PHILIP RUHLE

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Philip Ruhle began his work in the fishing industry during the 1940's. At that time, he was primarily involved in seasonal inshore fisheries in the waters off New York city and Long Island. His manuscript is a rich source of information on the abundance of inshore species in that area which made the way of life of inshore fishermen possible at that time.

During the 1950's, Mr. Ruhle gillnetted mackeral from Long Island to Virginia. He went on to work in several other fisheries, including dragging and Scottish seining.

Mr. Ruhle worked as a swordfish harpooner and was one of the first people to use longlines for catching swordfish. His manuscript contains a wealth of information about the development of the swordfish longline industry, swordfish migration and spawning patterns, technological advances in the swordfish longline industry and swordfish depletion, and the consequences of the United States government's failure to regulate the swordfish industry.

Also included is extensive information about swordfish trips, the work of swordfish longlining, and what it means to be a fisherman.

Interview with Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society, Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, by Jennifer Murray, September 29, 1987.

MURRAY: It's September 29, 1987. I'm talking with Mr. Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society's Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island. Do I have your permission, Mr. Ruhle, to tape this interview?

RUHLE: Yes Ma'am.

JM: Let's start out, Mr. Ruhle, with where you were born.

PR: In Brooklyn, New York.

JM: How about your parents? What are their names, or what were their names?

PR: My father's name was the same as mine, Philip, except his middle initial was F. for Fred, and mine is H. for Henry after my grandfather. My mother's name was Elizabeth.

JM: How did they happen to be living in Brooklyn?

PR: Oh, they were born there.

JM: Where were their families from?

PR: Germany, both sides.

JM: Do you know where in Germany?

PR: Somewhere near Stuttgart, but I don't know exactly where.

JM: How many years did you spend in Brooklyn?

PR: We lived in one house in Brooklyn for seventeen years until I was seventeen years old and my father

went to the war with Japan.

JM: World War II?

PR: Yes. He was a pie salesman in Brooklyn, New York. My mother was a switchboard operator in a hospital. She worked there for twenty-three years if I remember right. My father didn't get drafted. He was too old for the Army, but he enlisted in the Army Transport Command. He had always been interested in boats. My uncle and him owned a boat in partnership. They used to go out fishing and just had the boat for fun. He went in the Army Transport Command because that had something to do with the water. He was gone thirty-six months in the South Pacific. When he come back, he didn't want to go back in the pie salesman business. So they moved out to Freeport, Long Island, which is twenty-five or so miles out from the city on Long Island. In the meantime, I didn't like school too much. I was going to a maritime school in New York City.

JM: What was the name of that?

PR: It was Metropolitan Vocational. It was a maritime course, but not a fishing course -- just for tugs and ships. I was pretty interested in that. You learned Morse Code, how to send and receive on the radios, and things like that. It was close to an hour and a half on the subway every day. I used to get on in the last station out towards Long Island,

and I had to go to the last station where it ended in New York. I'm trying to remember what years it was -- the War was still going on. I used to go down to Freeport where my uncle kept his boat. My father had sold his half back to my uncle, so my uncle owned it himself. I used to go out on the weekends with him. I was only about fourteen then. I liked it. I liked the water. It was during the War and you could get a job easy because there was no people around. So I worked on boats in the summer when there was no school.

JM: What part of Brooklyn did you grow up in before we get too much further?

PR: I guess you would say it was Queens. It was right on the borderline. It was a strange thing. I went to school in Brooklyn, but I lived in Queens, because our street was the borderline between Brooklyn and Queens. They called it Glendale. That was the section. I went to school in Ridgewood, which was right across the street. That's the way that worked out.

JM: What kind of boat did your father and your uncle have?

PR: It was just a little twenty-eight foot pleasure craft more or less.

JM: They didn't do any fishing from that?

PR: No, just for fun -- rod and reel sport fishing type of thing.

JM: So you moved out to Freeport.

PR: Right.

JM: Before we get any further, did you have brothers or sisters?

PR: I have one sister five years older than me. She was a nurse, and then she married a doctor, and they moved to North Carolina. She still lives there.

JM: What was the name of the school that you went to in Brooklyn?

PR: It was Metropolitan Vocational High School, but that was in New York City.

JM: Oh it was. You had to go from Brooklyn into the city?

PR: Right.

JM: How about religion? Was that important growing up in your family?

PR: Oh yes. You had to be confirmed, and you had to go to Sunday School every Sunday when you was a kid.

JM: So your family were Catholics?

PR: No. Protestant. When we was younger, my wife used to teach Sunday School.

JM: About how long did you spend in Freeport?

PR: Oh, I'd say we lived there close to twenty years, between the two towns -- Freeport and Baldwin. They were two adjoining towns. The first house we bought after we got married was in Baldwin. The second one was in Baldwin.

JM: Where did you and Mrs. Ruhle meet each other?

PR: In Freeport. I was working in a restaurant. I was only a kid. The people who owned the restaurant were friends of my mother and father's. They were from Finland. It was a restaurant on the waterfront, just a what do you call it, a ma and pa type thing. They used to pay me five dollars a week. I used to get up at three o'clock in the morning and do dishes and get the restaurant ready. Then he used to take people out for hire on the boat. You know, just two people come down, three, four, five people come down, and we'd go out fishing for the day. But you couldn't go too far because of the war. The Coast Guard had us restricted how far out we could go. Then we'd come in about three o'clock in the afternoon, and I'd do dishes and clean up the restaurant until about ten at night. They used to close at nine, and by the time you got cleaned up . . .

JM: That's a long day.

PR: Yes. And they paid me five dollars a week and my keep. And they fed you good.

JM: Did you live there too?

PR: Yes. Their apartment was upstairs, and they had an extra room there. And she [Mrs. Ruhle] was a waitress in the restaurant, so that's how we met.

JM: That's nice. What year did you get married?

PR: 1946.

JM: Yes. So the War was just over.

PR: Just getting over, yes.

JM: How did you get involved in the fishing industry?

PR: There was a very big manpower shortage. When school was out for the summer, you could get a job on any fishing boat. This was mostly day boats. They went out in the morning early and come back the same day.

JM: Out of Freeport?

PR: Right.

JM: What were they fishing for?

PR: In the winter, it would be cod fishing. In the summer, it would be flounder, squid, sea bass, porgies and different fish like that. It was easy to get a job. I mean, anybody would get hired, because they had no people. Under ordinary conditions, as young as I was, I probably wouldn't have been able to get a job on them boats, but during the War, or on account of the War, you could get a job. I'd work with a fellow for a month or six weeks, and then I'd change boats trying to pick up everybody's way of doing things. I went back to school, but boy, I didn't like it after going fishing. I was in the last year of high school, and there was no way I was going to stay in school.

JM: What was it about fishing that was so much more important to you?

PR: It was just fishing really. I really liked it. I don't know whether it was the money you made. I don't think the money entered my mind that much. It

was just the idea of -- it was such a difference from being in New York in Manhattan going to school, or being out in the ocean. It was like two different worlds. In them days, high school wasn't as important as it is today. So I never really regretted not finishing. Because the way that school was set up, when you graduated, you had a chance to go with Moran Towing Company in New York as an apprentice on their tugs and barges. I think they did a lot of funding to the school. Like I said before, it was nothing to do with fishing. But of course, some of the things I learned in the school was helpful later on. But once I went fishing, I was no more interested in the school or the program they had.

JM: Did you fish all off the coast of Long Island?

PR: Right, yes. We used to fish in Montauk in the spring, and then the rest of the year we fished off Freeport.

JM: What were you fishing for off Montauk in the spring?

PR: In the spring, it would be founders and fluke -- which is a summer flounder. That was a big fishery on Long Island when I was growing up. You would be getting the fish as they were coming up towards Block Island and towards Newport. Off Montauk, you'd get them before they got them here. Consequently, you'd get a better price for them.

JM: Was there a lot of fish then?

PR: Yes. We didn't have the power in the boats or the equipment. As a matter of fact, when we first started, we didn't have cable. We used rope to tow the nets. Now it's all cable. It's all a different situation.

JM: Tell me about the boats.

PR: A lot of them had converted car engines -- out of automobiles and that type of thing.

JM: Yes, so they were gasoline.

PR: Gasoline powered. There was a few diesels around in the bigger boats. The only ones I remember that did have the diesel power would go south shrimping in the winter. They would come up to Long Island in the summer for the fluke run, as we called it. But they'd go back to Florida shrimping in the winter. The rest of the boats that stayed on Long Island were smaller then, and I don't believe that it would have paid them to make the trip to Florida.

JM: About how big were they, the boats you were on?

PR: In the forty to fifty foot range. Some were smaller.

JM: How many people would be in the crew?

PR: Usually three.

JM: And what did they do -- their jobs?

PR: To tend the nets, then tend the catch once the nets brought them in and run the winches. Most of the time in them days, because you was only fishing days, the captain would do all the steering and

running the boat, and the crew would more or less just -- like codfish you had to clean and dress. Fluke, you didn't, but you had to measure them. They had to be over -- I'm trying to remember the legal size, but I can't remember right now.

JM: So there were restrictions then?

PR: That was a New York State restriction. I think it was fourteen inches. Even then, as a kid, it used to disturb me. If we'd run into small fish, we would take them into New Jersey, because New Jersey had no limit. The Jersey boats would come to Long Island, and we would have to throw these small fish back, and they would be keeping them. I didn't think that was right. Back in them days I thought any fishery law should be federal, not state. It didn't strike me as fair or doing the fish much good, because at that time there would be a lot of boats from New Jersey up fishing with us, because Freeport was close to New Jersey. It was only a matter of thirty-five miles, I think, to New Jersey with a boat from Freeport.

JM: Were you involved in any other fisheries at that time?

PR: Yes. When I got seventeen years old, the surf clamming industry got started for food. Before that it was all bait. I did some of that, which was a dredging type of thing. I had a chance to buy a small boat. It was twenty-five foot, eleven inches.

It had a gas engine in it out of a car. I paid $900 for it. We used to go out and catch these surf clams.

JM: How far out do you go for those?

PR: Oh, just off the shore, very seldom more than two miles. You might go up and down a little, but from shore you never went much over two miles. Of course, they were mostly, in them days, in shallow water. They were in deep water like they are today, but we didn't have to go in the deep water. There was plenty in the shoal water. We used to get, I think it was fifty cents a bushel. That boat I had could hold fifty bushel. I used to do it alone. And you'd retrieve the dredge on a rope. Today they use cable and all, but we didn't have winches then. It wasn't too long before I got that boat paid for. It was pretty good, because I wasn't married then. All I made I could pay for the boat. I had that boat, and more and more boats were getting into this surf clamming business. At that time there was three companies in Long Island buying them. The companies had a bad habit of getting more boats than they actually could handle. That way they were sure of a steady production to keep the plant going, but they'd lay the boats off. If you got two days of good weather, they'd tell all the boats, "Well, you can't go the third day." Because they couldn't handle it fast enough. That was getting very

aggravating. When we first started, there was only a few of us, and we could go steady. Finally they got up to a dollar a bushel, and they stayed at that. But the problem you was running into was if you got a spell of good weather when you could go out and make the money, the company wouldn't let you go, because they couldn't handle the product. That I was getting tired of very quick.

At that time, there was twenty-nine boats like mine in this little crick or canal.

JM: What was the name of that?

PR: I'm trying to think of the name. Milburn Creek, I think it was. It was the dividing line between Baldwin and Freeport. It was only seventy foot wide. It was just a narrow creek. There was twenty-nine boats. I think twenty-six of them were on the Baldwin side, and three were on the Freeport side. Each boat had its own little shack in them days. You never see them no more, but we had these net reels for drying the nets where you got in them and walked them. You walked around. Even in them days people used to come down and paint them. They were great for artists.

I got out of the clam business. In the spring we did gillnetting mackerel. There was quite a fleet of boats out of there. Even with them little boats we used to go down to Virginia -- to Chincoteague, Virginia in the early spring. We'd

leave in March, and we'd fish in April. From Virginia we'd start working the fish back towards Freeport.

JM: Was that all mackerel gillnetting?

PR: All mackerel. And that was done nights. You'd go out in the afternoon and set your nets out just at dark and leave them until daylight and bring them in.

JM: Were you out all night doing that?

PR: Yes. You used to tie right onto the nets, and they drifted with the current. We did that for quite a few years, but that was only for a few months in the spring.

JM: What was it like going down there in a boat that size?

PR: [Laughs] It was different than it is today. All you had was a compass. You didn't have no navigation equipment at all. It used to be foggy. It was a strange thing. I often look back at it now. I don't know how we did it. I guess in Chincoteague, in the early spring, there would be over a hundred boats from -- well there was two or three used to come from Maine, but most of them were from Long Island and New Jersey. A lot of boats from New Jersey used to go down. We'd all fish together. We all knew each other, and we'd kind of work our way back up to New Jersey. About the time we'd get halfway up the coast of New Jersey, we'd

shoot across to Freeport because of the shape of the coast there where it meets Long Island. The timing when you caught them -- [if you were] off Atlantic City, you would catch them off Freeport within a day or so. And of course, that was the advantage to be home, you know.

JM: Were there certain places to set the nets that were better than others?

PR: More or less. We never went too far from the coast in them days either. Twelve, fifteen miles was maybe the furthest out you'd go. You used to have a lot of problems with ships going through the nets, because they floated on the surface. And tugboats -- in them days there was a lot more towing than you see nowadays. And besides, there wasn't no such thing as radar then. But that was interesting fishing.

JM: Around what year were you doing the gillnetting?

PR: Oh, that would have to be in the late forties, early fifties.

JM: Did you ever have any close calls out there with those tankers or ships?

PR: Yes, yes. One time in the fog we had one. They used to blow their horn to let you know. You'd hear the horns. Of course, when you fished off Freeport, that was the approach to New York. The traffic was quite heavy, especially on Thursdays it seemed, [when] a lot of ships left. And the outgoing

traffic would be bad. In them days we had a -- well you still do -- but they were wooden boats, and they used to have a steel guard rail to go around just to protect them from the dock. I've had a steamer actually knock that off; we rubbed down the whole side of the steamer. We had cut loose of the nets when we realized the steamer was as close as it was. It was dark, and like I said, you had no way to tell, but you could hear the steamer -- his wash and his propeller churning. You knew he was getting close. You didn't want to let go of the nets, because you had no way to find them again until maybe daylight and the fog cleared. But we had to let go of them. (When we went mackerel fishing, there was two men -- the captain and one other man.) By the time we decided -- the ship was very close and we cut the net loose -- the ship was alongside of us and was going right parallel down us, and you couldn't get the boat away, because if you tried to turn away, your stern would bang against the ship and then put you right back in again. In the process of that, it knocked the guard rail off the boat. But luckily, when we got part way down the ship, the wave that the ship made going through the water was enough to shoot us off to get us clear. Luckily we found the nets the next morning. The man with me never went back to the ocean. I never seen him again.

JM: Yes. I don't blame him.

PR: He was a boy I went to school with and we grew up together. He never even come back for his money. The last I heard he went as a clerk in an A & P store or something. But you know, it was just one of them things.

JM: What were the nets worth?

PR: Oh, let's see, I'd say somewheres around eight or nine hundred dollars.

JM: Who made the nets?

PR: We used to buy the netting, and we made the nets ourselves. You put the cork line, which was the top, and a lead line, which was the bottom, and you sewed that on. You sewed the netting to the ropes yourself. There was quite a lot of maintenance in them days, because it was cotton. That's why we had these reels. When you come in in the morning, you would unload the fish, the mackerel. How can I describe these net reels? They must have been about fifteen foot high and fifteen foot around. They were made out of two by four slats and a heavy axle in the middle. It was just like a round frame. You would tie the lead to one end and the corks to the other. Then inside it you had a shelving board, which is one inch wood by twelve inches wide nailed all around it, and you'd get in there, and you'd walk. You wouldn't move, but it would turn the reel, and that would bring the nets out of the boat and up

in the air to dry so they didn't rot. Then in the afternoon you'd pull them back in the boat and go back out.

JM: Getting back to Milburn Creek, were there a lot of different things living in there? Was it cleaner then?

PR: Oh yes. In them days you didn't know nothing about pollution. You didn't have plastics, which is, in my opinion, one of the worst things ever invented for pollution. If you threw a paper bag over, that would dissolve eventually.

We mackerel fished in the spring, and then we would gillnet what they call weakfish. Up here they got a different name -- squeteague or something.

JM: Squeteague, yes.

PR: But down on Long Island, it was weakfish. And when I was a kid, there was no bluefish.

JM: There weren't?

PR: I remember when I was fishing, the oldtimers talked about catching a lot of bluefish. But when I first started fishing, I would say three or four years there was no bluefish. Then they started to come back as I got older.

JM: Do you have any idea why?

PR: No, no. I talked to some people from New Jersey, and they claim when they were in Africa in the War, there was all kind of bluefish over there. They didn't know if they always were there or just

what the story was. But I would honestly say I fished four or five years before I saw my first bluefish, and they were small when we first did start to catch them. It was almost like the population had moved or something. And then, of course, they got thicker and thicker. But it's always struck me as a strange thing. You know, it was a fish that just wasn't here. And then we'd go chasing these weakfish all summer.

Then you'd catch butterfish and different fish. That was a gillnet operation too. That was daytime. The nets went to the bottom; they didn't float on the top. You used twelve hundred foot of net. Mackerel fishing, we used thirty-six hundred foot of net with the smaller boats. In the fall of the year, come Election Day, then we used to rig a hold for codfish. That was a hook and line -- a set line type of thing. There was 435 hooks to a line, and we used to fish five lines a day.

JM: Was that all done by hand?

