up to three hundred fathoms. He tried setting on those, but to get it so that you set it up-tide or up-current, and to get it to land where you want it to six thousand feet down doesn't

work. You just can't do it.

JM: Is that someone from around here?

CL: It's someone who has fished out of Newport but doesn't now. If you look at a chart sometime of the continental shelf, you'll see what I'm talking about, how it drops off and it's very steep. Some of the walls on the canyons are literally like the Grand Canyon. They are that steep and that far down. I've seen the fathometer go from a hundred and eighty fathoms to six hundred fathoms in the turn of a boat. You come outside, and you're obviously on some sort of a cliff. You just picture what it looks like without the water there, and you'd see that it's a real monster with this canyon. It's a lot of money in gear to fish offshore. The average offshore boat now has over a hundred thousand dollars in lobster traps and rope and support gear. Some of them have twice that.

JM: How about all the other technology? You said the fathometer. What else do you have to have to go out that far?

CL: You've got to have good, high quality, long-range loran. It stands for long-range aid to navigation, I guess. Lorans are necessary, and you've got to have a couple of good, powerful radar sets so you can keep your eye on ships. There are a lot of ships bobbing around, twenty knots either way. You

have to have a good chart recorder, or video sonar is handy. Some guys have plotters to help them set back on the exact same sets. Of course, you have to have an autopilot. There's a lot of electronic gear that goes along with it. The average boat has probably thirty or forty thousand dollars worth of electronic equipment. There's all kinds of stuff on a lobster boat. You have to have big pumping systems circulate live tanks inside the boat. When you do that, you have to have all sorts of alarm systems inside the boat if you ever break a pipe or anything like that. Basically, most of these boats have big pumps inside their engine rooms that are pumping seven or eight hundred gallons of water a minute from the outside of the boat through these pumps, through the pipes, into the lobster tanks. It's kind of dangerous, so you have to have a lot of bilge alarms and backup bilge alarms because if you break a pipe, or if a pipe rusts out from the inside (if it's a metal pipe), or something like that happens, it can fill up your engine room inside of ten minutes and sink the boat right then and there. There are all different kinds of boats out there, all different setups. Some are better than others.

JM: Are most of them corporation-owned out there?

CL: No, most of the offshore lobster boats are private,

owner-operated. It's one of the few remaining small business enterprises. There are a few boats that are company-owned boats, so to speak, with private investors, but generally, they don't stand up too well under the competition. It's hard to find good crew and good help that will care about the boat and the gear and it's hard to find good captains. Whereas, if the guy owns the boat and the gear, he's going to take care of the stuff. It's a pretty punishing environment on equipment out there. Everything gets worked around the clock. The average boat, I think, probably spends three thousand to thirty-five hundred hours running time a year. That's a lot of wear and tear on everything.

JM: How about on the people out there?

CL: It's hard to find good guys. You have to work them to the bone, and they're not making the big money like they used to. See, when I was eighteen and nineteen, I was making thirty or thirty-five thousand dollars a year fishing eight hundred or nine hundred pots. Now, the boats are fishing two thousand pots, and the guys are lucky to make that. So they're doing twice the amount of work and making the same money. Boats that are fishing the same amount of gear we fished ten years ago, or even seven years ago, aren't making enough. There's really not too many guys around who are any good.

There's mostly derelicts -- guys who are drunks and drug addicts.

JM: Have you ever been on a boat with people like that?

CL: I made one trip one year where there were some guys on the boat that were all screwed up. But no, I've been fortunate because I'm one of the few guys who's any good around here. When I was here and young and starting in, there were a bunch of guys who were all young and starting in. Either those guys got out of the industry and went on to something else, or they're owner-operators, captains now. But the crews that you have coming up the ranks now are just not what they used to be. It used to be if you were late five minutes, you were history, up the dock with your tail between your legs because there were ten guys beating down the door to take your job. Now, captains have to go drag the crewmen out of the barrooms to take them fishing. I was fortunate when I had the Neptune, that I brought in all outside help -- guys out of college who had never been before. I sort of promised them a lot more than I actually -- not a lot more than I delivered, but I sort of glorified it a little bit. I said, "Yeah, yeah, it's going to be great," because there is a certain amount of camaraderie that goes along with it when you have guys that are new at it. But what happens is, these guys work at it for ten years and

they're making less money than they were, and they're working twice as hard. It's hard for them to get excited about it. Most of the good guys are gone. Either that or they're owner-operators now and they have their own crew troubles. I'm putting together a good crew now, but they're all out of state; they're all guys from Vermont and old buddies of mine who were living in Wisconsin. I said, "Come on out. We're going to go -- "

JM: Be quite an experience.

CL: Well, the first few trips are a little hairy.

JM: I'll bet. Did you get sick the first time out?

CL: Some guys will get sick and that's it. They can't go. They don't want to go through that again because that is a little uncomfortable. I've never been seasick, but I've seen guys who are and I know that they beg you to shoot them right then and there and knife them in the back to put them out of their misery. It's pretty miserable. I was lucky in 1985. I had all new guys. I had a guy from New Zealand and I had a guy from Buffalo, New York, and a guy from Pennsylvania. They all worked out beautifully. They worked all year long. They never missed a trip, never missed a day. We had a pretty good year, comparatively. Then they went about their merry way. They fulfilled their committment to me and said, "Well, this isn't for me," because I

was working them to the bone.

JM: What are the hours like out there?

CL: They're pretty tough. It depends on who's the skipper. Generally, I know when I worked out there, we worked eighteen to twenty hour days, and laid-to at night for four or five hours, usually between ten at night 'til three in the morning. You do that three days in a row and then you come home. It depends.

JM: Then what happens when you come home? Do you wait 'til the next trip or --

CL: The way to make money nowadays is you come home and you sell your lobsters and you don't even shut the engine down. You go tie up and take bait and food and go back out again. That's the way to make money now. The plan for me, right now with this new boat that I'm getting, is I'm going to have to have two captains and two crews -- not necessarily two complete crews, but a crew and a half, so that I can keep rotating the men. You can't ask them to work the kind of hours that the boat needs to work to pay for itself and to make money. And a captain, which will be me -- I can't ask myself to work that kind of duty without time off. That is one of the major reasons why I had to get off the Neptune. I worked approximately twenty months straight without a day off between the time we restored the boat and the

time we fished. We had a lot of afternoons where we couldn't go out because the weather was blowing or something, but there was always something to do for me. What a money-making boat has to do nowadays lobstering is to have two captains. The primary captain takes the boat three trips and a backup guy comes in and takes it every three or four trips. It's usually the owner nowadays. A lot of these guys who own their boats only take the boat once a month and they have another guy who runs it for them.

JM: What's the condition of the lobster stocks right out here and offshore?

CL: I would say that it's pretty much, in my opinion, stabilized. I don't think there's a real danger to the population. I think that the amount of lobsters that are there now are about the same that were there ten years ago. It's just that there's ten times as many traps in the water, so you're slicing up the pie thinner and thinner. It's like if you put one mouse trap in the closet, then you'd catch one mouse; or if you put six mouse traps in there and you only catch one mouse. I think there's the same amount of lobsters around. The competition is a lot greater than it was. It used to be you could fish wherever you wanted to and you'd never ever see another guy's gear offshore, but nowadays there's

miles and miles and miles of gear. The whole continental shelf, is plastered from one end to the other, literally from off of the Delaware coast, all the way up around the southeast parts, all the way to the Bay of Fundy.

JM: What kind of regulations are you operating under?

CL: We're operating under government National Marine Fisheries Service. [There is] a minimum size. We're not allowed to take female berried lobsters (carrying eggs). The state of Maine has a lot of regulations that only they enforce. We have to comply with marking our gear with our number, but there's no conservation going on. There are no trap limits. There's no Limited Entry. Anybody can go out there and throw a lobster trap out.

JM: What do you think about Limited Entry?

CL: I don't think it's right. I think it's better for the old cycle to continue the way it does. For every new boat that comes in, you hope that one goes out of business and gets out. Right now, it's not really working that way. There's more guys getting into it, but it eventually weeds itself out. Limited Entry is not fair to the guys who are crew members who have been working, who want to get their own boats. The minimum size is going to be increased again starting in 1988. By the sounds of things there's quite a good stock or population of

small lobsters to the west. The problem is that there are a lot of smaller boats fishing to the west and they don't allow the lobsters to move their way up this way to the east. Generally out here to the south, down to the edge, lobsters come from the west. They start down off of Baltimore Canyon off of North Carolina. Then in the spring they come up and they move to the east, following the water temperature. A lot of the small lobsters are getting caught before they ever make it down this way. But I've heard guys say there are a lot of small ones around -- hauling up a pot with thirty or forty little ones in there.

JM: How about enforcement? Is it adequate?

CL: Definitely not. Definitely not. Not in this state.

JM: Really.

CL: I know of guys and boats that were taking shorts, scrubbing eggers. One particular boat was in dire straights financially and they were doing anything they could to make ends meet. I know inshore here, in this bay, there's a lot of piracy going on.

JM: Of the shorts and the berried females?

CL: When they increase the guage to where they want it, literally a pound and a quarter lobster is going to be a short by the year of 1990, I think. And you have divers -- this is totally different. Offshore, generally, there's a general overall mutual respect

for the lobster industry. If you take a short and scrub an egger, you're cutting your own throat. But inshore here is a whole different story.

JM: Why is that?

CL: It's the general mentality of the fishermen. Offshore lobstermen are generally a more educated group.

JM: So you're dealing with a whole cultural kind of thing?