PR: That was all done by hand. You set them out by hand early in the morning, just at daylight. You'd try to set them so that you could go back to your beginning, and you would start to haul them in right away. The fish used to average four pounds down on Long Island. They weren't big fish. Some days, you'd get five hundred fish, so it'd be 2,000 pounds. The price in them days was usually ten to

fifteen cents. A funny thing was, way back then, for the big weakfish that we could catch, we used to get forty cents. You didn't catch many big ones. But certain times -- once in awhile -- you'd get a few hundred pound of big ones. But they'd be forty cents, and the average would be like in the twenties. But now they're not much higher, that particular fish.

JM: You don't see it much.

PR: No, no. In the old days when I was a kid, that was a big marketing fish. The same with the mackerel. But see, in them days you had canneries. So if the glut -- I mean the mackerel was always a cheap thing -- two or three cents. Sometimes early you'd get ten or twelve cents, but most of the time it was a cheap fish.

JM: Did you sell the mackerel to a cannery?

PR: No. We sold to buyers who would truck it to New York. But if the market got glutted, New York would get rid of it at the canneries.

JM: What else did you fish for in the fall of the year?

PR: Well, we'd usually go from this weakfishing right into the codfishing. And that would go right on up until it was time to go mackerel fishing in the spring. We'd codfish all winter. Codfishing was where we made the most money, because it was the steadiest.

JM: What was it like out there in winter on those boats?

PR: I still had that little boat. You had a coal stove in them, a little pot bellied stove. That's where you did your cooking. You would heat up a bowl of soup for dinner or something like that. I don't know, it was fun, I think. You know, when you're young, the cold don't bother you, and I remember that canal used to freeze. It was a narrow canal, and it didn't take much to freeze it. These little boats used to have what you call ice sheeting, which was copper nailed down the sides at the waterline. There was days, if it was too windy, the boats wouldn't get out. If we didn't get out, we used to take turns running back and forth twice a day to keep that path open through the ice. It would freeze overnight, but never thick enough that them little boats couldn't break it. One time we had a real bad freeze, and the Coast Guard came to break us out. But they could only come to the mouth of the canal, because they were starting to build houses on the canal with bulkheads. The Coast Guard wouldn't take the responsibility of damaging the bulkheads. So we cut it out with handsaws. We went out on the ice and took two man saws and took the handle off one end, and we cut that path open. It didn't have to be too wide. That was the only time that ever happened, because all the rest of the time we would keep it open by going through it.

JM: That was work!

PR: Yes, when you stop to think, it must have been pretty tough on the boats. You used to wear that copper out. Every year you'd have to re-copper them.

JM: I bet it was tough. What about those oldtimers? Had a lot of them been fishermen for a long time?

PR: Yes, yes. A lot of them were like brothers or father and son. I remember there was the Seamen brothers. There was three of them. They all had their own boats. A lot of them were related. Out of the twenty-nine boats, I guess I was the only outsider there. They accepted me good and everything, but all the rest of the boats were people who grew up in the town, were born there and their fathers were there.

[end of side one, tape one]

JM: Are any of them left?

PR: I still have good friends on Long Island and Freeport. [There are] the fellas in the party business that I'm friends with now -- good friends with. Another fella that we grew up with lives in Freeport and has two or three boats. He has three or four boats here in Newport -- that fish out of Newport, but he owns them in Freeport. They're here now.

JM: Oh. Was that the one with Mr. Bill and the Charlotte G.?

PR: Right, Billy Granau.

JM: Right.

PR: When we was kids, our houses almost faced each other on the next street, like back to back.

JM: No kidding. In Brooklyn?

PR: No. That was in Freeport. Well, it was in Baldwin. It was a funny thing. I had five sons, and he had five girls. And boy, he used to get some mad. I was the godfather to one of his children. We've been friends many years. We'll go down and visit. I'll go down, and he'll say, "Oh, you know, so and so died." It would be one of the fellows used to be in that original twenty-nine. I don't know why there was twenty-nine, but that's what it ended up at. When I got there, I made the twenty-ninth boat, and nobody ever come along and made the thirtieth, the years I fished out of there. But it was very good. That was a good, honest bunch of people. In them days, you never locked nothing. I used to have an old Model A. It was what they call a rumble seat that you used to make into a truck. You would park it with the key in it and go out fishing all day or even all night, if you was mackerel fishing, and come back, and everything would be there. Until very recently I never had a lock on a boat. Of course, that's all changed now.

JM: It certainly has.

PR: Maybe I'm funny, but I hate keys. I hate locks I should say. I've been lucky over the years. I've

only had boats broken into a couple of times.

JM: Was it pretty there?

PR: Yes, very pretty. Like I say, we didn't know about pollution in them days. I remember, oh I guess it was in the middle fifties. What had happened is, that boat was twenty-five foot eleven inches. Most of the other boats were thirty footers, so I had a smaller boat than most of them. A fellow bought a thirty-four foot boat, which was a bigger boat, and it was a different shape. Ours was what you would call skiffs.

I should get back to -- You asked me about the summer. We also did lobster potting. I forgot to mention that, and I should have -- in with the weakfishing. We would run five, six hundred pots to the boat. The pots was on strings like they do today. Nobody would put their pots out until the mackerel season was over, so we didn't have to worry about drifting our nets into the lobster pot markers. After that went by, then we would all put out our pots. Everybody went to their own little place or area. There was no problems. We'd start out lobstering. But that would be very short lived, because you'd only be catching the lobsters that accumulated over the winter. As soon as that got scarce, then we'd start catching sea bass in them pots. That was one of our main fisheries. We'd haul the pots every other day, and then every other

day you'd go weakfishing with the gillnets. I forgot to tell you that when I was explaining what we did in the summer. But we used to catch a lot of sea bass in them pots -- four or five thousand a day in the good part of the season.

JM: Wooden pots?

PR: Wooden pots, yes. It was the same identical pot we used for lobsters, except for lobsters the pot had to be clean, no grass and stuff on it. We used to tar them in the winter. And you baited them. Once the lobsters got scarcer, we would just cut the funnel that holds the pot open where the lobster crawls in and then he crawls in the second one to get the bait, and it's a netting there. All we did for sea bassing was cut that so it wasn't held open. If the fish wanted to swim in, he could push it open to get in, but he couldn't get back out. You would catch the sea bass after the pots got dirty with grass. They had to have grass on them. If [it was] a clean pot, the sea bass wouldn't go in. We found out later on, that the temperature had to be 57 degrees on the bottom before the sea bass would go in pots. It used to be a strange thing, because the boats towing nets would be picking up sea bass, but we wouldn't see none in the pots. They'd be towing alongside our pots and all around the same area. Then all of a sudden, we would start catching them in the pots, and we'd do much better than the

fellows that were catching them in the nets. We could never understand why the bass were there but they wouldn't go in the pots. We used to think maybe the pots wasn't dirty enough. I'm trying to think. It was quite a long time later -- I had been out of the lobster pot business and the sea bass business -- when we found out that it was the temperature. It always stuck in my mind, the 57 degrees. After they discovered it was temperature, they'd keep taking the temperature, and once it reached 57, then you would catch the bass in the pots, but not before that. Sea bass fishing ran all the way from the western end of Long Island right on down almost to Norfolk, Virginia. That was a big fishery in the old days, a lot of boats in it. But there's nobody does it anymore, because they're all cleaned up and gone.

JM: Did you ever get involved in any of the haul seining that was done on Long Island?

PR: We did a little. Sometimes if the weakfish left early like maybe the beginning of October, we had the time -- the month of October maybe -- until we could go codfishing. Or if it was a late winter, if it was a warm fall or something, we did some -- we called it beach seining. We used to do that on Fire Island. Did it with an old fellow named Carl Chichester. He owned the net and the dory. You had to have a dory. And he was from a town called

Lindenhurst, which was another fifteen, twenty miles further out Long Island than Freeport. He fished out of there. He used to codfish with us in the winter. I don't remember him gillnetting mackerel, but I know he gillnetted in the summer for the weakfish. He had him and another man on the boat, and I had another man on my boat. You needed more than two men to work them beach seines. Matter of fact, we used to go six men. But we didn't have the winches like they had in later years. But of course, we didn't have as big a net either. We did some of that, not an awful lot. My knowledge of that is very skimpy.

JM: Was that for striped bass?

PR: For striped bass, yes. In them days there was a size limit on them too, which was good. New York was pretty good on fish limits in the old days.

JM: Was there trouble with the sports fishermen then?

PR: Not much, not much. Matter of fact, if they were surf casters, going after the striped bass, we wouldn't set the net around where they were fishing. We'd go one side or the other. A lot of times they used to help us. If they weren't catching no fish, they'd come give us a hand pulling the net in or putting the fish in the trucks or whatever it was. We never got into it big like they did on the east end of Long Island. That was real big out there. I don't think in them days the fish were as plentiful

up to the western end as they were to the Hamptons on Long Island. We never really had trouble with sport fishermen. We didn't do it that much, maybe for three weeks or something. As a matter of fact, a lot of rich people lived on Fire Island. I'm trying to think of the name of the town. But they had a fence across from the Sound to the ocean, and we used to use those Model A Fords with big tires on them to get along the beach to carry our fish and our net and stuff back and forth. They gave us a key for both gates. I don't know who gave it to this Carl Chichester, but I know he had a key. Point of the Woods was the name of the town, and it was all these great big homes, beautiful homes, old wooden homes. They had a caretaker there. They were just summer homes. But he had a key so that we could haul on their property. We never left a mess or nothing. As I look back, it had to be good relations in them days.

JM: Did he go way back, Carl Chichester?

PR: Yes, he was a lot older than us. He must have been in his fifties when I was in my twenties. But he was a powerful man. I remember that. Great big fellow. And he had the knowledge of this beach seining. We didn't because we never got into it that much.

JM: How long did you do that kind of fishing on a seasonal [basis] -- fishing different things at

different seasons?

PR: Boy, I did it a long time. I mean, the type of fishing changed, or the species you went after changed. But I day fished, oh, right up until 1957, 1958.

JM: So all of your sons were born there?

PR: Yes.

JM: What did you change to after you stopped day fishing, and how did that happen?

PR: Well, let's see, I had this small boat I told you about. This Italian boy lived right near the docks and was a fisherman. He was working on these surf clam boats. He didn't fish out of that little canal where all the other boats was, but he used to come down there all the time. And gee, one day we come down the dock, and he has a new boat. It was a thirty-four foot, which in them days was a big boat.

I got to go back to the boats we had, the smaller boats. All twenty-nine of them boats used to change over fisheries. All those boats were built locally. There was two brothers, and they built them boats. They were named Verity, and they were Verity skiffs. That was the name of the boats. They were built so that in the summer the cabins used to come off. You just took some bolts out, you lifted off the windshield, and then you lifted off the cabin. Then the boat was open to go lobster

potting and gillnetting. In the winter we would put them back on so we could go codfishing. You had some shelter. And mackerel fishing you also left it on. When you look back at it now, it was quite a unique thing. This was a long time ago. It was just a matter of a few bolts and you took the whole top off, the whole cabin right off the boat, and it was an open skiff. It was quite a thing, when you look back at it, the way they were designed. And they were using them years before I started in the fishery.

JM: Are there any left now?

PR: A boy used to fish with me that owned a sea food market in Long Island. He's still down there, and he owns one. He just uses it for pleasure. I guess there's others around, but it's the last one that I know of around.

So, like I mentioned, this fellow come in with this newer boat, and it looked -- well, it was a different style boat. It looked like a little dragger. It had a little pilot house, a regular permanent cabin on it and everything. He was going to go codfishing. They were built in New Jersey. I'm trying to think of the name of the builder. I'll think of it in a minute. But there's one of them right here in Newport now, the Elizabeth K. In later years, I had the sister ship to her. John Olsen was the name of the builder. They were in

Wildwood, New Jersey, which is just above Cape May. He built quite a few of them. It was a father and a son. I had the last boat the father built. The Elizabeth K. was the boat built before the one I had. Anyway, this fellow got this boat, and it was thirty-four foot. We were good friends, and he was an awful good man on a boat. So he started fishing this boat. He gave up working on [other] boats because he had bought this one. He started fishing on it, and he couldn't do nothing. I mean, he just couldn't catch fish. Yet, he was an excellent man on deck. So like I say, we was good friends. He's the godfather to one of my sons. All of a sudden he came to me just when we were getting ready to go codfishing in the fall and asked me if I wouldn't run his boat -- get somebody to run mine and run his boat and go with him. I said to him, "You know, it don't usually work." Trying to put two captains on one boat doesn't usually work, especially if one of them is the owner and he's not really the captain. He said, "Well, I can't do nothing with the boat." I think he had tried for about a year, and he just, for some reason or other, couldn't catch fish. But as far as working on a boat, there was none any better. It was a strange thing. Anyway, to make the long story short, I says, "Well, we'll try it." So I got a fellow to run my boat. In them days, codfishing, you had to have baiters. When I first

started codfishing, we used to go out and fish five lines a day. You'd get in about eleven o'clock in the morning, and you'd unload your fish. We used to sell a lot of fish to people coming down -- a dollar a piece and things like that. You would leave the fish in front of this little shack you had on the dock, and you'd be inside baiting the lines. We used to use the surf clams. You would open the clams, and then you would cut them, and you'd bait up these lines. I got to thinking that if I could hire somebody to do that -- because you wouldn't get home until six, seven at night by the time you got done. I was spending half of the day baiting lines. I figured I could make more money if I spent that half a day fishing in the ocean and hired somebody to bait the lines. So we felt around. It worked out very good. In them days, the garbage men were finished at ten o'clock in the morning. That was the time we was getting in. They used to come down to the dock and hang around and talk. A lot of them would help you baiting. We started hiring. We used to pay two dollars a line. You had five lines. That was ten dollars to get baited up. Well, me and whoever was fishing with me would be like from eleven in the morning till six at night for ten dollars. So we started fishing more lines instead of buying just five lines at the beginning of the year, because you would wear the gear out in a year.

It wasn't nylon like you have nowadays. We was buying fifteen. You would fish ten a day instead of five and leave five home to be baited. When you come in, you could bait five of the five you fished that day. In later years, we doubled the gear. In other words, if we was fishing ten lines, we'd buy twenty. You'd have ten home being baited. We'd come in four o'clock, five o'clock in the afternoon or the evening, unload. But that was all you had to do was unload. Your lines were already baited. You would put the ones needed baiting in the shack and leave the other ones in there until the morning.

JM: And take them out in the morning.

PR: Yes, yes. You wouldn't put them in the boat on account you was afraid of the rats. We had big problems with the rats trying to eat the bait. We had that problem in the shacks, but no big problem. But we didn't want them on the boats. But that changed that around. I had one garbage man and his wife, they baited for me for years. Oh, I don't know, I say years -- eight, ten years I guess. Of course, gradually they got more money per line. Like anything else, prices went up.

JM: Did he do better on his boat -- your friend?

PR: No. He didn't. So he asked me to go with him. Like I explained, sometimes that don't work. But I knew I could fish more weather with that boat than I could my little boat, and I could also carry more.

I was limited. Six thousand pounds was all that little boat would hold as far as fish. Very seldom did you catch more than that. But once in awhile you could have stayed longer and caught more. Plus, it was almost ten foot bigger, which was a lot. It don't sound like much, but it's a lot.

JM: Yes, it makes a big difference.

PR: Yes, like you're going from twenty-five foot eleven inches to thirty-four foot. So I talked it over with the wife, and she says, "Well, try it." I got a fellow to run my boat. I explained to him if this didn't work, then I was going to take my boat back. So I went with the fellow, and it worked out good. He never interfered with nothing. We used to go down the inlet, and a lot of times it'd be bad. The inlet was a pretty bad inlet in them days. By that I mean it was shoal, and the breakers were bad. A lot of days you couldn't get out. Sometimes there'd be wind would keep you in, and sometimes there'd be no wind but just a sea. I can't remember back how many days we fished a year. It's too long ago. But you would lose a lot of time for weather. Well, with a little bigger boat, you could maybe fish more. So up until from the beginning of November until right after Christmas, we'd go out. We'd set out the lines and haul them right back -- codfishing. After Christmas the water got cold and the fish didn't swim around as much. So we used to

leave the lines overnight. But then we used little wine corks on each hook so that the sand fleas couldn't eat it as bad. The sand fleas used to eat the bait off. It was no sense using the regular lines and leaving them, because there'd be no bait. But we used these, they called them bottle corks -- the same as a wine cork. We used to buy them by the thousands and put our haul through them and put them on the hook, on the leader. Then we used to leave the lines overnight. And you would go out today, if it was the beginning of doing that, and set your lines and come in with no fish but leave them overnight. So we had the lines out. Once you put them out, you had to be pretty sure to get them the next day, otherwise the fleas would eat up all the fish -- you would be losing all the fish, plus you had to bring the lines in to get them rebaited. So we went down the inlet this one morning. I had been running the boat for about two months. It was the third month, and we was getting along good, and we was doing good. For some reason, I was pretty lucky catching fish. I think a lot of that on the codfish had to do [with the fact that] I used to go surf clamming and knew where the clams were. If you put the lines where the clams were in them days, that's where the codfish were. I knew them areas pretty good, and I think that had a lot to do with it. I was very lucky in catching fish. So we was doing

very good. In them days, we used to work on thirds. There was two of us on the boat. We'd take out the expenses, which would be the baiters and the gas. In the winter we didn't use ice because we were in and out every day. Just general expenses. We used to split it three ways, a third for the boat, a third for you and a third for me. Nowadays they have captain shares and all that. In the old days you didn't.

JM: It was all equal.

PR: It was all equal, but everybody really worked. The captain worked, the deck hand worked. Like I used to tell them where to set the lines, but I actually set them. But I'd tell them when to turn and all that stuff. But when it come to hauling them in, if we had ten lines, he would probably haul six, and I'd haul four. Then he would clean the fish on the way home. It was a pretty even thing. In other words, he hauled two more lines than I did, but I set them all, and then he would clean the fish. It worked out very good. You never had problems like you have now or in later years with manpower. I mean, you'd fish together for years, the same two. So anyway, we had these lines out there, and we went down the inlet. We had been doing real good -- four, five, six thousand pounds a day, which was very good in them days. And we was getting twelve cents a pound.

We had made a deal with a filet house in New York, and he paid us twelve cents for the market cod and eighteen for the steak, which are the big ones. The head was off the big ones. The steak had to weigh over six pounds with the head off. He had made this agreement through my father, who had by now moved out and opened a seafood market in a town called Bellmore, which is in the general vicinity. And he used to go to the New York market twice a week to buy his fish that he couldn't [get locally]. He bought some off me, [but he went to New York] for all the other stuff. He come back, and he says this fellow wanted to buy all our codfish for twelve and eighteen for the winter. It sounded pretty good, because the price used to fluctuate an awful lot. This way here you knew what you was going to get. So we took it, and we made real good. But Christmas week we lost money, because up here the New Bedford fleet and all that used to lay in for Christmas. And we used to get a big price Christmas for the week or so until after New Years. I remember they went up twenty cents. We were still getting our twelve, but we had made the agreement, so he got all our fish. Then, later in the spring, when fish went to two and three cents, he still paid the twelve. We did that for quite a few years with the same company until the fellow died or went out of business. After that first year, when the fish went

cheap in the spring, I figured, "This is when he's going to dump us." But he didn't. I remember we had gone out east as far as Shinnecock and was fishing there. The rest of the boats had gone mackerel fishing. But we stayed codfishing, because we was getting this twelve cents, and we was catching quite a few fish.

JM: Yes. It was worth it.

PR: Yes. And the man, he stayed right to his original agreement. I mean, the fish were like two and three cents. Before this, I remember getting a cent and three quarters for codfish -- cleaned. So this worked out pretty good for us.

To get back to that boat, we had these lines out. We went down to the inlet the next morning, and all the boats was laying there. The inlet was pretty bad. But I kept watching. You would watch your seas. After the seventh sea, the next one was smaller. You would kind of get as close as you could to the breakers, count them, and after the seventh one you could get a little chance to shoot out, because the next one would be smaller. We kind of maneuvered around, and we got out -- no trouble. None of the other boats come out. Of course, we was a little bigger than them, too. They were thirty foot. We was thirty-four foot. We went up, and we hauled the lines in. Boy, we had good fishing, very good fishing. But all day long the sea was gaining

-- not the wind, but a big -- we called it a ground roll in them days. We got the gear in, and I got ready to the set other gear to leave for the next day. This fellow that owned the boat says, "Don't set no gear." It was the first time he ever said anything about fishing on the boat. I says to him, "What do you mean don't set the gear?" He says, "I ain't going with you no more. I quit." I says, "You can't quit. You own the boat." He says, "I'm selling you this boat. I'm getting off."

JM: Did that scare him out there that day?

PR: That's what happened. I didn't think it did. So I said, "You've got to have a reason." So he says, "I'm not fishing with anybody who thinks more of a goddamn fish than he thinks of his own life." So I said, "That's ridiculous. I value my life just as much as the next person." So I said, "We got out. We had no problem." He says, "Yes, we ain't in yet. We gotta get in." You know, to me it was [no problem]. But he refused, and he was an Italian fellow. He refused. He just says, "Don't set the lines. I own them, and you can't set them until you got somebody to haul them with you, and I'm not coming out with you again." We got back to the inlet, and we waited our chance, and we got in with no trouble. I forget the amount, but we had a lot of fish -- I don't know, five, six thousand pounds, which was a lot in them days. I figured, by the

time we got in, and we got in all right that he'd cool off, and everything would be all right. All we'd do is miss one night where the lines wasn't out.

JM: How big were the seas out there?

PR: I can't judge. I think if another boat would have come out with us, he wouldn't have been so concerned. But being we were the only boat out, and we had a lot of weight in the boat, which took away from the sea worthiness and also took away from our speed, which was important to try to get in behind that seventh sea and follow it in. Anyway, it was no problem. We got in -- no problem. So we got to the dock, and we unloaded the fish, and he just went up the street -- disappeared. I went home, and I'm eating supper, and I was kind of upset, because I didn't have no lines out. I didn't know what we was going to do the next day. He come over, and he says to me, "I'm going to sell you the boat." I says, "I don't want the boat. I ain't got no money anyway. I've got a bunch of kids. I can't afford no boat." He says, "The boat's yours. You pay me when you can pay me. I want $3,600 for it." So I says, "There's no way I can ever pay you." He says, "You'll find a way, and I've found you a good man."

[end of side two, tape one]

So anyway, I bought it. I told him I'd do it. And it was a couple of years -- I would give him money

every time. But we went right to the Custom House in New York, and he signed the boat right over to me. He never had a paper saying that I owed him a cent. Legally the boat was actually mine once he signed it over. I think he put down on there for the sum of one dollar. But I paid him the money, and we're still friends to this day. I just found out his wife died last year. But that's how I got a bigger boat. Then after I had that one paid for, I sold my other one, because I couldn't take care of two boats. I didn't have the room for it, and it was too much aggravation. So that got me started in a little bigger boat.

Then I sold that one, and I bought one built by the same man -- a forty-five foot boat. That was in 1957. I sold that one to a friend of mine. He helped me get this new boat ready. This new boat, when I bought it, was a year old. It had been surf clamming for bait in Brooklyn. The reason I was able to buy the boat -- I remember we paid $10,000 for it -- is a fellow and his brother-in-law -- Willie Pierson -- they were from Sweden or Finland. They had been working together for years. And they bought the boat in partnership. One man got caught in the winch and got killed, and the other partner couldn't fish the boat. He couldn't get it out of his head that his partner was gone. As a matter of fact, three months after I bought the boat, they had

put him in an asylum, and he hung himself. Up till then he was a very successful fisherman.

JM: You hear a lot of that.

PR: Yes. It just broke the guy. He put a new winch on figuring that might change it. And it was a strange thing. He went about a year after that accident. And he really went in debt. He just couldn't do it. In them days, the same as it is now, if you buy a boat, you're responsible for the bills. Well, I knew a lot of fishermen in Brooklyn, because I used to fish there in the winter. We had changed our style of fishing. Even with that thirty-four foot boat I put a diesel in her, and then we started using nets and doors to trawl.

JM: A trawl kind of thing.

PR: Right.

JM: How did you learn to do that?

PR: Just went out and learned it. I did some of that when I was a kid in the summers with them boats that used to come up from Florida I told you about. So I had a vague knowledge of it, not much. Just by trial and error I went out, and I did it. The man who supplied us with equipment -- Ray Mell his name was. He had Island Fishnet and Twine Company. He was in Sayville, which is in the middle of Long Island. Twice a week he would come to Freeport with his truck, and you'd buy whatever you needed. He taught me at home how to mend nets and how to make

the nets. We was pretty good friends besides being in business. He helped me a lot. By trial and error you just kept getting better and better. We used to fish out of Brooklyn in the winter for whiting. I say winter. It was January, February and March. Sometimes we used to get twenty cents for the whiting, and that was good money in them days. We used to pack them in thirty pound grape boxes. They used to truck them to New York, which was a very short ride. That was all just day fishing. Through that I got pretty friendly with a bunch of the fishermen out of Brooklyn. So this boat I was trying to buy was in Brooklyn. That's how I had found out it was for sale. Friends of mine had found out about all the bills that was owed on this boat. It totalled up to $9,000, and the man was charging me $10,000 for the boat. Well now, the question was -- See, he couldn't raise the $9,000 to pay the bills until I give him the money for the boat. But once I give him the money for the boat, if he took off with that money or something or refused to pay the bills, then I would have been stuck for that other $9,000 in bills. Campbell and Gardiner was the Custom House Broker for the Long Island area and New York. You used to have to renew your boat papers once a year. Up here you could do it in Newport in the Post Office with George Monk. But in New York, like every big city, you had to go

through an agent. To go back to when I told you I worked in the restaurant with that Finnish fellow?

JM: Yes.

PR: Well, he wasn't going to pay that ten dollars to have his boat papers renewed. He took me in the car with him. We spent the whole day in a New York Custom House, and all we got was a run around. We never got the papers. Late in the afternoon, he went to the broker, Campbell and Gardiner, paid the ten dollars. He got the papers right away. So that always stuck in my mind. So the man in Campbell and Gardiner's arranged it so that I'd sell the boat, and we'd have the closing on a Friday afternoon. Now Willie Pierson, who I was buying the boat from, agreed to pay all them bills. He come up with all of them. As a matter of fact, he come up with a few that I didn't know of. Well, the Custom House agent's idea was that if he didn't have them paid by Monday morning, we could stop payment on the check. See in them days, the banks weren't open Friday nights. So that's what we did. I give him the $10,000 Friday afternoon late. In them days you didn't know a bad check. I mean, you didn't know the word. In other words, if I give you a $10,000 check, that was good. If you gave me one, it was good. It turned out he paid every bill. He had them all paid by Monday night. Monday morning this Campbell and Gardiner agent had checked around, and

found that most of them were paid. The few that weren't Willie hadn't got up with. The man paid every bill. So he was quite an honorable man. And I believe it was within three months [that he hung himself].

JM: Poor guy.

PR: Yes. He called me and asked me if he could go fishing with me. I knew that wouldn't work, because he had taken to drinking and everything else, which he never did before. Then finally they committed him, and he hung himself. I kind of felt bad that I didn't take him, but it wouldn't have worked.

So I had that boat. That was 1957. This was a much bigger boat. We still used to do the gillnetting mackerel with her in the spring, but now we would go south -- instead of waiting until March, we would go south sometime before Christmas or sometime after, because the codfishing was falling off. There wasn't that many codfish to catch no more. We would get a little run in December, but that would be about it. So we started going further south for mackerel. We'd go down as far as -- just north of Cape Hatteras. As a matter of fact, I went below that, but we never found none below Cape Hatteras. We did find them just north. You used to kind of gamble to be the first one to catch them. You would get good money, like forty dollars a barrel. That would be 150 pounds. You could get a

couple of shots at that forty dollars a barrel. If you had a little luck, you could get ten or twelve thousand pound a night. If you hit them. So we used to do a lot of that. We started leaving after Christmas. Then we got so we was leaving right after Thanksgiving even -- before Christmas. We'd spend most of the winter fishing out of Cape Charles, Virginia, which is just the north end of the opening of the Chesapeake Bay. And we'd fish down off North Carolina. I tried taking the fish into North Carolina. You couldn't get no money for them, because they didn't know what Boston mackerel were. We would take the fish either into Hampton, Virginia or Cape Charles, Virginia, and they would be trucked back to New York.

End of Interview.

Interview with Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society, Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, by Jennifer Murray, October 1, 1987.

MURRAY: It's October 1, 1987. This is Jennifer Murray. It's my second interview with Mr. Philip Ruhle. Before we continue with where we left off around 1958, I want to go back and ask you about those fishermen that you knew in Brooklyn that you went out whiting fishing with in the winter . What's happened to them?

RUHLE: There's very few boats down there now -- just two or three from what I understand. Well, the whiting disappeared. I think New York has got a lot of pollution problems. The young ones didn't get in it, and the old ones got too old. I think that was it. See, that was a bunch of Italians. They were citizens, but they were from Italy, that whole group. There must have been twenty or thirty boats there. It was a pretty important fishery, for New York anyway. I'm still friends with one fellow, he has a boat, and he fishes out of Brooklyn yet. But all he does is go out and catch fish and then sell them off the dock to people. He doesn't fish for the volume in the market, because the volumes are not there no more.

JM: What part of Brooklyn was this?

PR: It was Sheepshead Bay and Garrison Beach. Sheepshead Bay was one side. I think that was where

all the party boats went where the people paid to go out fishing. Across the road was Garrison Beach. The docks used to be old barges. They would ground them next to the shore, and that's where they worked out of. I think there was three of them if I remember right.

JM: What kind of boats? Three barges?

PR: Three barges for unloading. The boats were thirty to fifty foot boats mostly, the fishing boats.

JM: Were they all day boats?

PR: Yes, yes, it was all day boats.

JM: What's in that area now?

PR: I really don't know. I haven't been down there.

JM: When you were fishing out of Freeport and there were those twenty-nine boats --

PR: Right.

JM: The group of twenty-nine. What else did those men do to make a living?

PR: That was it. They fished. We used to go clamming in the Bay.

JM: Did you do that?

PR: Yes. I did a lot of that certain times of the year.

JM: In that creek?

PR: We worked out of there, but we worked in Hempstead Bay, which was the local bay. I should have mentioned that the other day. We did a lot of clamming. I did a lot of eeling. Matter of fact, when I first got that boat that was thirty-four foot

I told you about, fish were cheap in them days. I remember July 19 was my birthday, so my wife talked me into staying home. We had been fishing pretty hard, but we wasn't making much money, because fish were so cheap. So I stayed home, and then I decided, well, I'll go eeling, which I used to do in the spring and the fall. I went eeling and made more money than I did fishing, so I stayed eeling from July 19 right until Election Day in November. I used to eel where Kennedy Airport is now, but it wasn't there then. They were building it. There was a fellow in New York who used to pay me twenty cents a pound for the eels, all I could catch, the ones that were big enough. I used to get three hundred pound a day, so that was $60, and you had maybe $10 or $12 expense for the gas for the outboards and stuff. That was good money in them days. I just left the boat tied right to the dock.

JM: How did you do that -- catch the eels?

PR: Dredging. It was kind of a funny thing. It was like a clam tong handle. I don't know if you know what a clam tong is.

JM: Yes, I do.

PR: All right. Well, it was one handle. It used to be eleven foot long. In the bottom, seven-eighths of an inch apart, we'd drill holes, and then we'd put ice picks in it. We used to buy the ice picks in a place in New Jersey -- just the picks, no handle.

You had ten picks in the bottom, and you used to tow it along with the outboard in through the seaweed on the bottom. That's where you caught the eels.

JM: Now what is it about the eels? Don't they go out into the open sea?

PR: Some do and some bed in the winter in the mud in deeper water in the Bay. There's two different kind of eels the nearest I know, and I'm not an expert on it. You have what you call a silverside, which is your bigger ones that come in in the spring and go out in the fall. Then you have your local eels that they'll mix during the summer. They bury in the mud. A lot of times we used to chop holes in the ice and winter spear them.

JM: They were used for eating?

PR: Right.

JM: How do you cook that?

PR: You have to skin them, and it's very good eating.

JM: I bet it is.

PR: They fry them -- cut them in pieces two or three inches long, you know, and fry them like you would any other fish. It only had a center bone. Very good eating. A lot of people don't like the name of it.

JM: I think more Europeans eat them.

PR: Oh yes. It's a big market in Holland nowadays they say. But that was a pretty fair business. It was a good fill in when fishing was bad.

JM: Were there oysters?

PR: Yes. There was oysters, but when I started fishing, that was getting near the end of the oysters. When I first started, there was a few oyster houses left in Baldwin, but they weren't in use no more. I guess you could say population expansion and growth more or less put them out of business. The thing with oysters, see, they used to catch them out in the Bay and then bring them in and put them in these oyster houses and let the tide come up. That would wash them out while they were in the bags or in these oyster houses. Then when the tide went out, they'd leave them in there a few times, and that would cleanse the oysters. And the same we used to do with the soft clams to get the sand out of them. But, of course, you know, they stopped all that kind of stuff. I think what happened there mainly, it got too crowded. The bays got too many people with yachts and pleasure boats and things like that.

JM: How about swordfish, harpooning swordfish? Did anybody do that?

PR: I did it when I was fifteen years old. I went with a fellow named Carl Forsberg. He's dead now, but his son has still got the business in Montauk. As a matter of fact, he runs a ferry to Block Island from Montauk. He just started a year ago. He's got three or four big boats. It was right at the end of the War. As the War progressed with Japan, the party

boats couldn't go out. I mentioned before that, when I first started, we was able to go out a short distance. But as the War got progressed along, then they stopped us from doing that. The people couldn't get the gas to come down to the boat anyway. So this Carl Forsberg -- he was a big man. He was originally an engineer in a tunnel, and he got his hand hurt -- damaged -- in some kind of accident in a tunnel. Then he quit that, or he got some kind of disability and he went in this party business. During the course of the War, they stopped that. So he went swordfishing, and I went with him for two summers, harpooning. We used to come up this way.

JM: To Narragansett Bay?

PR: We used to go to Georges Banks.

JM: Oh, you did then when you were a boy at that age.

PR: Right.

JM: Tell me about that.

PR: We did it for two summers. We weren't very good at it compared to the good ones like from Martha's Vineyard or the boats that had more experience at it. They used to catch a lot more fish than we did.

JM: Were there a lot of swordfish out there?

PR: Yes. It was a different story than it is now. As a matter of fact, we used to catch them off Long Island pretty good.

JM: You did.

PR: Yes. And I don't think they ever see them there anymore, or if they do, it's very rare.

JM: What job did you have when you were doing that harpooning?

PR: More or less the spotter, the man up in the mast looking for them, because I was young, and I had good eyes. It was a lot of fun. It was a learning experience, but I don't think we made any money if I remember right.

JM: So the spotter spots the swordfish and then the harpooner -- There's a special person that --

PR: Yes, right, that does the harpooning. Of course, in later years they used airplanes and everything else, but we didn't have nothing like that in them days.

JM: What other fish did you see around Long Island that you don't see anymore besides the swordfish?

PR: Sea bass was -- Like I mentioned before, I don't think they catch them anymore, or if they do, it's a very limited amount. And what we call scup. I don't mean the menhaden what they call [pogy]. Fishing is funny. Different parts of the coast they call different fish by different names. On Long Island the fish that the traps are looking for here off of Newport in the spring -- up here they call them scup. In New York, New Jersey, Virginia they called them porgy. But up here a pogy is a menhaden -- a trash fish. From New York on down it's called a bunker, a pogy is, the trash one, you know. So

it's a little confusing when you mention porgies. We're referring to what they call scup up here. That was a big fishing. Boats from Gloucester used to come to Long Island in the fall of the year, and the boats from Virginia would come up. They'd work the fish down and fish off from Virginia for the whole winter on scup and sea bass.