CL: Yes. With inshore guys, anything goes. They cut each other's gear and they beat each other up. Most of the serious lobstermen inshore are honest and don't take shorts, but it's the pirates, the guys who come down from up the bay there -- quahoggers and the scuba divers. I don't know if you noticed, but the entire east shore of Jamestown has become a diver's haven during the summer and fall on the weekends. The divers go down and there's no way to catch them. There's no way to catch a diver stealing lobsters out of traps and taking shorts. Even if a diver comes up with a lobster -- not necessarily a short lobster -- he's allowed to bring up lobsters. He brings a lobster up that could have come right out of your pot because your pots are right there.

JM: How can you prove that?

CL: I've caught them. I've been right above my traps

with the bubbles coming up all around me. The divers come up with all these lobsters, but they say, "Oh, I didn't take them out of your pots. As a matter of fact, there are three big ones in one of your pots right now." They'll say something like that to you and you'll go away. There's no way to catch them unless you dive over the side and down and watch them actually putting their hand in the pot. They're a big culprit. But as far as enforcement goes, there is not enough enforcement in the state of Rhode Island at all. I fished a total of three seasons out front in my little boat, and I've never seen a warden out there in a boat. I've never been boarded; I've never been checked. I brought lobsters in to Fatulli's for three years and I never got checked, ever.

JM: Is that where you mainly bring your lobsters in?

CL: Yes, I'm a devoted Fatulli Follower. I don't peddle. It's tough enough spending the time out there catching them. The last thing I want to do is peddle them to restaurants for an extra dime a pound or an extra quarter a pound. I'd rather just sell them.

JM: Do most of the lobstermen around here bring their lobsters in there?

CL: No. All the offshore boats do, but none of the inshore guys do, with the exception of two or three.

Most inshore guys sell to Fat John down on the corner at Long Wharf Seafood, or to restaurants and various places.

JM: What do you think the future of the inshore lobster industry is in Newport?

CL: As long as not too many more guys get into it, it should stabilize. This year was a pretty good year. Who's to say? They [lobsters] might not come one year. They might just not show up when they're supposed to because they're tempermental little bugs. You don't know what they're going to do or where they're going or how many are going to be around.

JM: What else do those people do to make a living?

CL: The guys who fish full-time year-round make a living lobstering and that's it. Then this time of year, from about the end of January until April, two months of not much -- banging on traps, repairing gear, working on the boat. You have to save up enough to make it through the tough times. It's not a year-round thing. Inshore, even from April until the end of June, you really don't catch much. You just scratch on a quarter a pound a pot, a third of a pound a pot. But in July they show up in force in the river here. That's the way to make money lobstering -- when the lobsters are there, you just work as hard as you can, and haul as much gear over

the rail. The same thing with offshore. When they're there, you've got to make the trips, and you can't be sitting around the dock for three or four days in between trips. I know that's what I'm going to do. I'll probably be setting gear in the end of July and early August, and I'll be ready by the end of August with all my gear in place, approximately where I want it to be. When they show up -- hopefully -- in September -- when they come, they come. They just arrive. All of a sudden, they're there. They're everywhere. Where they come from, nobody knows. It is amazing. The old cockroach of the sea.

JM: Is that what you call them?

CL: That's what they are. Same thing like the crayfish down south in the bayou, which is scary. I was down there two weeks ago, and all down the roads in the trenches are lobsters. That's what they are. They're crayfish, but they're the same thing as a lobster, and they're everywhere. They were eating everything; eating all the nasty things. That's what lobsters do. They thrive on offshore dumping grounds. If you want to catch a lobster, you go find an old dump marked on the charts "Dumping Ground," "Danger! Toxic Chemicals Dumped Here." That's where you go set and you're bound to catch lobsters there because they love that garbage. All

I am is an oceanic exterminator.

JM: [chuckles] What's the worst part of an offshore trip?

CL: Waking up. Yes, going to sleep after being awake for twenty hours on deck, in your oilskins, stuffing hot food down your face as fast as you can so you can get in your bunk, and then having to get up an hour and a half later to stand an hour and a half watch. Or fishing your gear if the boat you're on is fishing trawls spaced out every two or three miles apart from each other, down the edge. So you haul a trawl, you set it back, and then you've got a three mile steam, which takes twenty minutes or something. So there you are. You're done baiting up for the next trawl and you fall asleep for ten minutes. Then you've just fallen asleep and you have to get going again. It's better to stay awake and work around the clock than it is to doze off for ten minutes because your body goes to sleep and your adrenalin stops. It's a real unpleasant feeling when you first wake up and you know you've got to get up and go back to work. It's much easier and better to keep on working steady all day long than it is to lay down and rest. I've laid in my bunk sometimes. I would have given anything to be able to stay there, but you can't.

JM: You must get so exhausted.

CL: Yes, you get tired. You definitely get tired. You sleep well on the way home, but you have to keep standing watches -- rotation. Somebody's always got to be in the wheelhouse. That is one of the better parts of it -- when you're all done with the gear and you get to start steaming home, and you get a hot meal. Whoever gets the first watch stands his watch. At the end of his watch, he knows he's going to have four and a half or six hours sleep. That's a good feeling. But you never get more than four and a half hours sleep. A captain never gets more than three hours sleep because he's always got so much on his mind that he can't fall asleep like that [snaps fingers]. I know I couldn't. I could be up for forty-eight hours and it would take me two hours to fall asleep. I don't know. There's a lot of good parts to it and it's just a way of life. I tried to quit it when I got off the Neptune. I started another company, a marine service company, and it just wasn't --

JM: Was it an inside job?

CL: No it wasn't. It was an outside job. You see, fishing is a pain in the butt a lot of times. It's hard work and everything's against you -- Mother Nature, your gear is always breaking, and trouble this, trouble that. But it's a very independent and free way of life. There's no set time clocks. You

don't work by a clock. The clock means nothing, and that's what's nice about it. Time is irrelevent. There's people who live their whole lives where eight-fifteen to eight-thirty is when they have coffee, and twelve to twelve-thirty is when they have lunch. That's just not for me; it never will be. There used to be a lot of spirit and camaraderie. It's tough to find nowadays.

JM: Why is that?

CL: The money is not there anymore. I could make more money doing something else. For most guys, that's what they're doing. They're going somewhere else to make more money.

JM: Is that because there are so many more people going for the same thing?

CL: In the case of lobstering, yes. The pie is sliced up thinner so you don't get as big a piece, and the price of lobsters hasn't risen in comparison with inflation, the price of diesel, and the price of food. Have you bought a box of Raisin Bran lately? They keep telling us inflation is only two and a half percent a year or something. Diesel in 1978 was fifty cents and that was high. It actually has come down in the last two years, but it got up to over a dollar a gallon. That's a big difference when you're burning six or eight hundred gallons every few days. Bait costs for lobster boats. Wow,

now that the price of fish has gone up, I hope that doesn't mean the price of bait is going to go up. The average cost for an offshore lobster boat is twenty-five hundred dollars to make a trip, so that's a thousand pounds of lobster you have to catch just to pay the fuel, bait, and the food.

JM: How many pounds do you usually catch? What do you catch on a good trip offshore?

CL: Oh, I don't know. These days, five or six thousand is a good trip. It depends on the boat. Some boats fish twice as much gear as other boats and only catch the same amount.

JM: How many pots is that for five or six thousand pounds?

CL: I know in '85 I was fishing thirteen hundred pots. My best trip was seven thousand pounds; my worst trip was six hundred and fifty pounds. So it varies, depending on the time of year. Of course, when I was catching seven or eight hundred pounds, the price was four dollars a pound. When I was catching seven thousand pounds, the price was two dollars a pound. Actually, it wasn't two dollars... A big steel boat with four guys working and a pickup truck and gear and all this has to make three hundred thousand dollars a year just to pay the bills and for everyone to make thirty thousand dollars or whatever. A captain makes forty. So

it's three hundred thousand. That's just to break even. To get into it costs you half a million dollars -- if someone were to walk off the street and get into it with a used boat and used gear. This boat that I'm getting and the gear -- I'm getting the boat for a song because it's coming out of a depressed area of the country. All the equipment down there is fifteen cents on the dollar right now. But that's the only reason I'm even able to get into it. I also have to go spend two and a half months in a God-forsaken part of the world just to get the thing converted over, using skills that I have and most other people don't have of working on boats and fabricating that stuff. So in my case, I can't be compared. If anyone were to come along and want to get into the business -- a half a million dollars into a business that has to make three hundred thousand to break even, and the chances of doing that are slim. I mean, most boats only break even every year. They don't come out ahead.

JM: And all the time it takes to get so you know what you're doing.

CL: Yes. There's not too many new guys getting into it. The only ones who are, are guys who had smaller boats and kept working up, up, up. It's not like some guy comes along and says, "Oh gee, I think I'll be an offshore lobsterman."

JM: Are there many people in it that you know whose fathers were involved in the fishing industry?

CL: Definitely. About half the guys I know have a long line of it.

JM: Are they at an advantage when they start out?

CL: Oh, sure. I imagine it's an advantage. You have a lot of stuff handed down to you and the knowledge, too, that goes along with it. The other half of the guys that I know are really smart guys who got into it. I was ten years late. If I had come around in 1968 instead of 1978, it would be a whole different matter.

[end of side two, tape one]

... that I know who have made millions of dollars lobstering.

JM: Here?

CL: Yes. Now they're both basically break-even. They survive off of what they have already made. If they were to support or to gain what it is that they already have, they could never do it with the money that's coming in. One of the big problems is insurance. The cost of insuring the boats and the crews has gone way, way up. Everything else, too.

JM: Those men got started when the offshore industry was new?