JM: Did you do any of that -- the menhaden?

PR: No, no.

JM: How was that done on Long Island?

PR: Pretty big boats -- well over 100 foot, and they had a pretty good sized crew, mostly colored, on them. And they were seining. It's the same way they still was doing it a few years ago here in Narragansett Bay. It was the same general principle. There was what we call fish factories. There was one in Promised Land, which is by Montauk on Long Island. There was one in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. And there was another one somewheres down towards Cape May. I don't remember exactly where. But there was plants all over the coast, all within a day's running for these boats. But that's all gone now. Matter of fact, there's a little bit done out of Virginia, which was the big home port for all these boats. It was a big fishing in the old days. But that you don't see anymore.

JM: Were there many whales off the coast of Long Island migrating?

PR: No, you didn't see many.

JM: How about things like sturgeon?

PR: We used to catch some sturgeon, never any amount. In a year's fishing you wouldn't get twenty-five sturgeon I don't believe.

JM: How about salmon?

PR: No.

JM: Getting back to when you were doing the swordfish harpooning, what did you think of Georges Bank the first time you went out there?

PR: Well, when you were a kid, it didn't look no different. It was water. That's all you remember. Of course, you was a little excited because you was going to Georges Bank, but you know, we didn't have no navigation aids. I mean, you didn't have lorans or nothing. It was just all guessing where you was and everything. But it was kind of nice to come back and say you was on Georges Bank .

JM: Yes, I bet.

PR: But that was about the only difference you could actually see.

JM: For the record, what were the names of your boats? The first one, your Verity skiff?

PR: The first one didn't have a name. It was New York number 10Z536. It was under five tons, so you didn't need a name. You had to have a New York number. You didn't even need a Coast Guard number. Then the second boat, which was thirty-four foot,

was named the Venus. The third boat, which was forty-five foot, was named the Gloria and Doris. All them names were on when I bought the boats. I never changed the name on a boat. I believe that's hard luck.

JM: Oh really.

PR: In my opinion, yes. My wife's name is Gloria, but as I told you, before that the man and his brother-in-law were partners, and their wives was named Gloria and Doris. So that's why that name was on that boat.

JM: Do a lot of people think that's hard luck to -- [change the name of a boat]?

PR: I don't know about other people, but I do. I wouldn't change a name on a boat for no money, but to each his own.

JM: You had said that in the late fifties on the Gloria and Doris, you were going down for the mackerel, to gillnet the mackerel.

PR: Right.

JM: And it got to be around Thanksgiving that you were already going down there, because there were no cod left.

PR: Right.

JM: What happened to the cod?

PR: I guess you could go back and say that by that time the foreign boats were starting to fish Georges Bank. I think if you put the two together -- we

didn't know it at that time -- what was going on -- but I believe that had a lot to do with it, because codfishing used to be a big thing. It used to be you could catch them pretty good down off Jersey, too. And now they never see them. They do catch a few on Long Island but not enough to amount to anything.

JM: Those gillnets that you used for the mackerel, those were called the driftnets?

PR: Right, right.

JM: So we got to the point where you were down there during the late fifties around the Chesapeake Bay.

PR: Right.

JM: What happened after that?

PR: We went further down. We went below Cape Hatteras, but we couldn't find no fish. So we kind of come to the conclusion that the Boston mackerel, the ones we were after, didn't go below Cape Hatteras. We tried it a few different years for a couple of weeks, and we never did catch none below Cape Hatteras. We assumed they didn't go below Cape Hatteras, which in later years it turned out they don't. That was a pretty good fishery. I stayed in that till around 1960. That was a three man operation. You needed three men on the bigger boat. When we used the smaller boat, it was only two men. As soon as we got above that twenty-six footer and went to the thirty-four footer, then we fished a different

style. On the little boat you pulled the nets in over the stern, two men, one on each side. On the bigger boat they were too heavy to pull backwards, so you run the boat along the net and took it in over the side up forward. That meant you needed three men, one man to pull the net, one man to run the boat, and another man to pile the net. So we went to three men. And then, when we was down south mackerel fishing, especially off North Carolina, I noticed that the draggers were doing very good catching these summer flounder, which is a fluke. The boat was rigged to drag. If we wasn't mackerel fishing, we could be dragging. So I think that's why I got into that catching the fluke with the trawl, and we more or less got out of the mackerel fishing.

JM: What other things were you going after on that boat?

PR: I used to go swordfishing in the summer, harpooning. Never very successful, but I liked it. It was like my vacation. I would go for three or four weeks every summer. We didn't know much about it. That was our bad thing, you know. We used to come up here off Martha's Vineyard. I did go to Georges Bank with her a couple of times, but we never did really very good at it, not like the other boats from up here were doing, because we didn't know. We didn't have the experience. We didn't know where to look for the fish. It got so we was dragging most

of the year -- trawling, towing nets.

JM: How far offshore?

PR: In the spring we were dragging the Gully, which is the outer continental shelf. There was one period when we was dragging that I fished alone for eight years. That would have been on both boats, the Gloria and Doris and the Venus. If you was codfishing with the hooks, you needed another man. But if we was using a net -- with the net, when the codfish come in around Election Day, you could catch them until right after Christmas with a net very good. They were also catching them with the hooks, but not as good as you was doing. But after Christmas, when the fish got rid of their spawn, in the shoal water, which is off Long Island -- Long Island is not very deep -- the fish would get too fast, and you couldn't catch them in the net. Then the set liners would do real good. November and December used to be pretty good months for us codfishing with the nets. Then we'd either go whiting fishing in Brooklyn or if we didn't want to do that, we'd switch over and put the hooks on the boat. The whiting fishing in Brooklyn I couldn't do alone because it was so crowded. I'd take another man with me. The codfishing I couldn't do alone unless it was the dragging.

JM: And you did the dragging alone?

PR: Yes. I did it for eight years. I enjoyed it very

much. I used to take the kids with me weekends, on days they didn't have school. We'd have a pretty good time. Then we got so we'd stay out for three days. You would fish days and then just drift nights. And then if we got off to the Gully, then it worked out very good. The man who I sold the Venus to was fishing the same as I was. If fish got far from home, he'd just tie his boat up and go with me. It worked out very convenient for both of us. We both fished alone if the fish were within range of us. If not, he'd tie his boat up, because she was the smaller of the two, and we'd both go on my boat, on the bigger boat.

JM: And you had no navigational equipment?

PR: Yes, I'm trying to think when. But I think it was 1957 or 1958 that I bought a loran, which was Navy surplus. There was a fellow named Riley who worked for American Airlines, that was buying these Navy sets. It seemed when the Navy declared them surplus, they had to damage the set somehow to release them. He used to repair them. I think I was the first boat on Long Island to have a loran. We had the set, and this Mr. Riley -- we used to go to his house. He lived in Floral Park, which was a half hour car ride from Freeport. He would teach us how to use it. But we didn't have no charts. The government hadn't put out the charts at that particular time for the lorans. He made up charts

for us to use. That was the first breakthrough in navigation instruments. We had put a fathometer on the boat before that, and that was a very big help. It was a lot better than the lead line we used to use when we first started. We kept them lorans, and they got better and better. Now they're all computerized and very modern. If I remember right, it was around 1957 when we put the first one on.

JM: And that's when you started going offshore pretty much?

PR: Yes. Boats had been fishing off there prior to that without loran. They just more or less fished with the fathometer. But you lost a lot of nets and stuff by not knowing where you was. The loran made a tremendous big difference in knowing where you were.

JM: How did they lose the nets?

PR: In wrecks or rocks or something like that. If you lost one, once you get a hundred miles off of land or something, which is roughly where they were, you had no good way to tell where you was except by the fathometer. But if you happened to lose a net, say, in 70 fathoms, it didn't mean you had to stay out of 70 fathoms all up and down. You could get back into the same wreck a couple of times in a year without knowing it. We used to buoy stuff in them days. If you got in a wreck, you'd put a buoy out and stay away from it. And then, of course, if you got a

storm, the buoys would all disappear.

JM: Was that loran surplus from the War?

PR: Yes, from the Navy. They were great big two piece units. It was really three piece. It was a motor generator to give it power. And I guess they were about ten inches square and it must have been thirty inches long. It was two units, two pieces plus the power supply. You couldn't run them long. They'd melt your batteries. They took some amount of juice. In other words, you turned it on, and it didn't give you numbers. It gave you poles and hills. You'd count the poles and the hills and all this, and you would come up with the numbers. You could take a bearing, but you'd have to shut it off. When you turned them on, it took about a minute to warm up before you could get a bearing. You would take a bearing, then shut it off. Then you wouldn't be able to take another bearing for five or six minutes because of the amount of juice they were drawing. I remember they had forty-eight tubes in them, in the two units. And it took two units to make one loran. They were great big awkward things.

JM: They worked okay though for you?

PR: Oh yes, yes. We had them for a long time. I think they were $150 for the whole thing. That was the course on how to learn it and everything. And that Mr. Riley, he worked on them for years -- nights. He did that for American Airlines. I know the

airlines used to use the same loran in them days. The airlines, I don't think, stayed with surplus. I think they bought new. But that was more or less the beginning of it. That was what they called Loran A, which is no more now. We have Loran C since 1980. And Loran C, it's better than Loran A was. It's much more accurate, and it's longer distance.

JM: Did you like the offshore fishing better than the day fishing?

PR: No, no. Well, it's hard to say. Actually I think the offshore fishing you got more rest than you did the day fishing. Because the day fishing you used to get up like a quarter to three, and when you're raising a family, and you don't get to bed until ten at night. Where if you was offshore fishing, if you was just fishing days, you might be in bed by nine, nine thirty, and you didn't have to get up at three. You could get up at four thirty or something.

JM: Did you have to stand watch when it was just the twoof you?

PR: No, we never did. We never did. [Chuckles]

JM: You never had any trouble?

PR: No, no. I had a whale knock off a rudder one time during the night. In them days I was fishing alone. Being we was talking about a Loran, I had a very good tow of these porgies just before sundown. Sunup and sundown used to be the best time to catch

them and slack water. I had a pretty good tow, the sundown tow, and my Loran had broke. Something went wrong so it didn't work. Instead of drifting, I anchored so I was sure to be where I caught the fish in the morning. Because if you drift, you don't know where you drift, and with no Loran to verify where I was -- so I decided to anchor. So I anchored, and I was sleeping, and I heard something. The whole boat shook during the night. I got up, and I didn't see nothing around, but I heard some whales blowing, and I never thought no more of it. I got up in the morning. When we used to anchor, we used to use the towing cable from the winch. We'd just take it off the door and put it on the anchor and run it out and hook it in the bow. So I took up the anchor and tried to steer, and I had no steerage. I couldn't steer the boat. I couldn't figure what was wrong. Of course, you check the rudder, and from inside everything was turning. I assumed I had lost a rudder. That boat had a wooden rudder, but it was a pretty husky thing. It had five-eighths things -- there was four of them -- bolts going through it, through a shaft. Anyway, I steered home with a tire. The boat was only forty-five foot, so if you tie a rope across the stern and you let out an automobile tire, which we used to use for fenders, and you let it behind the boat like maybe fifty, sixty feet, you can slide

that tire across that rope and slide it to one side, and that'll bring the boat around that way. You could steer in the ocean. That wouldn't steer in the rivers or the canals. I steered all the way back to the inlet, and then I got a local fishing boat that was going in to tow me along and steer me. When we hauled the boat out, you could see where the rough skin of the whale had rubbed up under the boat. It must have broke that rudder off. It broke it off right -- broke all them pins right off it, the shaft.

JM: Strong whale.

PR: Yes, right.

JM: What do they sound like when they're blowing? How did you know that it was whales out there?

PR: Well, you know, you had seen them before and you know.

JM: Yes.

PR: You can hear them splashing at night, and they make a noise too, a moaning noise.

JM: It must be quite an experience to be out there by yourself with all of that.

PR: I don't know, it's nice. I get along good with myself. [Laughs] I enjoyed it. I really did enjoy fishing alone. But the insurance company finally stopped me. They didn't like it to start with. I think it was eight years I did it, and then they wouldn't insure the boat no more.

JM: How far out did you go alone?

PR: Oh, thirty or forty miles, never too much further than that.

JM: When you were out around the Gully, did a lot of lobsters come up in the nets?

PR: Yes, we used to catch a lot of lobsters, but you didn't get no money for them. I never particularly liked that business. Most of them had eggs on. They were washing the eggs off, and that went against my grain.

Matter of fact, in 1958, I think it was, I was supposed to be best man at a boy in Maine's wedding. This boy -- I mentioned earlier that there used to be a few boats come down to Virginia from Maine, mackerel fishing. This boy's father --

[end of side one, tape three]

JM: He came down from Maine to Virginia?

PR: Right, and then he used to fish out of Freeport also. He was a herring fisherman in Maine in the summer and a lobster buyer. He had what they call a lobster pound. He used to go down to Casco Bay in Maine and buy the lobsters off the lobster fishermen. That business was more or less summer. It got so he was -- if it was a bad year mackerel fishing, he would come down to New York to Freeport anyway and go codfishing with us. It seemed funny, a boat from Maine, but he could do better working off Long Island. So we got very friendly, and I

used to go up to visit him. As a matter of fact, we still are today. So when his boy got married, he wanted me to be best man. So I made arrangements with the local shipyard right there in Freeport to haul my boat out and paint the bottom for the spring. That's all they were supposed to do was just paint the bottom, and they was going to do that while I was gone up to the wedding. Well, I got all set to go to the wedding, and they were hauling the boat out. Whenever they hauled the boat out, I used to get nervous, because they put them on these little railways, and they hauled them out. Anyway, they dropped her. They got her up just so far, and the cradle broke, and the boat fell over on its side, punched a hole in and then did quite a lot of damage. I couldn't make the wedding on account of this. It was a big thing. To get the boat fixed right they wanted $2,700 which was a fortune.

Whenever I had a lot of work to be done on the boat, I used to take it to Brooklyn to a bigger shipyard. But this was just going to be a paint job, so I didn't bother to go to Brooklyn. I hauled out there. Well, the long story was that shipyard kept charging the insurance companies for work on the boat to repair it that they weren't doing. I had a local boat builder who lived right next door to the shipyard, and he watched it.

I took a job on another boat, a bigger boat, and we was offshore lobstering. That's how I got into this, because you mentioned lobstering. I remember it was May and June. I didn't like this. I only made the one trip. It was a five day trip. We had a lot of lobsters. I don't remember how many pounds. But they was scrubbing them all. In other words, it seemed to me that I know we used to get twelve, fifteen baskets in an hour's tow, and you'd be scrubbing them until the next hour. That didn't go very good with me. It was against my grain. We used to catch lobsters inshore, but we never scrubbed them. If it had eggs on, you threw it back. But here it was, and there was many, many boats doing it. And you know, you look at a lobster, boy there's a lot of eggs. I only made the one trip, and by that time my boat was fixed up anyway. But I didn't like it.

JM: About what year was that?

PR: I would say that was around 1957, 1958. So that offshore lobstering, in them days there was no offshore pots at all. There was a lot of boats -- a lot of boats from Carolina and Jersey, Virginia and all that used to do it, Long Island and up here too. I don't know if they all scrubbed them, but I have to assume they did, because we're not going to be the only ones that catch the females. So that business never appealed to me. And there was no

money anyway -- fifteen cents for the big lobsters. That business has gone by the wayside anyway.

JM: The towing for lobsters?

PR: Right, right.

JM: What do you think that did to the lobster stocks?

PR: Well, it sure didn't do much good. I don't think that helped anything. It had to hurt, because it was an awful amount of lobsters you were scrubbing as we called it. So that never appealed to me. I imagine that had to hurt the business bad.

JM: Did you ever offshore lobster again after that?

PR: No.

JM: No. You never got involved in the pot industry at all in any way?

PR: No, no. Well, I did in 1970. It's the only time I hadn't been fishing. I ran a state research boat for North Carolina, a fisheries research boat, a boat named the Dan Moore. She was a ninety foot stern trawler, kind of a super fancy thing. We did a little experimental potting to see if we could find them off Carolina. We did some dragging, but it was all just for tagging lobsters. We would catch them and tag them and release them. We did save some. We was trying to establish a market for lobsters caught off North Carolina with the Marines in Cherry Point. I remember the Marines come down, and they had to inspect the whole boat for sanitary conditions and all of this sort of stuff. It seemed

that they weren't too familiar with lobsters, because one lobster can be full of meat, and another one won't have much meat. So that never worked out, I mean as far as establishing a market. We did tag a couple thousand lobsters. I only stayed on that job a year.

JM: How long did you own the Gloria and Doris?

PR: Ten years. It was 1964 that I bought a different boat.

JM: Okay. And you did all offshore fishing in that boat?

PR: Well, some day fishing, some offshore fishing and stuff. It wasn't all offshore. It was two or three day trips mostly.

JM: And I just want to make sure we get the kind of fish that you caught on a yearly basis.

PR: We'd catch codfish and very few haddock. You didn't get many haddock on Long Island. Then we'd go catch some yellowtail flounders. In the spring we'd catch regular flounders. In the summer we'd catch fluke and sea bass and porgies and squid. In the fall you'd get a run of butterfish and striped bass. Then you'd go back to the codfish.

JM: Did you see many foreign boats out there? Were you far enough out?

PR: No, no. I didn't see hardly any. I don't remember seeing any in that boat. But I saw plenty later on.

JM: What did you do after you sold that boat?