CL: Right. They were there when the time was right. I'm ten years too late, but I figure there's still a

good wage to be made. I would never go and sink my own half a million dollars into it because for that kind of money you can make investments elsewhere and gain a lot quicker and easier. I'm doing it because I like to do it and I have other people's money. I'm doing it because there are other men with a lot of money who have faith in me who want to do it for their own reasons, their personal satisfaction. It's not a viable industry, if you know what I mean. Financially it's not viable. It's dumb to spend a half a million dollars on something that only nets -- net profit after all expenses -- fifty thousand dollars a year. That doesn't make sense. That's ten years just to get your money back, not including interest. It doesn't make sense.

JM: For what part of you does it make sense?

CL: For me it makes sense because it's a good way to save money. When I'm offshore two hundred days a year, I can't buy cigarettes and coffee and go out to lunch, and all my expenses are paid for. Everything I make is profit. This new boat that I'm getting involved with will not cost me a dime. Yet I stand to net sixty [thousand] a year, plus I get a brand new pickup and I have a workshop that the rent is going to be paid on and health insurance. So it's a decent job. Ten years ago, thirty thousand dollars a year was big money.

JM: Yes, it was.

CL: Now, thirty thousand dollars a year is about what it takes to break even in Newport, in this area, to live.

JM: It's not a lot of money anymore.

CL: No.

JM: Why don't we get into where you dock your own boat?

CL: My little boat?

JM: Yes.

CL: As of yesterday, I still have a spot on Long Wharf, in front of the new hotel -- if I go up and pay the last three years rent on it, which I haven't paid. I've been cheating the city. But the harbormaster told me that I can have the spot for another year if I go up and pay the last three years. There really is no dockage available for any new incoming fishing boats of any kind in Newport at all. It is a closed port. There's not even enough room or slips or spots available right now for the existing vessels, but we're working on that. We're trying to shed a little light on the subject as far as the public is concerned, but we don't have much luck with the local media or newspaper. They don't seem to be too interested. It's quite apparent what Newport wants for Newport. Commercial fishermen in stinky clothes and rubber boots isn't part of it, in my opinion. How can we gain anything as fishermen if we don't

have the support of the City Council for starters, or anyone in city government? Nobody that I know of sticks up for us or does anything for us. As fishermen, it's really hard to lobby together. Nobody can agree on any one thing. Half the guys don't even like each other and you just don't have the time. We're too busy trying to make payments. We're in definite trouble. Luckily we have the law on our side through the Public Trust Doctrine, the Rights of Way, and Mary Farrazoli and the Friends of the Waterfront. They're fighting for waterfront access. But as far as the State Pier is concerned, it's a joke the way the state runs that down there. These guys [state government] spent all the money that they had on Point Judith because that's where they want the fishing fleet to be. But it's kind of hard for Newport fishermen to fish out of Point Judith. It's a forty-five minute drive and I don't believe there's any excess of spots down there at this time either.

JM: What's going on over at the State Pier?

CL: Nothing, a big nothing. There's money in escrow, I understand. There's 1.4 million dollars that the public, the voters of the state of Rhode Island, allotted and voted in November 4, 1986, but it has yet to be allotted and spent. It was allotted for the Newport State Pier and there's nothing

happening. That's what that meeting is all about down there.

JM: What's it going to take to get that going?

CL: I would imagine the only realistic thing to do is to get the television stations involved. Not enough people read the papers. TV, I think, does a little something that papers don't. Maybe our group, the Newport Waterfront Public Trust, in association with the Newport Fishermen's Association, which is the group of guys who are already formed and already have their private slips down there -- maybe between those two groups we'll get a little media coverage. I don't know how the state does their business. I just don't know what it takes to get them to do anything. I, myself, don't feel like sticking my neck out. I've already fallen under the scrutiny of state influence and discrimination against myself in certain subtle incidences. I'm going to be gone the next three months anyway. I just know that when I come up with the boat, I'm going to tie up at the dock.

JM: At which dock? Brown and Howard or the State Pier?

CL: The State Pier. Well, either one. Brown and Howard is supposedly sold, but that's sort of pending CRMC's case [Coastal Resources Management Council].

JM: What happened to you when you were under state scrutiny?

CL: They don't like me down there. The port director and his right hand man don't like me personally. They make sure that I'm not allowed to utilize any of the property down there for anything. Without naming names, these guys -- the State -- they are the rats. They're not doing anything in the best interest of Newport fishermen at all. If it were up to them, they would sell that property and get their money back, and we'd all be -- "Sorry guys." I mean, they lie all the time to the papers. I remember an article about the Brown and Howard sale where we were hanging in down there, refusing to leave. The State came down and served up court orders for us to leave, but when they parlayed this to the newspapers, they told the newspapers that they had given us alternative spots and asked us to leave and to relocate at the alternative spots that they offered us, which was not true. They didn't offer us anything. They just said, "Get out or else. See you in court." So, things like that. I've had a couple of previous experiences with the Neptune. When I first brought the boat out of the yard, I tied up at the Yacht Club and leased that slip for three months. Come April, the lease expired because they had to start putting their floats in, so I had no place to go. I went to the State Pier and tied up in a spot where a fisherman,

who I know, said I could use his spot while he was out fishing. I tied up and the state guys came over and they brought in the sheriffs and served me up with all sorts of phony papers and threatened to arrest me. I got off the boat and I said, "Let's be reasonable." The coffee truck was there. I bought the guy a cup of coffee. I said, "Let's talk about this in a mature manner." I never raised my voice; I never said anything nasty. It was left up in the air at that time. He turned around and called his superior in. His superior wrote a letter to my boss and to the owner of the boat, filled with all kinds of lies about how I had been extremely rude and abusive and, "Will you please have your captain refrain from this sort of action in the future?" What it did is it got them stirred up. Well, the owner of the boat is a pretty powerful guy in this state. He has a lot of money and influence, so he was able to get us a spot. But if it wasn't for him, we never would have been able to get a spot down there. But they lied. They lie a lot and it's too bad. They're not the only politicians in the state that lie, but that's the way it is. I've had phone calls and stuff. The phone is always ringing with prank calls from people and they threaten. They threaten a lot.

JM: Serious threats?

CL: No, I haven't had anybody come down and threaten me with cement galoshes. But they laughed in my face the other day when I went down there and filled out another application for the new boat -- the ninety-five footer. They laughed in my face. The biggest thing is that in Newport they don't enforce the same rules and regulations that apply to the State Pier in Galilee. So there's two different sets of rules and regulations that are being enforced by one state agency -- the Department of Environmental Management -- and that isn't right. Most specifically, the subject of rafting vessels. In Newport it's against regulations to tie up boats next to each other. In essence, there are private slips that boats, existing, rent from the state on a yearly basis. When those boats go to sea for five days at a time, those spots are unavailable for use by any other boats. Also, they are utilizing that entire spot down there for twenty something boats. There's room for forty boats down there.

JM: There was supposed to have been.

CL: I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to take -- not the law into my own hands -- but being on a documented vessel, I can pretty much do what I want, I mean, within the law. I can't go kill anybody, but I can tie up that boat where I want to on state property and say, "Look, I'll leave tomorrow when

I'm going out fishing." And we'll just have to take it from there, and hire a lawyer.

JM: What do you think the future of the fishing industry is in Newport, with people making so much money off development and politics getting all involved in that?

CL: I think, unless the state steps in and starts helping out the fishermen that are tying up there, and really does something about that facility, it's going to stay the same as it is or get worse. Who's to say that somebody might not come and make an offer on that piece of property and the state sell it out from under, and leave everybody high and dry?

JM: Are they worried about that, people who tie up over there?

CL: People who tie up over there are only worried about their own problems. Like I say, you can't get them together. There's not enough time, nobody likes each other enough. Nobody's willing to do anything. That's why nothing is being done. We need some sort of lobbying group. This Newport Waterfront Public Trust thing is all well and good, but I don't have the time myself. I mean, I'm living proof.

JM: Yes, and you represent one facet of the industry.

CL: What's going to happen? There's a lot of big money being spent around here -- monopoly money.

JM: Do you think people in town realize how much the

fishing industry contributes? Do you think they even know what fishermen do?

CL: No. People in town are being affected in different ways just as the Newport fishermen are being affected in their ways. The local working class are all being squeezed out of Newport in one way or another. It depends on what kind of work they're involved in. The only ones who are busy are the contractors, the builders. Your average Joe, who bangs nails for a living, doesn't care what's going on. All he's doing is working for a living and he's probably renting or, if he's lucky, he's a little older and he owns a house. Nobody can afford to buy a house in this town, nobody can afford to buy a house in this state -- nobody who works for a living. People who were born with money or got lucky and made smart investments a few years ago can afford one. There's something basically wrong with the whole economy in this state, in this area of New England. There's something wrong somewhere. When a guy makes fifty thousand dollars a year and he can't afford to buy a house, that's something wrong. I don't want to get off-base here, but in my opinion, there's no sense of community in this town at all. It's gotten too big for its britches. There just is no sense of community, no sense of belonging with the locals. Do you know what I'm saying?

JM: Yes.

CL: It's not like a small town anymore at all.

JM: Do you think that's pretty recent?

CL: I'd say since I've been here. The first three or four years I was here, it was a pretty nice place to live in the winter, and even in the summer. It wasn't all that crowded. Now there's just so many people from elsewhere living here. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that, but city government isn't handling the situation the way they should. They're just not.

JM: How about support services that you need along the waterfront?

CL: There are none.

JM: They're gone.

CL: Yes, there are none at all. It's all yacht money oriented. We do all our own work or we call in guys from outside who drive down from New Bedford.

JM: It must be expensive to do it like that.