PR: Like I mentioned, we used to go to North Carolina and mackerel fish, and then we switched over to the fluking. But off Cape Hatteras the weather is pretty bad in the winter. And the fluking used to be good until just about Christmas off North Carolina -- for a boat that size. Then they moved off into the deeper water which made it pretty hard to get to with a boat that size. I think it was 1963, I guess it was -- I'm trying to think, because that summer, a boat in Portland, Maine was going to try longlining for swordfish. It was the nephew of this fellow I told you I went to his son's wedding. I was friendly with him. Dick Paulsen his name was. He was rigging up to go, and this fellow in Maine called me and told me about it. So I jumped in the car, and I went up to look at it to see what kind of equipment and all. There was no winches or nothing. It was just all by hand. So for the summer I took the Gloria and Doris, which was the forty-five footer, and I rigged it up. We put 750 hooks on it, and we had a dory. Well it was a type of a dory. It was a flat bottomed skiff. And we went off Long Island, and we started longlining for swordfish. We used to pull part of the gear in in the little boat. 750 hooks I think was about seven and a half miles. We didn't have no radar. We had a Loran, but we didn't have a radar. At night we used to tie that dory on with a Coleman

gasoline lantern in it so we could keep track of the line because we didn't have radar. Then in the morning we'd go up alongside that boat. I had an outboard on it. And we dropped two men off in that, and they'd haul about a mile of gear, and we would run down with the big boat about a mile ahead of them and pick up the line, and we'd haul. We just kept overlapping eachother and hauling. And we was catching a few fish. Like I say, it was a brand new thing. Nobody knew nothing about it. And then we'd go harpooning in the daytime, because that much line, we'd have it all in by nine o'clock in the morning. And we'd go harpooning. So in the fall of the year when the weather started to get bad, I went down to Virginia and Carolina fluking. We used to start off Jersey and follow them down to Carolina. I'd start in Jersey in October and work them right down. So come right before Christmas when the fluke moved off, I got the idea to try that swordfishing off North Carolina. They claimed they didn't go that far south, but . . .

JM: Was anyone else doing that?

PR: No, no, nobody. There was only I think two of us on this coast doing it at that time -- that fellow in Maine and myself. We went out, and we caught twelve swordfish the first night. I remember we went five or six times, but we had to turn around for the weather, before we finally got one night to do it.

It looked pretty good to me. That was a lot of fish. That was more than we had ever caught in a single night up here. So a professor from East Carolina named Dr. Hessler, Bill Hessler, had heard about it, and he come over the house. And come to find out, he had done a lot of studying on that, and he felt it could be a good fisheries off North Carolina. So we got very friendly. He stayed at the house and all that.

JM: Were you still living on Long Island then?

PR: No. I had moved to Carolina.

JM: Okay.

PR: What had happened is I moved from Freeport to Montauk, New York.

JM: Okay.

PR: No, wait a minute. I've got to get that right. No, no. I moved from Freeport to North Carolina. There was a big sound, Pamlico Sound, down in North Carolina. And a boat like I had you could fish the ocean in the winter and the sound in the summer -- shrimping. And, you know, it could make into a pretty nice thing, and the idea was I'd be home more and all that kind of stuff. But we moved there. We moved to Wanchese, North Carolina, which is an island. I mean, it's connected to the mainland by the Outer Banks -- two hour car ride from Norfolk. I didn't move down there until -- I believe it was just before school started. So my wife was there.

I was still up here fishing, but she wanted to be there to get the kids in school. So I come down, and I tried swordfishing, and I caught some. So right away, I realized that if I was going to gamble on that swordfishing being anything, I couldn't do it with the boat I had. I had to get a bigger boat. I'd heard about this boat being for sale in another town further down in North Carolina. So I went down to look at it. It was a man named Harry Jarvis. And he owned I think it was seven boats. Them boats used to shrimp all summer. He'd send them off North Carolina in the winter -- fluke fishing and stuff, and in the spring they used to come up to Long Island lobstering. Then like in July or August, whenever the shrimp season opened, they would go back shrimping. And what had happened, he found one of his captains sold a trip. In other words, went into a different port and sold them and split the money. And boy, he got mad, and he called all his boats home and sold them all. So I looked at this one, and it was a new boat. It was only a couple years old if I remember right. The name of it was Harry Glenn, which was named after two of his boys. Well, he wanted $22,000 for the boat. And I could probably, by selling the boat I had and everything, probably raise $12,000. So I told him that I liked the boat and everything, and I'd like to own it, but I didn't have enough money. I asked him if he'd

hold a second mortgage. He says, "I ain't holding no mortgage for a damn Yankee, you know, somebody I don't even know. What the hell," he says. So I went home kind of disappointed. And he called me up a couple of days later, and he said, "Come on down." And I went down, and I talked to him. So he says, "Supposing I let you take that boat and hold a $10,000 mortgage, and you do real good and you go buy a Cadillac or something and then it comes to payment and you don't do good and you ain't got the money." I says, "Well then, I'll sell the Cadillac and pay you." So anyway, to make a long story short, he let me have it, and all he charged me was interest on the unpaid balance, and it was a very low interest. And we took the boat, and we started going swordfishing, and we did very good, very, very good. Inside of a month there was more and more boats starting to get into it, because we was doing very good.

JM: How big were they?

PR: The swordfish?

JM: Yes.

PR: Oh, anywheres from fifty pounds to five hundred pounds. When we first started, they used to average pretty good even off North Carolina. Maybe a hundred and fifty pounds would be an average. We designed a hydraulic winch to take the line in, which made it faster. We finally got it up to

twenty miles we was fishing then instead of the seven. Now today the boats are fishing forty. But that was real good off North Carolina. I think by the second year there was sixty-five boats doing it.

JM: Did a lot of those men who had been shrimpers in all those little islands change over?

PR: Yes, a lot of boats went, because it looked real good. A lot didn't make good, didn't do good. Some did. But the ones that did a lot of shrimping didn't do good at all, because they weren't used to that ocean. Swordfishing is a different thing. If you go out and set out a net and the weather turns bad, you can stop and haul it in and run for shelter. When you put out a longline, that's out. You set it out before dark. There's nothing you're going to do. You've got to stay there until at least daylight to try and get it back. So a lot of them fellows wasn't used to that, and they lost a lot of gear. Some of them wouldn't lay there. You know, the gear is drifting with the current, and you've got the Gulf Stream right in close to North Carolina. So a lot of them lost a lot of gear. A lot of them -- probably out of the sixty-five boats, I don't think ten or fifteen really made it good. There was a certain number did fair, but a lot of them didn't do very good at all.

JM: You didn't do any shrimping did you?

PR: No.

JM: Did they know much about the migratory patterns of the swordfish?

PR: No. We didn't know nothing. We didn't know nothing. Swordfishing -- to this day we know very little, to be honest. We tagged everything under fifty pounds if it was alive. I work with a fellow named Jack Casey over here, Narragansett lab. He's with NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] -- marine biologist. I've been working with him for, well, I think when I first rigged up and tried it off Long Island, he come down and introduced himself. That would have been like say 1961 or 1962 or something that. And we're very good friends to this day. He used to supply me with a lot of information and tags, and I tagged an awful lot of sharks for him and swordfish. Then he had a graduate student out of URI [University of Rhode Island] that worked with him, and he computerized all my logs. I used to keep pretty good track of what I was doing all the time. He computerized twelve or fifteen years on the longlining for swordfish. You know, he told me how many swordfish I caught and how many sharks I caught in my lifetime. I think we tagged two hundred and some odd swordfish if I remember right and I don't know how many sharks -- a lot. The swordfishing, I had very little information on them at all. We've got a little bit more today, but not much. When Congress

passed that Fish Conservation Management Act [Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976 (the 200 mile limit)], I was an advisor on swordfish myself. I think there was quite a few of us, you know, Chet Wescot from Point Judith. Anyway, I was on the New England Council as they call it, and I put a lot of effort and time of my own in on it. I remember the same fellow in Portland, Maine that I told you started it, he went to the Gulf of Mexico, and he was the first boat to try it there. And he did good, and he called me, and we went right down after him. And we did good in the Gulf. The following year, I remember we started working out of Pascagoula, Mississippi. That's kind of a dirty town. I don't know if you've ever been there.

JM: No.

PR: It's not a nice place I didn't think. So we went over to Panama City, Florida, and we pulled in there with swordfish. That was the first swordfish ever landed in Florida that I know of, I mean commercially. Some woman that saw us unloading these swordfish from the boat to the truck, called the Marine Patrol and told them that we was unloading porpoises. So the Marine Patrol come down, and they didn't know. And the fellow, he come up to me and wanted to know who was the captain, and I told him. He said, "What are you unloading?" I

told him, "Swordfish." He said, "I understand they're porpoises." I says, "No, they're swordfish." So he says, "Well, you're not allowed to kill porpoises." I said, "I know that. They're not porpoises." So he said, "I'm going to lock you up." So I said, "Now look, before you make a fool of yourself, you got a lab -- the government? NOAA's got a lab here in Panama City." I said, "I never been there, but I know they got a lab here. I advise you to call and bring them fellows down. Somebody's got to know that these are swordfish, not porpoises." So he said to me, "Well, will you stop unloading until I can do that?" I said, "Well, I can't stop unloading for long. I can give you about an hour. We'll break and have a lunch. But if you're not back in an hour, I'm going to start, because I've got to get the fish to New York." Well, it got a little nasty for a few minutes. And I says to the guy, "Look, I'm going to tell you to lock me up in two minutes, and boy, you're going to look awful foolish when these things are swordfish, not porpoises." So finally he didn't know what to do. So he calmed down a little bit. And by now quite a few people are gathered, because it was a state dock. So finally he put in a call, and a biologist come down and told him they were swordfish. Of course, everything was all right then. So we was trucking them from Florida up.

The next year, when we went down, I made a set off Miami on the way down from Carolina. I remember we had forty nice great big swordfish, but boy, they were all full of roe. It was the first time we had ever seen roe in swordfish. I had never seen it above Cape Hatteras. So it was quite exciting. So we went on around into the Gulf, even though forty fish was good. That was very good. You know, when you caught forty big fish, they probably was two hundred pound average, you're talking eight thousand pounds. But the idea was they were all ripe females, so right away you knew the damage you was doing. Also, I knew I could do almost as good in the Gulf without killing the ripe females. That was 1969. That's when that was. We fished the second year in the Gulf. I think it was towards the end of the second year that that mercury business started in swordfish. Well, we had heard it was going to be trouble with Food and Drug. So instead of staying out and catching twenty, thirty thousand pounds, we was going out for a few days and coming in, because we didn't want to get caught with a lot of fish and lose them. We hadn't been told we couldn't go. This boat from Maine and myself were still the only ones fishing there. No, I think by now -- Yes, by now some of the Florida boats got in it. Anyway, one day, we went out, we had some kind of trouble, and we come back in. The Food and Drug man was

there when we was unloading. He was from Tallahassee, a federal man. He asked me what we was going to do with the fish. I says, "I'm sending them to Frank Wilkerson Fish Company in New York. That's what I always do with them." He says, "Fine." And he left. We only had twelve fish, so we put them on the truck. The truck had other fish on it, not swordfish, but other different kind of fish. I get a call two days later from New York from Frank Wilkerson, the man that was supposed to get these fish. He said, "They put a stop sale." Food and Drug come down and told him he can't sell the fish. Well, I got kind of mad, I went up to Tallahassee, and I asked the guy, "Why wasn't you man enough to tell me don't send them? Why did you let me spend all the money to get them from Florida to New York and you put a stop sale on them? You was right there. You could have told me that you'd put a stop sale on these, and you could have tested them right here in Florida." So word for word -- we didn't get along very good. It ended up I got subpoenad, the U. S. Government versus twelve swordfish. That was a -- I call it a typical government deal. We went back north fishing, not swordfishing, because we had to get out of it, see. Well, the case come up in Tallahassee Court. I get the notice, "Your case is Wednesday" such and such a date. Now my name wasn't on the summons. It was

the U. S. Government versus twelve swordfish. I've still got the summons down around here somewhere. Anyway, I fly down to Tallahassee from Newport. I believe I was in Newport then. I go in the courtroom. Nobody seems to know nothing. Finally I get up at the sheriff, and I asked him about this case. He says, "That was tried last week." So I says, "You couldn't try it last week. Here's the paper saying it's tomorrow." He looks at it. The date corresponds with tomorrow, but they had already run the trial a week before. And I couldn't be there to defend it. So that was one of the starts of the bad dealings with Food and Drug, which we had quite awhile. Then they stopped us completely. That stopped the harpooning. It stopped all swordfishing. It stopped all the Canadians. So we formed an American Swordfish Association and --

JM: Fishermen.

PR: Right, fishermen and dealers -- Frank Wilerson like in New York and Aiello's in New Bedford. Whoever was buying swordfish put money in it. We put some money in it to get it started. Butch Segal in New Jersey who had three or four boats swordfishing. Anyway, to make the long story short, we spent $180,000, and we beat Food and Drug in court and got the limit raised from five part per million to a full part. And oh, it was a big long hassle.

JM: I bet it was.

PR: As a matter of fact, when President Reagan was running for president, in one of his speeches, he mentioned how a small group of American businessmen, he called us, could lick the government, you know. But like I said, it took $180,000.

JM: How'd you get the money?

PR: Well, we was all putting up some money, but there wasn't that many in the Association. There was many boats fishing but wouldn't go in the Association. And the dealers and the National Fisheries Institute give us some money. Finally, when the case was over, we still owed the lawyer -- it was a good law firm in Washington -- we still owed him some money. The way we was doing it, after we put in initial money -- I forget what we put up -- I think we all put up about $5,000, all the boats and the dealers. There wasn't that many of us, which was a thing that aggravated me very greatly, because there was many swordfishermen, and if we'd have all put in a little, we'd have had a good Association, and it would have made a big difference. But I would say there wasn't one-tenth of the boats in it. Everybody gained, because without it you wasn't going to swordfish regardless of what they say, because I had my fish seized. So did a lot of other people. So after the initial money we all put in, then we was putting in a dollar for every fish we caught, and the man who bought them put in a dollar

for every fish. So every fish that come in for the boats in the Association -- not the outsiders -- you was getting two dollars. Well, in them days we used to come in with five or six hundred fish. So if you had five hundred fish, that would have been $1,000 towards the Association for that trip. So that's how we built up the money to beat Food and Drug.

JM: How were you able to prove that they were wrong?

PR: Oh, they had many things. They were mentioning total mercury. They were adding up total mercury when only methyl mercury is the poisonous part. And there was a fish in, I don't know whether it was the Smithsonian Institute or some institute, for over a hundred years, and the mercury content in that fish was the same as the fish we was catching today. So it was not a man-made pollution. It was a natural thing that comes out of the atmosphere and into the oceans. It wasn't a man-made thing at that time. [end of side two, tape three]

JM: Mercury poisoning in Japan?

PR: Yes. There was a couple of them if I remember right. But that was the fish caught in little rivers where there was factories pouring out the pollutions. You know, that was a man-made pollutant. But we had to fight that. It was a real -- I don't know, it took three -- They stopped us in 1970, and we didn't get back till 1974. And then in 1974 we still hadn't beat them, but we started to

go swordfishing. And I think it was around 1975 that we finally got the verdict changed -- upped the limit.

JM: Where did the scientists come from that helped you on this?

PR: Oh, all over. All over we got them from. I mean, from colleges, universities. You know, you could produce five guys say it don't hurt you. They could produce five guys say it did. It was one of them kind of things.

JM: Yes.

PR: But finally one of the boats got caught, and we decided to make that the case. That was the lawyer's business. A few of us got caught with fish. I didn't get caught no more. But you were doing a lot of sneaking. It was a shame. You go out, and you worry about catching the fish. Then after you got them, you've got to worry about unloading. As a matter of fact, the dock here in Newport wouldn't handle them -- Parascandolo's, who I'd been dealing with for a long time. They didn't want to get involved. They were afraid. They didn't want no trouble. So we had to unload down at Sandwich (Massachusetts), and we would unload nights. It made you like a criminal. And we felt very strong, which we proved later on, there was nothing wrong with them. If we'd have felt we was going to poison people, I'm sure we wouldn't have

sold them. But there was nothing wrong, which proved out right later on.

JM: It must have hurt a lot of people.

PR: It did. It hurt the Canadians real bad.

JM: Did it?

PR: Because see, they have to bring them over the border. There was no way they could sneak them in. I had an awful lot of good Canadian friends -- fishermen -- and it just put most of them right out of business, to tell you the truth. The Canadian government did give them a lot of money to get into other fisheries, but these fellows were swordfishermen all their lives. That's all they knew, and they just couldn't get into the other business. Really none of them made very good at it. A lot of them just sold their boats and got into other things, small boat lobstering or something. But that was a -- I don't know what you call it. It wasn't right. I'm sure Food and Drug thought they were doing right. Like anything else, there was a lot of things wrong with it. And finally we got so that we could sell them anyway, as long as they were above one part per million. It was a half a part. It was .005 when we started, and they doubled it.

JM: Is it tested when you bring them into the dock?

PR: No more. It was for awhile. They would test sample them. They would grab a few and test them. And the

bigger the fish, the more mercury content, the smaller the fish, less. There's been periodic seizures on some of them. But now, I guess, the budget's been cut so bad on FDA that they can't really do much checking no more, so it's not been no hassle the last few years that I know of.

JM: Where do you think the swordfish spawn?

PR: Well, they spawn down in the Straights of Florida, I guess. That's what the scientists seem to think. That's what we seem to think. And over the course of the years in the Straights of Florida and one little place on the Texas-Louisiana border is the only place that I've ever seen ripe females. I think we only caught a couple -- two or three -- off Texas. There's been a lot caught off the Straights of Florida. In 1976 they started fishing Florida. Like I say, we stopped from 1970 to 1974 with Food and Drug. When we went back in the Gulf, a lot of boats got into it, and it didn't take long to clean that area out. Then they started fishing the east coast of Florida -- Florida Straights. And that was either great big fish or small fish. And the big fish were all ripe females that I could see, especially in the spring and well, most of the winter. So when I got on that council for the government, I argued like mad to close the whole Straights of Florida to fishing completely. At that time there was no Florida boats in it. So, you

know, if they'd have stopped it then, they wouldn't have been hurting nobody, because nobody had fished there. Now, you got five hundred boats doing it in Florida. Most of them are small boats, a husband and wife and things like that. But I think that was the worst thing that ever happened to the swordfish.