CL: Yes. Yes, there's nothing here. You can't buy a thing in Newport for a fishing boat. Nothing. The only thing you can get here is diesel fuel. Even that you pay top dollar for. No, there's no fishing community here.

JM: Was there when you started out?

CL: More so, yes. There were more fishing boats here and more support facilities, too. But they're all

gone because they couldn't compete. The rents were too high. Newport isn't what it used to be. Look around. I's OK, I guess, if that's what you like, but I know, personally, I can't wait to relocate as soon as possible. It's just not feasible to live here anymore. You know what it's like on the weekends. It's all year-round now. You can't even get around. There's no access to the waterfront. There's no property available anywhere within fifty miles you can even rent. I'm pretty lucky I have a place, a workshop, that I can afford. There!s two other guys who do really well in lobstering and they both have nice places. One's in Jamestown and one's in Middletown on Paradise Avenue.

JM: Bennett and Alan Eagles?

CL: Yes, right. They're the guys who have done well, but other than that, there's nobody. They don't even allow you to stack lobster pots on the State Pier.

JM: Would you have to have your own property to do that on?

CL: Right. There's none available. I am lucky I have a spot on Vicksburg Place but it's very limited. It's not big at all. It's barely big enough for an inshore operator. I am lucky I have a nice, new shop that I built this winter. I rebuilt the inside. It's a building about as big as this room

and it's suitable. I pay seven hundred dollars a month, though, for a workshop. The future of it doesn't look good, in my opinion. Anthony's is gone now. It's just Fatulli's and Parascandolo's left.

JM: And Tallman and Mack.

CL: Yes, Tallman and Mack, right. Hopefully, Fatulli's -- and I'm going to try and talk to him about tying up there -- if he would just reorganize a little bit, there'd be room for a few boats there. He should offer that, buying the lobsters the way he does. It used to be that way, too. There used to be a fleet of lobster boats there, but he's got all his sea-going junk and paraphernalia there. [He has] his barges and his derelicts. He's going to have to do something about that. I think that's where I'm going to end up tying up.

JM: Where would you relocate to?

CL: I would imagine I'm going to have to move to Maine and commute down somehow. Either fish out of New Bedford -- I'd like to be able to buy a coastal parcel, but I have to go pretty far north to do that now. Anywhere from Frenchman's Bay north you can still do that. But you're talking probably an eight or nine hour drive from here. I think that's the only solution for me on the long term. Now, getting my wife to agree to that is another story, but I can see that happening. I can even see fishing out of

Maine because I think I'm going to be fishing the Gulf of Maine during the winter. I have to see. That's what they make radar detectors for, and fast BMWs.

JM: So people can still find you way up there?

CL: So I can commute back and forth nine hours. It's not that long of a drive when you really think about it. If you go out for a week at a time, what's another sixteen hours? It's just a little better than half a day. You can't buy property in Rhode Island anymore; not in the last two years.

JM: Where would you like to see yourself ten years down the road?

CL: [chuckles] Rich and famous. No. I want to have a nice little place on the water in Maine and probably be fishing out of New Bedford, I imagine. Newport would be nice, but it's not going to happen. There's no stopping this madness now. I mean, look at that thing over there. (Note: Referring to Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza being built at the time of the interview.) They allowed that to be built. It's supposed to be architecturally compatible with Old Newport. Come on. It's really sad.

JM: What do you like the best about your job?

CL: I like boats. I like mechanical things -- engine rooms, boats, and all that stuff. Lobstering allows me to be around boats and make a living at the same

time. That's what I like the best, all the mechanical things that make big, steel boats work, and all painted up nice. That's what I like about it the best. I like to drive in boats. I don't know what it is. When you're on the beach and you talk about it, it's really great. It's a great way to make a living and everything about it is great. When you're out there it's the worst thing in the world. You'd do anything to get off the boat. It's like hitting yourself in the head with a hammer. It feels so good when it stops, you know? You get out there and that's what it's like fishing. It's like hitting yourself in the head with a hammer. Boy, it feels good when it's over with. Like I say, when you're coming home -- coming into Newport late at night -- one o'clock in the morning on a nice fall night -- it's pretty coming up the bay, and the lights, and everything, and you're coming in. You know that most of the eastern seaboard is sound asleep in their cozy little beds, and you're up there and your man's chopping ice off the front of the boat. It's kind of macho, I guess you would call it. But it's a good feeling when you tie the boat up and you go buy a couple of six-packs and the boys come down. Everybody has a couple of beers and talks about what you're going to do tomorrow. It's camaraderie, I guess, that's nice about it. The

good times are about ten percent of the time. Ninety percent of the time it really is horrible. But the ten percent of the time makes it all worthwhile. It's kind of funny. Anything gets old to me. Anything. Fishing is never the same.

JM: What's the worst part of it for you?

CL: The unknown -- not knowing what you're going to catch, if anything at all. The risk. The whole way out, steaming out for eighteen hours and not knowing if you're going to pick up, drop off, or stay the same with your catch. There's always the risk of flopping and going broke and not making enough money to make it work. That kind of gnaws at you.

JM: Have you ever felt in a lot of danger out there?

CL: Yes, we've been in trouble a couple of times, but not really. No. If you're in danger a lot of the time, or even some of the time, you're doing something wrong. Your equipment isn't up to par or something like that. We had one incident where we were involved in a collision. That was a close call, but other than that, it's only been one storm in particular where everyone was in danger. That was that big storm of November 20, 1980. About six boats were lost. It was a bad one. That was pretty rough. But other than that, if you have a good boat, good crew, and a good captain, you're all set. You can ride out just about anything. It's

not necessarily fun. That was one of the big things about the Neptune. I never really trusted the boat a hundred percent because I had worked on it so much and I knew it so well. I knew it s flaws. There's something disturbing about the fact that most guys who go out to sea don't know their boats very well at all. They feel safe in them, when in fact the boats might not be too safe. You hear about these boats going down. Most of it is human error, but a lot of it is the boat itself -- the stability of the boat, the design. But I had the misfortune of knowing the boat so well that I knew its flaws, so I never really felt a hundred percent safe and sure of the boat when it got really stormy. That was another contributing factor to why I got off the boat.

JM: How do people cope with that danger when they're far out?

CL: Like I said, most guys are ignorant to the fact. They don't realize what can happen, or what might happen, or what's on the verge of happening. The skipper is usually the only one who knows what's going on to the fullest extent. But I knew every square inch of the bottom of that steel boat that was twenty years old and I knew there were places that were [tapping] a little punky. It was a poor design. We're talking about the Iron Horse. It was

a poor design to begin with. It was unsuitable for what it was doing. We made it work. Hopefully, things will be different with this new boat. It's a big, big boat. It's the biggest boat around. That will make up for some of its deficiencies in design and construction. To have the ultimate boat to do this job in, you have to go spend a million dollars. You just can't find a boat for a reasonable amount of money. There were plenty of times when I was looking out the back of the wheelhouse at the life raft saying, "Gee, I hope that thing is functional," because they inspect them and pack them up, and whoever does that is responsible to make sure that it goes off. You can't blow it up like [puffing]. It's automatic, self-inflating, and it's inside this box. Who's to say it's going to inflate or not? There were lots of times when I'd look out at that thing and say, "Oh boy, I hate this. I don't like being here." I'd go down in the engine room and things were pitching and rolling and shuddering, and the two engines are screaming in your ear, and you're looking at the bottom of the boat and you know that just on the other side of that is eight hundred feet of briny deep. The water temperature is forty degrees. You live about three minutes if you go in it. Sometimes you get a little scared. Like I say,

if you've got a good boat, it's all the difference. Ignorance is bliss, man. That's where it's all at. [end of side one, tape two]

JM: Have you ever heard of any sayings that people who have been in the industry for a long time use for good luck or bad luck? Like, "Never say pig," and "A woman on board is bad luck," and "Don't start a trip on Friday."

CL: Sure, there's all those. You know, "Whistling on a boat, whistle up a gale," "Never hit a seagull with a crab," "Never turn the hatch covers upside down." It's all superstition, I think. I don't believe in any of them because I've done all of them and nothing's ever happened.

JM: When you're out there and it's really dangerous, when you're under a lot of stress sometimes, you can just naturally --

CL: Function?

JM: Yes.

CL: Well, most of the time you're operating on adrenalin as a deck hand. The captain has to have his wits about him all the time. As a crew member your bodily functions are purely mechanical. You're running on adrenalin, except for the first six or eight hours of the day. But after that -- It's amazing that more guys aren't lost out there.

JM: Really?

CL: Yes, when I really think about it because it's such a fine line. It really is amazing. As a matter of fact, there hasn't been one guy lost off a lobster boat here in the history of offshore lobstering in Newport, which only spans seventeen years. No one's ever lost a man off a lobster boat and it's amazing. There have been some guys who've been washed overboard and then brought back aboard during the daytime. But if you ever fell off a boat at night and the boat was steaming, there's literally less than one tenth of one percent chance of being found because ninety-five percent of the guys don't wear any sort of strobe lights or anything. I always used to make my guys wear them. I was the only guy whose boat had strobe lights. When they were setting the trawls out, one guy is dragging the traps back off the stack and the boat and the waves are going like this and that. If he goes off the stern and you're setting the trawl, he's gone. If he's got a strobe light and he can swim well and get his boots off -- But it's amazing they don't get lost. I know I almost went over two or three times. Almost. But I didn't.

JM: Well, I'm glad you didn't.

CL: Oh yes, me, too.

JM: I guess we're going to have to wrap it up.

CL: I don't know. I hope I've helped you.

JM: You've helped me a lot, and I really want to thank you for all of this.

End of Interview