JM: So the females travel with the pups -- the young -- where there were the ripe females and the small fish together?

PR: Well, it's hard to say. Years ago harpooning, see, you didn't catch small fish, because you select them. You see the fish, and you throw a pole at it. So if it was a little one, you didn't bother, not that you saw that many little ones. When we first started longlining, we didn't see many little fish. But as the pressure on the fisheries got heavier -- and I think the record showed that -- a lot of people blamed longlining -- that after we started longlining, the fish had its ups and downs like all fisheries. It wasn't until they started cleaning up or fishing heavy in the Straights of Florida that you've seen a bad decline. And I argued like mad with the councils, and you know, you got economic impact statements they worry about and everything. You know, they tell you you're an advisor, but they don't listen. If they'd have acted early before the Florida boats got in it, they could have closed it down, because it was only transit boats -- boats

like myself from other places that were fishing there. But by the time they decided to act . . . Now they're basing all their statistics on 1980. Well, by then it was overfished. In 1974, we averaged 73 fish a night for every night we set the gear for the year. Now, you couldn't average ten fish a night, and you're fishing more sophisticated gear and all that kind of stuff now than we was then. So after, I don't know what it was, three or four years on this government council, I finally resigned. And I find it's happening all over. The oldtimers like myself that were originally on it got so frustrated with nobody listening to you and not getting nowheres, that they quit. A friend of mine runs a very successful party boat business in Freeport yet. He's on the Mid Atlantic Council which meets in Philadelphia. It was the same thing. They had a bunch of oldtimers on there that were really interested in trying to preserve the fisheries and so forth. And he says, they all quit too. The same thing -- it just gets so frustrating with these councils. I don't know. Congress appointed them with good intentions, but they don't do nothing. That's the trouble with them.

JM: That's too bad.

PR: We've got to have regulations. And it's too late now on a lot of the fish. As a matter of fact, I was thinking of suing the Swordfish Council. I

thought about it, and then I decided not to. But I was going to try to get a few boats and put a class action that they actually put us out of business by not putting no regulations -- not to sue them for any amount of money, but it was the idea maybe to get them to put something on it. They still haven't come up with any regulations on swordfish. And to this day you can go off the coast of Texas in January and catch three hundred swordfish for a trip, and you won't have one fish over fifty pounds. Every one is little babies. Places like that should have been closed. We told them that years ago. Because I fished swordfish from Puerto Rico to Newfoundland. After a few years you learn where the small fish are and where they aren't. And that's Texas in the winter. Now in the summer I caught big fish off Texas, but in the winter it was all little babies. And we would just go on and fish someplace else. You didn't need them. I pushed very hard not to be able to sell anything under a hundred pounds. The government council or whatever you want to call it argued, "If you go out and you catch them, you're going to kill them if you can't sell them." But you're not going to stay there. Sure, you're going to kill them the first night, but you're not going to stay there. But I didn't get nowheres. I guess it was around 1982 or 1983 I just got fed up and give it up. And to this day they still haven't come

up with any kind of regulations. They come up with a regulation and nothing goes through.

JM: You gave up swordfishing or you gave up working on the --

PR: No, I gave up being on the council. It was costing me a lot of time and a lot of money. I was going to Florida to meetings to try get support for it. Actually, they're supposed to pay you, but I never put the bills in. I paid it myself. You know, you go to . . . But you couldn't get much support. Funny thing about it, in the fishing industry -- and I've found this all over -- the older people who ain't got much time left in it are more interested in conservation and preserving it than the young fellows. The fellow in his twenties who has got his whole life ahead of him, he don't want nothing to do with it.

JM: Why is that?

PR: I don't know. I don't know. It's something I couldn't understand. I've talked to other people, and we've all come up with the same conclusion. You know, you take a guy in his fifties, the way the government works, you argue for some kind of regulation, by the time it goes through you're going to be retired. But the older fellows are the ones that want the conservation. The young guys, they don't care. I see this all over. Point Judith is very bad for killing small fish of all kinds.

They'll put a small mesh net on, and they kill a lot of fish that you really don't have to. Yet, Point Judith has got a lot of young fishermen in it too. They just don't seem to be interested in conservation. It's backwards of the way it should be. The old guy, he ain't got that much time left, so he shouldn't care. But the young guy, it's a whole future. I don't know. Congress appointed them councils, and I think they meant them to do well. But they're not accomplishing what they meant them to do. A few years back they put a ridiculous small limit on yellowtail flounders up here for the boats -- 7,500 pounds -- which was really tough to live with. If they'd have made it like 12,000 or something, the boats could have survived. They put that on for one year. Then they take it off completely the next year. That tells you right there how stupid it is. Now yellowtails are almost extinct. So instead of putting a stupid ridiculously low figure like 7,500, if they'd have made it 12,000 and maintained it for a five or six year period, I believe you would have yellowtail flounders today. But that's the way they do things.

JM: How long did you live in North Carolina?

PR: Not very long. My wife didn't like it. We didn't like the schools. They weren't very good at that time. I guess they're better now.

JM: What were the people like on that island?

PR: Pretty good, friendly. My son still lives there today. He has five children, and we have quite a few friends there. My wife's brother just died. He lived there. Pretty nice, pretty nice in general.

JM: How long did you stay?

PR: I'd have to ask my wife as far as staying. I think only two or three years. Then I moved back to Montauk, New York and lived there for a few years.

JM: Why did you move back to Montauk?

PR: My wife didn't like North Carolina.

JM: Okay. Why did you go to Montauk and not back to Freeport?

PR: Well, Freeport was getting too crowded. By that I mean they have an awful lot of party boats and pleasure boats and everything. And it's going to sound kind of stupid, but they catch these bluefish, and in the process of catching them they use chum, which is ground up fish in five gallon cans. They throw these cans overboard, and it got so you couldn't tow a net anywheres around where we used to without filling it up with these five gallon tin cans. You'd spend the whole day cutting them out of the net, and you just couldn't catch no fish. You couldn't get no time in. The net would be full of these chum cans, as we called them. I mean, they rusted out after awhile, but until they rusted out. . . And you know, there was just getting too many boats. The little crick I originally fished out of,

that got all bought up and developed into houses. There's not a fishing boat left in that crick today. So then we had to unload in the fish dock in Freeport. It was just getting too crowded. So we moved to Montauk. And we did yellowtail flounder then. When we caught yellowtail flounders, there was no market in New York for them. You had to bring them to New England. So we used to come to Newport with the fish. You would go out of Montauk and go off of Long Island or wherever you went and catch the fish. Then you'd come in at night to Newport, unload them in a day. But then you had to go back to Montauk and give the men a day off. Where, if you'd have been living in Newport, like the day you was unloading, you wouldn't have the whole crew there unloading, you could kind of work the day off, you know.

JM: Where were you off loading?

PR: Parascondolo's. So we had got into a Scottish seine. I'm trying to think what year it was. What had happened, when I bought the Harry Glenn in 1964 and we started swordfishing exclusively -- that's all I did with it year around -- it got so it was good all year except, oh maybe February and March the fish got so we couldn't catch them. This was before we went in the Gulf now. And I was looking for something to do for them two months as an alternative. I heard that the Canadian government

had hired a boat from Scotland and its crew to come over and show them about this Scottish seining, which is you catch conventionally the same fish as you do dragging, but it's a different way to do it. So I went up. I found out the boat was going to be in Louisbourg in Nova Scotia in February, this boat from Scotland. So I went up. I drove up, and luckily enough, when I got there, the observer that the Canadian government had put on the boat -- The idea was this Scotch boat was going to go into many different towns in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia and take out the captains of the local boats. And if he went in a town where there was ten captains and ten of them went out with him, then he'd move on to another town to show them how this rig worked. Well, one observer that the Canadian government put on to oversee this operation I knew real good from the old days swordfishing. So he talked to the Scottish skipper, and they says well, I could come along as a guest. So I had a chance to go out with them, which I didn't expect to when I left home. I thought I'd just be able to look it over, you know. So I went out with them and saw how it worked, and I was very impressed with it. So I come home and decided I was going to go into that as an alternative to these few months swordfishing. Then if it looked as good as it looked, then I would maybe give up swordfishing and do that. After I got

home I inquired about the gear, and I got very friendly with that Scottish skipper. He had agreed that when I got my boat rigged, he would take a leave of absence and come down and show me how to work it, and I was going to pay him.

JM: You were going to do that on the Harry Glenn?

PR: Yes.

JM: Okay.

PR: Well, I inquired around, and I could have got the gear shipped to Nova Scotia and installed in a shipyard in Nova Scotia who was doing it to a few of the Nova Scotian boats, so he had a little experience. I went to the customs, and they says, "No." I was living in New York at the time. They says, "No, that would be against the law to take the boat to Canada, have their equipment put on it and fish it in American waters." So we decided well, I didn't want to break the law. So I was going to have everything sent to New York. Well, it turned into a terrible hassle with customs. They give me a duty of $180 on the rope. So I ordered the rope. That was the main thing in this Scottish seine. I ordered the rope. I had it sent to New York. When it arrived, they want $2,800 duty after giving me a figure of $180. I went down, and I fought with them. Well, it was some kind of a mistake they had made. But that didn't do me no good, because I didn't have the money for the difference. I could

have fitted the whole boat out -- I've got to try to remember the exact figures -- in five weeks for $8,000 in Nova Scotia. Customs informed me it was illegal if I did that, which I found out later it's not. You can do that as long as you don't sell the equipment. If I'd have put that equipment on in Nova Scotia and fished it from that boat and didn't sell the equipment, just sold the product, that's not illegal. You can do it today. But I guess they didn't read the law right or something. Anyway, I had gone to the bank. I had the boat paid for. I had gone to the bank, and I think the figure they give me was going to be like $12,000. So I borrowed $10,000 on the boat. Well then, this stuff started with this customs and this hassle and everything else. Eight months went by. I don't have the equipment. They were holding it up in customs, because they don't know what duty to put on it -- a real big hassle. Finally they come up with, they're going to send the ropes to Nova Scotia, and I can pick them up there, which we originally wanted to do first. To make the long story short, there was a real big long delay. By the time I finally got rigged up, this Scottish skipper, he had been back home in Scotland and fishing. So he couldn't come down to show us. But URI had a fellow from Scotland, David Thompson. He was in this country giving talks on this type of fishery. Well, he went

out with us a lot and tried to help us. And the fellow meant well, but he just didn't know. Come to find out in later years that he had worked on a boat, but he wasn't skipper in Scotland. But he was an awful nice fellow. He worked Saturdays and Sundays and everything else. We finally got it working pretty good, but I always felt that it could be better. We was catching a lot of yellowtails. Yellowtails in them days was cheap, but you caught a lot. We used to bring them into Newport. So that's how I got involved in coming into Newport.

JM: How did the Scottish seining work? What's different about it?

PR: It's a mile and a half of rope on each side. The conventional net is towed with two doors like paravanes, and you tow. You use a lot of power. The more power, the more you catch. The Scottish seine, the rope herds the fish. They claim that the fish won't cross the rope once it's on the bottom. They set up a vibration and a mud cloud or a sand cloud or whatever. We had it so it could catch eight times what you could for the same amount of time trawling. It produces a much better product, because it's not in the net long. It takes you three hours to make a set with a Scottish seine, but the fish are only in the net for a very short period. It's the idea you're herding them together for most of that time. The bad part is you need a

lot of room, because this thing is a mile and a half behind you. A boat comes along towing a net, he don't realize it; consequently they catch the ropes. You get a lot of things. A lot of times, too, you go to a place to fish, and there's boats there, and you can't fish. It has a lot of disadvantages, and it has a lot of advantages. It's used over in Scotland, and it's used in Australia or New Zealand. It's used in Japan; it's used all over the world. Where they do it, the fish are so cleaned up that the trawlers can't make it no more. But it's all Scottish seiners, so they don't have that problem that you've got here in this country. We've tried it three or four different times. I've tried it with the boat I've got now. You can catch fish very good with it, but you can't put the time in, because it is so many boats nowadays that it . . . And we have a lot of Portuguese speaking boats who don't speak English and, you know.., Nobody realizes it's a mile and a half behind you. A conventional net is six hundred feet behind you, see. So they go a thousand foot behind you, they figure they're clear, and you've got this thing. That was one of the real bad things with the Scottish seine.

JM: Is that used on New England boats much anymore?

PR: No. There was a few boats tried it out of Chatham, a few boats out of Portland, Maine. The last I knew, nobody did very good with it. We did it for

awhile, and then we went back swordfishing. And swordfishing started to get cleaned up a little bit, and I went back to the Scottish seining. I get a magazine from Scotland, a fisheries magazine, and in it you always see this name, Willie Campbell. He fished with couple a thousand boats. He was the highliner for five years in a row. I wrote him a letter and asked him if it was possible if I come over to Scotland, if I could go out with him to see how to work this, figuring maybe I could improve the way I was working it. He wrote back that he'd be glad to take me out, but he had just sold his boat, and his new one was behind on delivery, that he had a month and he thought it would be more of an advantage if he come to Newport and went out with me in our own waters. He says, oh, I could come over to Scotland, and he'd make arrangements for me to go with his brother or somebody else, you know. So he give me a phone number. We called him, and all he wanted was his plane fare. So he come over, and he stayed, I think, three weeks -- a real genetleman -- and showed us. My idea wasn't to catch fish while he was here. It was just to see how to work this gear in all different conditions. We went all over. He thought the potential for the Scottish seine was tremendous in this country. He helped us tremendous. I couldn't believe it. In three week's time he taught me more than I learned on my own in

three or four years. I don't know if you know Scotch people, but they're quite excitable. And when he found out that this Dave Thompson in URI, what he was telling us was all wrong, he got madder than heaven, and I had to take him over to URI. He knew this Dave Thompson, knew his father. I said to him, "Willie, the man meant well, and he tried hard to teach me, but he didn't know." Willie says, "If he didn't know, he shouldn't have tried to teach you." He says, "You'd have actually been better off if you didn't know him, so I got to go tell him." I refused to take him, and he called a taxi. So I says, "Well, I'll take you." He was blunt when he told David, and David didn't deny it. But he says, "Now, David, you couldn't make it fishing, and you're over here teaching it. That's very bad. Things like that shouldn't be done." I was terribly embarrassed, because this Dave Thompson did mean well. Because it wasn't too long after he was helping us that I asked him if he was ever a skipper in Scotland because we wasn't getting no where, see. You know, he'd tell me something this week, and then the next week he'd tell me something completely opposite to do. And I said to myself, "Now if he knew, why would I be trying so many different things?" So I come right down and asked him, "Dave, I don't think you know much about this. I don't want to hurt your feelings." And he said, "Well, I

never was skipper. All I did was work on boats." Well, there's a big difference. So this Willie Campbell, boy, he was quite outspoken. He's retired now, and we still write eachother and everything. So that was with the Gloria and Doris [Harry Glen], and I'm trying to think what year that was. It had to be around 1972, I guess. I know it was the period we couldn't swordfish.

JM: Did you keep the Gloria and Doris when you had the Harry Glenn?

PR: No, I meant the Harry Glenn. I meant the Harry Glenn. No, I sold the Gloria and Doris then. [end of side one, tape four]

End of Interview.

Interview with Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society, Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, by Jennifer Murray, October 6, 1987.

MURRAY: It's October 6, 1987. This is Jennifer Murray. This is my third interview with Mr. Philip Ruhle. Before we go on, I wanted to ask you a few more questions about the swordfish longline industry in addition to what you told me last time. Did you and that other man from Maine start that industry?

RUHLE: Yes. Yes, we was the first American boats in it.

JM: And there were other boats doing that.

PR: Later on.

JM: After you started it.

PR: Yes, yes.

JM: Where did you get the idea from?

PR: The government had chartered a boat out of Woods Hole, a boat named the Captain Bill -- the owner's name. The captain was Henry Clem. [They] tried to longline for tuna fish like the Japanese do it. They went right off Long Island in the fall of the year and caught swordfish. They caught swordfish better than they did tuna. He come in, and the word got out that he had caught some swordfish. I think it was in the late fall like after harpoon season. So, you know, if he had swordfish, it was too late for them to be harpooned, so I guess that was really how it got started. Then this fellow in Maine who

knew this Henry Clem real good, Dick Paulsen, I guess he talked to Henry and found out about it. I think Dick Paulsen was the first and I was the second, and then Henry come along. But Henry would have been in it first, except he had a commitment to NOAA to do this tuna longlining, and he couldn't get out of it. So that was more or less the beginning of it. In them days it was all taken by hand. Later on some boats put Japanese type haulers on them, which the Japanese use, because the Japs are very experienced in this longlining. But we made a drum. As a matter of fact, I had it made in Virginia. It was more or less like spools, I guess you'd call it. Most of the boats use the same general principle as that today.

JM: Was that hydraulic or mechanical?

PR: Yes, it was hydraulic.

JM: Okay.

PR: We made four spools that each held five miles. This was in the beginning. We didn't fish as much gear. Then later on we went to one big drum that holds like forty miles. That's what's on my boat now.

JM: And what boat were you using that equipment on?

PR: We started out with the Gloria and Doris, which was the forty-five footer. Then, as I mentioned before, when I caught them fish off North Carolina, I went down and I bought the Harry Glenn, which was a sixty-five footer. We brought the first longline

swordfish into Montauk, because we worked out of there in the summer. And I think we brought the first into Newport, too, if I remember right. That was about it. We just kept improving on the gear and the scope of our operations. We traveled further and further. When we first started, we didn't have to go down to Grand Banks, because then you didn't have no 200 mile limits, and we could fish off Nova Scotia, which was, you know, real good. So we never had to go down. I didn't go down to Grand Banks I don't think until 1974 or 1975.

JM: Was that because there wasn't much closer?

PR: Yes, yes. And also, you know, you always heard how years ago the Grand Banks was the best swordfishing there was. So we was anxious to get down there, and it proved out very good.

JM: How long did it take to get out there?

PR: Five days.

JM: How long were those trips?

PR: They weren't that long then, because it was a lot of fish. I remember we fished six nights one time and had 76,000 pounds. But that was off Nova Scotia. That wasn't the Grand Banks. We used to get fifty, sixty thousand pounds probably in two weeks of fishing. So it would be a month trip. We had salt water ice machines. When I first bought the Audrey Lynn, the boat I have now, which was in 1974, we put an ice making machine which made a ton of ice a day

out of saltwater. That enabled us to catch a lot more fish, because we could make ice as we needed it. Before we used to have to fill the hold up with ice, and then after you caught so many fish, you'd be out of ice. But here with that ton a day, we could keep putting the ice in. Eventually we bought another machine, and we put two of them. There's still two on the boat.

JM: Could you go that far -- to the Grand Banks on the Harry Glenn?

PR: Boats that size did. I didn't because I didn't have to. But after the 200 mile limit -- of course the tail of the Grand Banks is outside of Canada's 200 mile limit. Now there's boats that size go down to the Grand Banks. But I didn't have to when I had the Harry Glenn, because there was plenty of fish off Nova Scotia. We didn't really have to go much past Sable Island.

JM: How many people would be on the crew on a trip like that?

PR: Usually seven. Seven was all together.

JM: Was it hard to all get along for that amount of time?

PR: No, not really. No, not that hard. I'm trying to think. I bought that Harry Glenn in 1964 if I remember right. I know, for the year, I only spent twelve nights home in the house. Of course, if we put in someplace else, my wife would come up with

the kids or something like that. But I know she's always remarked about it. I was trying to pay for the boat and everything, fishing was good, and we was learning something all the time, you know. So for the whole year I know I only spent twelve nights home in the house. That was in North Carolina. We lived there then.

JM: Around what year did you move back up to Montauk?

PR: Well, we was fishing in North Carolina in the winter and up here all summer. We had plenty of friends where the wife could stay while I was out. Then, when I'd come in, she'd ride out to Montauk. Like I mentioned before, she didn't like North Carolina. So I think it was around 1966 if I remember right that we moved back to Montauk.

JM: Okay, not to get off the subject, but then around when did you move to Newport?

PR: Well, we're here I think sixteen years. But we didn't come from Montauk to here. Like I mentioned before, we lived in Montauk, and I got involved in that Scottish seining. I explained that to you before. It was a tough situation, because the boat was paid for. I didn't own a house, but I was renting a house in Montauk. The boat was paid for, and we was going along pretty easy, you know, pretty nice, I mean financially, no big deal. But then when I got involved in that Scottish seining and I lost so much time getting the equipment, and I had

borrowed some money to buy that, once you get a loan on a boat, you can't go get more until that's paid for. I had no money to pay for it, so it was a real mess. So in 1969 I got a call from some people I knew in North Carolina. I think I mentioned to you that I got very friendly with a Professor Bill Hessler from East Carolina from the college there who knew a lot about swordfishing. North Carolina had spent almost $500,000 on this research boat. It was supposed to be to help fisheries, a fisheries research boat. It was quite a nice boat. It was a stern trawler, ultra modern for them times. The boat was just about a year old, it had had five captains, and they weren't getting much results. So anyway, they called me and asked me if I'd be interested. I had never worked for nobody since I started fishing, so I decided I'd try it. So I went down in February. The home port, Morehead City, was where it docked in North Carolina, but actually the boat was in Virginia when I got on it. And I really, like I mentioned, I didn't know nothing. When I went down to take the job, they told me that I was -- I think I was the sixth captain in a year. There was five before me. And that there was some kind of problem on the boat, which the state didn't know what, but they hoped I was able to find it. The reason they called me was through Dr. Hessler and the University and a fellow named Jim

Brown who worked for the state. He was their head research biologist, and he was in charge of this boat. And he had gone out with me swordfishing on the Harry Glenn when I first got it. And he wrote up a little paper on it in the state newsletter. Anyway, five people recommended me for that job, and they were all nice people. Well I got there, and like I say, I got on the boat in Hampton, Virginia. The mate had been running the boat. He was a retired Coast Guardman. There was seven men on the boat counting myself. Feelings were very bad. Come to find out later, when I went to take the job and I talked to the Commissioner -- Dr. Linton was the Commissioner in the state -- I told him I wouldn't take the job unless I could hire and fire the crew, not that I had intentions of firing anybody. I didn't know nobody, but I knew there was problems on the boat. The word before I got there, was that I was going to fire everybody, see. So when I got on the boat, feelings weren't very good. It was a kind of a strange thing, because nobody was there to [meet me]. [The people who hired me] were going to take me down to the boat. The boat was supposed to be in Morehead City, but because of the weather, it was in Virginia. So I just walked on the boat alone with my suitcase, and everybody's looking, "Well, here's the guy who's going to fire us all." So things started out bad. And there was a biologist on

there. There was two biologists, two engineers, a cook and one deck man. There was seven of us altogether anyway, counting myself. So we left, and we was tagging striped bass for the Federal Government. That was the project. When we got ready to leave from Hampton, Virginia, I told the mate, you know, being you've been running the boat, you take it out and everything, because I didn't know the boat or nothing. We got to the mouth of the Chesapeake, and the biologist, Jim Sterling, was sitting in the pilot house. And you know, I'm trying to find out what we're going to do. So we get to Cape Henry, which is the mouth of the Chesapeake, and I says, "What are we doing?" He says, "Steer such and such a course." But he don't tell me what we're going to do or anything. So I just stopped the boat, and I said, "Hey, look. If I'm responsible for this boat, which I am, I want to know what we're doing." He said that was none of my business. So I said, "Well, I'll take this boat back to the dock right now, and we'll get Dr. Linton down here, and we'll find out whose business it is." So anyway, right away I got an idea what was wrong on the boat. He told me we were going to tag striped bass. So I said, "Well, that's fine. Where do you want to go?" And he told me, so we went there. I had caught a lot of striped bass years ago on Long Island, dragging in the fall.

So we made a tow, and the doors wasn't shining right. Nothing was working very good. So I told them, before we make another tow, I had to make a few adjustments and this and that. And this biologist says to me, "Your first day on the job and you're saying the other captain was no good." I said, "I didn't say nothing about the other captain. Everybody wants the gear the way they want it." So I decided, well, I won't make no changes that day. But to make the long story short, I think we caught twelve striped bass for the day. The fishing boats around us was catching a thousand, two thousand pounds a set, which would be an hour and a half. So I knew the gear was no good. So anyway, that night I made a few changes. The next day we did a little better, but I knew the gear wasn't fishing. So at four o'clock in the afternoon, the weather was beautiful. We were still north of Cape Hatteras, and we had left on a Tuesday morning. We worked part of Tuesday, we worked Wednesday and part of Thursday. So four o'clock -- I know the weather off Cape Hatteras. Like I mentioned, I fished there before. It was flat calm at that particular time, but I knew we was going to be in for a storm. It looked it. So the biologist, he picks up the radio, and he calls the home office. We had a direct channel that we talked to. And he says, "We'll be in four o'clock Friday." He never asked me how long

it was going to take to get from where we are or when we're going or nothing like that. To make a long story short, we come around Hatteras that night, and it was getting rougher all the time. It was a pretty good southeast breeze at that time. As a matter of fact, later on they told me they clocked 65 knots at the Diamond Shoal Tower. But anyway, we was coming around, and I knew the wind was going to come around nor'west. I wanted to get around the shoals and get up under the beach by Ocracoke and we'd be all right in the nor'wester. So I don't know, it was around ten o'clock at night, and we was going along fairly good, I mean doing some jumping with that much wind. And the pilot house windows in the boat leaked a flood. They didn't even know the windows leaked, because they never were out in no weather. So I had got all the towels we could find and stuff to try to keep the water off the electronics and catch it as [it came in]. The doors leaked. The whole thing was a mess, see. So all of a sudden the biologist comes up, and he says, "This is not a privately owned boat, it's a state owned boat -- $500,000 -- and you're beating it to death. I demand you slow down." So I said, "When we slow down, we're going to get caught in a nor'wester -- you'd have a sea from opposite directions." I says, "We're going to really take a beating." "Well, this is a state owned boat, and you can't do" -- "All

right." So I slowed it down. So I give the wheel to the mate, and I said, "I'm going to turn in. You get any problems, call me. If not, call me in the morning at four o'clock." It was about a little after ten then. So I went, and I turned in. And I noticed all the crew, except the engineer, was in the pilot house. It seemed strange to me, but I didn't think that much of it. And I went, and I turned in. But one o'clock the cook bangs on the door and wakes me up. He says, "You've got to come up top, Captain. We can't hold her." We were just going easy heading into the sea. So what happened was we got off in the Gulf Stream, and then it gets a lot rougher with the current. So I got up and went up top, and I noticed everybody was still up there and kind of nervous. So, I've never been on this boat before, and I didn't know her. The old fellow was the engineer. He used to be engineer on the bunker steamers years ago. I knew he had experience. And he seemed to be the only one decent when I got on the boat. I've only been on it a few days. So to make a long story short, I went down to the engine room -- his name was Donald Folcher. I said, "Donald, it's breezing up out of the soud'east," but I says, "According to the barometer, it's going to haul nor'west here in a few minutes. I got to drive this boat a little bit to get it inside. I understand you was at the shipyard the

whole time this boat was being constructed," which he was, "and been on it since conception really." I says, "I'm going to drive her as hard as I think. If you think I'm driving her too hard, you got throttles down here, you slow her down a little bit, because I don't know the boat. But I'm going to give it a try, to get it out of this sea." He says, "That's fine. I agree with you a hundred percent." He says, "You put it on. If I think it's too much, I'll slack it down." So we put it on her. As soon as I speeded up, this biologist comes back up to the pilot house. And he says, "I thought I told you that this was a state boat." We went through the same schmiel. I've always been bad with names, and as I said, his name was Jim Sterling. So I said, "Look, Charlie Harris, you get your ass back down in your bunk, and you stay there till this boat gets at the dock. If you come out, I'm going to lock you in your room. We'll settle this when we're to the dock. Right now I've got to worry about this boat, and I don't need you interfering." Well, this was a no no. I mean, the whole crew stood there with their mouths open, and nobody said boo. And I says to the rest of them, "The rest of you go down below. I don't need no help up here. If I do, I'll call you." So I kept her going, and the engineer never slowed her down. We got in onto the beach and come along, and the wind come nor'west, and we got in at

four o'clock the next afternoon. Well, I got to go back to the day before. We're towing these great big doors, and like I say, it was flat calm, see, when he called in and said we'd be in at four o'clock. So he told me that we was all done, and to head for Morehead City. So I says to the mate, "Well, we better secure things." Normally, on a fishing boat, you would bring the doors in and put them inside the boat and tie them down or at least have them inside the boat where they belong. No, they didn't do that. They put a block and tackle across between the two of them, which didn't look like a very good rig to me. But I says, "I'm new on the boat. I'm not going to change everything in one day." And another thing, like I say, it was flat calm. They didn't anticipate this bad weather, which I felt certain was going to come according to the barometer. So during the storm the doors broke loose. I wouldn't send nobody out there in that kind of weather, so I just had to let them fly around till they finally flew in the boat. In the process they broke a hydraulic hose which controlled the stern ramp. And we washed the flood lights off the galluses in the stern. She had what they call a captain's dinghy or some damn thing alongside, and that had a canvas cover on, and that ripped. And we broke a few light bulbs and this and that. So when we get to the dock four o'clock Friday afternoon,

I'm going to go right straight up to the office, which was at the head of the dock in Morehead City. At this time, I didn't know Jim Brown was my boss, but I knew him, because like I said, he went out on my boat. So I went up, and I found his office, and we shook hands. I asked him if I could use his phone to call Dr. Linton in Raleigh, the man who hired me. So he says, "Yes. Any particular reason?" I says, "Yes. Tell him I quit. I don't want this job." So he says, "Well, I'm your boss." I said, "Well, good. I quit. I don't want the job." So he was all upset. "Why? You can't. It's so quick," and all this. So I said, "Look, they hired me. They told me there was a problem on the boat. I know the problem already in one trip." So he said, "What's the problem?" I said, "Well, you get that biologist up here. I'm not going to talk about a man behind his back." So he got him up to the office. And I told him just what I thought, which was that he had too much to say and he didn't know nothing about what he was talking about. He might be a good biologist, but as far as seaman and all this -- So Jim Brown talked me into at least waiting until Monday. So I had to stay on the boat, because my family lived in Long Island yet. And Monday morning I went up to Jim Brown's office, and we had to go to Raleigh, the three of us -- him, this Sterling fellow, and myself. Well, unbeknown

to me, Jim Brown went and got up with all the crew over the weekend to find out what happened. They all told him how bad the weather was, and a few of them says I endangered their lives and this and that. The engineer said that under the conditions I did very good and that he'd sail anywheres with me. So there was some with me and some against me. So later on, I found out most of these people were related on that boat, which is against the state laws. You're not supposed to have relations on that kind of job, but it was cousins and uncles and all this junk. So we went to Raleigh, and we had a big blowout. I still wanted to quit, but now I was getting mad. So I decided, well, I'm going to stay long enough to get this guy Sterling fired and the mate. So I stayed a year and got the mate fired, and they put Jim Sterling on house arrest. He lasted until Christmas, but they had to do that, because he wasn't turning in the reports. And without the reports, the State couldn't get the thousand dollars a day the Federal Government was paying us to do this work. And we got the boat pretty well straightened out. I think they took him off the boat in September and put him on what they call house arrest so that he'd get them reports in. He knew he was getting fired, so he wouldn't write the reports. Finally, by Christmas, they got the reports, and they fired him. I stayed until the

first of February, which was just a year. The only reason I did that is I didn't want to disappoint the people who recommended me for the job, but I hated it. It was terrible.

JM: You were down there, and your family was in Long Island?

PR: Well no. They had moved down when school was out in the spring, and we rented a house in Newport, which is just outside of Morehead City. And funny, it was on Easy Street. That was the name of it. Then I come very friendly with Jim Brown. It was a small house we had on Easy Street. She liked it there, and so did the kids. And she says to me, "Now look at this house." And when I went to go to work Monday morning, she says, "Don't forget to stop and look at the house." I didn't look at it, because I knew I wasn't staying. We went out for ten days. When I come in, boy, she'd moved over to this house and everything. She's got the option to buy it and all this. Jim Brown moved her and got some other biologists to help him, and they all moved and everything. I was upset, because I knew I wasn't staying.

So anyway, like I say, I stayed the year, but it was a shame. Because the people in Raleigh who supplied the money wanted that boat to do good. They wanted it to help the fishermen in North Carolina find new grounds or find new fisheries or

improve anything you could. They really were sincere, but they didn't know how to go about it. And for a fisherman with no degrees or anything, the fight against biologists with their degrees and all that, it's a tough ball game. Another thing was bad was they were paying me -- they started me at $10,300. All the biologists made was $6,300. And when you work for the state, it's a grade, so it's common knowledge what everybody's making. They resented you before they knew you because you was making more money than them. And we went through five biologists in a year. I think the biggest problem was you was making more money than they was, and they couldn't accept that. They disliked you before they even knew you. It was sad.

I remember we got a new biologist from Michigan, and at that time we was tagging lobsters. We had gone just to the North Carolina-Virginia line. Actually, we was working in Virginia, but we had permission from Virginia for this lobster study to go into their waters. So we made an hour's tow and had 285 pounds of lobsters. And everything was right to the minute. You had a clock to punch for the hour and all that.

JM: Are they the same lobsters that we have up here?

PR: Yes, right. So we was dragging anywheres from 125 to 100 fathom of water around Norfolk Canyon. And then when you hauled back, they would put them in

the tanks -- saltwater tanks on deck -- and weigh them and measure them. Then we used to tag them right behind the back where the tail starts. They claimed that tag that they used, when the lobster shed, the tag would come out again. I guess it did. So anyway, this fellow was from Michigan. This was his first trip on the boat. And we had 285 pounds. So after he washed them, we would run inshore a little ways and dump some and then go outside of where we was and dump some more, you know, so you didn't dump them where you was working. So the next tow we made for and hour, and we had 283 pounds. And I don't think, in all my life, I ever had two tows of lobsters that close, only two pounds difference. It almost seemed impossible. So we dumped the lobsters in both places, get ready to set again, and this biologist come up to the pilot house. By now I had it that they weren't allowed in the pilot house unless it was business, because when I first got there, they lived there, and it wasn't right. He says to me, "Captain, you got to change the net." So I says, "Well, what's wrong with it?" He says, "Too much discrepancy between the two tows." I says, "You mean to tell me that two pounds" -- So like I say, the boy was from Michigan. He had never been on the ocean or anything. So I says, "Dennis, this is ridiculous. What do you suggest I do to the net?" He said,

"That's what you get paid $10,000 for." This is why I knew what the feelings was. So I said, "Dennis, to come within two pounds, boy, that's close. There's nothing I can do to the net. Probably somebody else might, but there's nothing I know to do." So he said, "Well, I can't do my job." I said, "Well, it's Monday morning. We're scheduled to tag lobsters till Friday. My job is to put them on the boat. Your job is to tag them. I'm going to continue to put them on the boat. If you don't want to tag them, we'll just leave them piled up there, and we'll go back to the dock with them piled up and let the boss straighten it out." So, reluctantly, he went about his tagging. Of course, when we got in, we got rid of him. But this was just the way it was. They put another biologist on named Frank Holland. Now Norfolk Canyon was about twenty-four hours from Morehead City with that boat, because you had to go around Hatteras and up. We were up there dragging, and I get a call on the radio that it's an emergency. We have to return to Morehead City right away. They don't tell me why. So I called back, and I said, "What kind of emergency?" "We can't tell you, but you've got to get the boat back here to Morehead City as fast as possible." So we hauled the nets in, and we run back. I called and asked if I couldn't put into Little Creek, Virginia, which was like eight hours from where we was. They says,

"No, you have to bring the boat back to Morehead City." They don't tell you why. Now, there's seven of us on the boat. A lot of things can happen. We all got families and everything. So we run all the way back to Morehead City. We tie up, and I run up to the office. I want to know what's the story. That biologist's dog was in heat.

[end of side two, tape four]

And that was the reason we had to come home, so --

JM: Oh boy.

PR: I mean, I'm just trying to point out some of the things on that boat that was --

JM: What did you do?

PR: Oh, I was wild.

JM: Oh, I bet.

PR: I used to quit every couple of weeks. I'd walk up there. We had a little secretary in there, elderly lady. Her name was Boots. Well, her right name was Ruth Thompson. You had to admire that lady, because she was working as a secretary, and she was in her late fifties then. She had been extremely well off a few years before. Her husband had started this Hatteras Trawlers I guess was the name of it. They built fishing boats in the Morehead City area, and they were very successful. The nearest story I got, is they built thirty or forty boats for Mexico. They finished them, and they delivered them, and somehow or other the money never come in, or it

didn't come in right. Anyway, her husband, they claimed, swindled the company or or something. He ended up -- I think he killed himself or something. It was quite a mess. And of course, this lady had to go back to work, because they lost everything they owned. (Or something like that -- or he died naturally.) Come to find out, years later, the fellow that went down to get the money, he absconded with it, and that's what broke the company. But they blamed her husband. Anyway, she was an awful nice lady. And like I told you, I never worked for nobody. But I could write a half a page letter or note, and she'd write it up for me into an eight page report. She was terrific for that. We're still good friends, today. She always told my wife, whenever they saw me walking up the dock with an envelope out of my pocket, Jim Brown would go hide, because he knew I was quitting. I'd quit all the time. I used to get so mad, because it was very frustrating.

JM: What else were they trying to tag besides the stripers and the lobsters?

PR: Oh, we tagged striped bass, and we tagged lobsters.

JM: Were they trying to find out the migratory patterns?

PR: Yes, more or less. That was it. It was a strange thing, because when you catch the striped bass, for example, you'll catch a few fluke, some weakfish, stuff like that, and everything is put in tanks. I

said to them one day, "You know, the crew is here to help the biologist." And I says, "Why don't we tag the weakfish and the fluke?" "No, we're tagging striped bass." So they would only tag one species. Maybe a month later you might go out, and they're going to tag flukes, and then you don't tag the striped bass. It was very unorganized in that respect. You just couldn't get nothing done the way it should have been done. But I will say I learned a lot on that boat how things work in a different world than fishing. To me it was like being in jail for a year.

JM: Yes.

PR: When I quit, there was a lawyer that had an awful lot to do with the funding of this whole project. They had sent us to Seattle to the Fish Expo -- the State sent me out. This lawyer went out and his wife, but he paid for his own way. He didn't go on State money. When we was in Seattle, he was asking me all kind of questions. We happened to be sitting next to eachother on the plane. And asking me a lot of questions about the boat and everything and troubles and all this. I told him everything I could honestly. When we got to Seattle, he spent -- I think we was there three days -- all the time with me. We went through the Expo together, and they'd take me out for supper and everything, you know. We got pretty friendly. Come to find

out, when he left Seattle, I went home, but he went on to Spain with his wife. But when he come back -- I didn't know, but he was very powerful in the State of North Carolina -- he went around and checked up on everything I told him and found out everything I told him was true. Everything was right. So he got up with Dr. Linton and Jim Brown and all them and told them that he thought I was doing a good job. He was very pleased, especially when he found out everything happened the way I told him. So when I quit, he says to me, "Look" -- They made me travel down to him, or they asked me to, because I give them a two weeks notice. And I went down, and he says to me, "Cap," he says, "You can fire everybody on the boat, and you can bring an all Yankee crew down -- hand pick them -- take as long as you want. Please stay." I says, "No, I just don't like it." But he tried everything, even to give me two week's severence pay, which they don't do. The excuse for that was that when the boat was in the shipyard and the crew was off, I stayed there and made sure the jobs got done and everything. He didn't want me to quit. Neither did Jim Brown and Bill Hessler and all them kind of people.

JM: What's the worst part of someone like you, who is so knowledgeable, working for a government program like that?

PR: It's hard to do something that you know is wrong.

Give you an example. He told us to rig a roller net that we was going to try to work rollers on coral, which you can't do. But it's all right -- we'll try it, you know. So he give me the diagram and told me how to rig the net. I looked it over, and I says to him, "Jim, this is upside down. You're putting the rollers on the top and the floats on the bottom." He says, "No, it's not." I went to Jim Brown and showed him. He says, "Well, I don't know nothing about nets, but if you point it out to the biologist and he still insists it's right, that's the way you've got to rig it." So I rigged it, and we went out fishing. We didn't catch nothing, which I knew we wouldn't. We had two net reels, and we had a net I had made on one net reel and this other one on the other. And I kept saying to the biologist, I says, "Well, look." He just kept putting in his reports he can't understand no fish in this area. I says, "Jim, you've got to catch trash. You've got to catch something. The net is not working." He says, "Did you rig it the way I told you?" I says, "Exactly." He says, "It's got to work." So I think we was on that project for almost a month, and it was so bad that before we went out, the cook used to buy fish at the fish market to feed us.

JM: Oh my God.

PR: So I think it was about the third week, a woman reporter from Raleigh, which is the capital of North

Carolina, was going to go out with us. So I figure, well now is my chance. So we go out, and we tow, and we don't get nothing. And the woman reporter said, "Well, I can't understand. I thought there was more fish than this." I says, "There is, but there's something wrong with this equipment." Well, this got her curious, see. So it wasn't long before I embarrassed that biologist into, "Well look, we'll put a buoy out here when we put your net overboard, and when we haul it back, we'll put another buoy. Then we'll take my net and tow it in the same place, and we'll compare them." To the girl reporter that sounded fair enough. So he was in a spot where he couldn't really refuse it. And we put the other net overboard, and I don't know, probably had a couple of thousand pounds of all kinds of junk and some good fish. But with the other net we wasn't catching nothing at all, because it was upside down. So this kind of got in the papers and everything. She wrote it up nice, you know, not to embarrass him and everything. But, this was just one of the things that you had to go through. Now to use that net upside down, knowing that it was upside down, because there's a top and a bottom to a net . . . It was just things like that, you had to do it.

Another time we come in, and like I say, there was a lot of bad feelings on the boat. We come in, and this was when I first got the job. I was living

on the boat, and I used to lock it when I left it to go up to get something to eat or something like that. I think it was the second week I was there. It was a long dock, and the conservation offices was here. They had eight biologists in that office. Law enforcement was downstairs. They had an airplane hanger here. It's for two seaplanes that the law enforcement officers used. I come in on a Monday morning. I called up to Jim Brown's office. This Jim Sterling -- it was either the second or third week I was on the job -- says an alarm clock and a fishing rod and something else was stolen off the boat over the weekend. Did I leave the boat unlocked? I says, "No, I didn't leave it unlocked." Well, now it's making like I took the stuff. So he was making a big stink out of this, this Jim Sterling. And the word got out, you know, the new captain and everything... One of the pilots saw him put that stuff in his trunk Friday afternoon. He had left the boat and come back when I went up to eat. One of the pilots happened to [see him] -- and he come forth and told Jim Brown when he heard the story.

JM: Oh, that's terrible.

PR: I thought it was nice of the guy, because I didn't even know him. I didn't know him from Adam. But he said, "Jim, he may be a Yankee, but Jim Sterling put that stuff in his truck, and if you open his trunk,

it's most probably still there." So they made him open it, and it was still there. And then he got by with the excuse that, "Oh, I forgot I put it in there."

Another time we were scalloping on these calico scallops. We went out, and we worked all day. The boat had two GM engines on one shaft for the main engines. It had a three cylinder and a four cylinder generator. The four cylinder generator was the auxiliary hydraulics; without that you couldn't work it. It worked the lifts and the booms and all that sort of stuff. The main hydraulics was off of the main engine. So it was our custom, when you towed the dredge all day, at night you would just drop it overboard and use it like an anchor. [One day] we got up in the morning and got ready to pull it up, and couldn't get the generator on, (because at night we would be on a small generator and then we'd switch over to this). [The engineer said,] "It won't turn over." He comes up, and like I mentioned, he was an old fellow, and he was very particular with his engines. And he says, "Captain, somebody's messed with my engine." I says, "What do you mean, somebody's messed with the engine?" He said, "That engine is froze up." We was only seven or eight hours from Morehead City. We managed to get the dredge back with the main engine, but we couldn't work them. Well anyway, we went in, and oh, it was

a mess. Nobody could leave the boat. The SBI, which is State Bureau of Investigation, come down. They sealed off the engine room. Then we could leave the boat. Ended up we had to take lie detector tests, everything else. The boat was idle for over a month before we could even do the job to fix it. After all the lie detector tests, it come out that the biologist did it.

JM: Why did he do that?

PR: That particular trip we had to leave him home to do some reports, and I guess he wanted to make it look like the boat couldn't operate without him or something. They couldn't fire him for that, because I think in them days lie detectors weren't legal or something. That was a real messy thing, because being I was the captain, I had to take the lie [detector]. I mean, you didn't have to. They asked you to take it. And I had to go first, you know, and I had no experience with nothing like this at all. I figured if you tell the truth . . . you know, and it was no problem. But that's just the way things went. So you could see why I didn't like that very much.

JM: Yes, I sure can. Was that whole program before or after the 200 mile limit?

PR: Before. As a matter of fact, they flew myself and the biologist to Atlanta, and I was in a Federal meeting. There were supposed to be two people from

all the coastal states from Texas to Maine. At that meeting were the discussions of what Congress had intended to do six years later. That was the first inkling I had of a 200 mile limit.

But the State really wanted that boat to do good. I was surprised at that end of it. Like I said, they used to take you up to Raleigh quite often. There was an old fellow in the budget department nobody could get along with. You could spend up to $50 for equipment on the boat a day without authorization. Anything else had to be three bids. I bought a lot of stuff in New Bedford, because I knew they were cheaper. We bought a lot of stuff all around. This old guy in the budget department, I guess he did a good job. So when I was in Raleigh, he wanted to meet with me, and he didn't know nothing about a boat, the equipment. He didn't know nothing. But he noticed that places I was buying was saving him a lot of money [than] where they had bought before I got there. So we become pretty friendly. I got him to up that $50 to $500. Because sometimes you need something, and you ain't got time for three bids -- you know, on that kind of boat. All you had to do was call him, explain it to him on the phone what the story was, and boy, he went right along with it. So he was one of the guys that everybody was really petrified of when I first got on the boat. He turned out to be

real good, because you just had to explain it to him, because he didn't know, and you know, he'd listen to reason, and he turned out... Of course, working for the State, whenever you needed something, you always went up Friday to the capitol. I had to admire this Jim Brown. He'd go up about one o'clock Friday afternoon. He'd take his jacket off and loosen his tie and [had] a big pile of papers like he's going to be there for a long time. They all want to get out of there Friday afternoon, and you could get anything you want Friday afternoon. [Chuckles] I always got a joke out of that. If you went Monday morning, you'd argue till Friday to get it --

JM: Good psychology.

PR: But if you went up one o'clock Friday afternoon, by three you had it, no problem.

JM: Where did you go after that job?

PR: I had given my two week's notice, and this Dick Paulson, who was in Portland, Maine, the year before he had got as far as Miami, Florida on his way into the Gulf of Mexico to try longlining. Nobody had ever done it in there to our knowledge. And he had some kind of engine trouble, and they gave it up, and they went back to Portland. Well, this year he went to the Gulf. He didn't get there until February, and he caught fish. While he was out fishing, he called my house on the marine operator

and told me. So I had a fellow in New Jersey running my boat, a fellow I knew for a long time. But he had a drinking problem, and he was drinking more than he was fishing, and the boat was in very poor shape when I got it back, which was right after I quit the State. We took her to the Gulf and went swordfishing. We did all right, but that was just before the mercury business. Then the mercury put us out of business. I moved the family from Morehead City to Panama City, Florida where we fished out of. And the same old story. We rented a house. Then she bought one that I never even seen. To this day I didn't see it, because when the mercury stopped us, I had to come back up here. I didn't know what to do, so I put the Scottish seine back on the boat and come right to Newport. I remember the boat was documented in Montauk. When you come to Newport, if you got an out of state check, it's pretty hard to cash them for groceries and so forth. We sold our fish to Parascandolo's right here in Newport. They give you a check. So we went to, I think it was Industrial [National] Bank there on Bellevue Avenue. I had just talked to my wife, and she told me that she was moving to this house she had just bought in Florida. So my son and I went up to the bank, an we opened a checking account. The lady says to me, "Your address, Mr. Ruhle." So I says, "Christ, lady, I don't know." I

didn't want to give her the old address, and I didn't know the new address. My son got so embarrassed, because I embarrassed him by not knowing.

JM: He was fishing with you?

PR: Yes. What I had intended to do was to find out the address and give her the right address rather than have her put one down and have to change it the next day. But I'll never forget that. You know, it's easy for Pops to embarrass their kids, I guess. So that was when we moved to Newport.

JM: About when was that?

PR: It had to be 1970.

JM: Getting back to the swordfish longlining, can you tell me about the process of the work out there when you're out on those month long trips? How many hours a day do you work, or is it twenty-four hours?

PR: Well, the way we do it is, I never let men watch over an hour and a half -- a wheel watch. In other words, I do most of the steering all day long. You have the automatic pilot, and you got the radars. You got all the equipment. At night we'll eat supper -- this is going out. The men will be working on gear all the way out. You have to keep them working, otherwise they get restless. You have them check the hooks and there's enough to keep them busy most of the day. You have your breakfast and your lunch and your supper. After supper, I'll

appoint the watches for the night. It's usually an hour and a half, and I alternate. Like if you got the first one tonight, tomorrow night you'll have the second one and the next night the third and so forth. I'm usually up by four in the morning, anyway. And it's nine o'clock by the time you go to bed. Then when you get there fishing, it's all according to how many fish you catch, how long you work. Swordfishing, you usually put the gear overboard in the evening. If there's a lot of sharks, you'll wait till almost dark. If there's not too many sharks -- which you never have too many sharks down the Grand Banks -- you might set out at four or five in the afternoon. You're going about eight mile an hour, so if you're setting twenty-four mile of gear, it's going to take you three hours to run it out and then another hour and forty minutes or so to clean up the deck and get everything secured. Then you just drift all night alongside the line, and you start to haul it in first of daylight in the morning.

JM: How long does it take to haul it in, that many miles?

PR: It's according to the amount of fish. If there's not many fish, you can haul it in four mile an hour. If there's a lot of fish, I've been twenty-four hours getting it back. Because we've had some good nights. I never did catch two hundred in a night,

but I've caught 170, 180 a few different times.

JM: Where was that?

PR: On Georges Bank I had 176 one night on only twelve miles of gear. They were kind of small fish, though. I had 180 in Laurentian Channel, which is the channel between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. I fished in there an awful lot. I used to do very good there. They were big fish. They averaged 170 some pounds if I remember right. But we was all day hauling the gear and into the night. Another time we had 170 up there. We didn't get all the gear back. A hurricane come, and we had to leave it. We just run inshore out of the path of the hurricane, then run back, and of course, the storm washed most of the fish off, but we got most of the gear back.

JM: Where did you run into? What was the closest place?

PR: No, we just run inshore. By now we had these Japanese radio buoys on the gear which you can hear for fifty mile away. And we run like forty mile. There's a good side and a bad side to a hurricane. You try to get on the good side of it, and it's not quite as bad. They move fast, so it's only a matter of maybe eight or ten, twelve hours of bad weather, and then it gets better again.

JM: What's the hardest part about that work?

PR: I guess the hardest part was dressing the fish and putting them down. See, swordfish you can't ice

when you put them down in the hold. You've got to spread them out because of their size. You've got to kind of spread them out all over the fish hold and let them chill for twenty-four hours before you can pack them in ice. Taking care of them that way -- because in them days we caught a lot of fish, so it was a lot of handling. You spread them all out. The fish hold isn't really that big. The most we ever had was 76,000 pound of swordfish. But when you pack them, you fill their belly cavity right up with ice. Then you just pile them up like cord wood. But if you fill their bellies with ice without chilling them, it would melt, and then they'd go bad, and then they'd collapse. So you've actually got to pack the ice in there real good after they chill for twenty-four hours.

JM: Pack saltwater ice in there.

PR: Yes.

JM: How many radar buoys do you have to have for that much gear?

PR: When we first started, before we had the Japanese buoys, we used to use a radar buoy every mile. We used to have real good radars. I bought some German radars, Atlas. At times we could see -- The best I've ever seen is twenty-six miles. We could see all the buoys. But they are very susceptible to the weather, too. Some days you won't see them four miles. Then we got these Japanese radio buoys. Now

we put the buoys further apart. I think the kid's [his son] got a dozen of them now. When I went, we only had three. We bought two when we first started, then we got three, and then kept building them up. But they made it a lot easier.

JM: And those fish will keep for a month iced in the hold?

PR: Yes, they keep real good, because they're all cleaned very good. The blood is cleaned out of them. There's a funny thing and it still goes on here in New England, New York. For years harpooned fish has been [considered] better than longlined. There's no difference if the fish are taken care of right. With longlining, the fish got a bad name. There's lot of boats that had never been swordfishing that got into longlining, and they didn't know how to take care of the fish. We've sold fish to the Coachman in Tiverton. The chef insisted on harpooned fish. We didn't have no harpooned fish. So you just take a tire iron and punch a hole in the back and take it to them. We've done it with Christies. We done it with a lot of restaurants.

JM: I won't tell.

PR: Parascandolos always insisted harpooned fish were better. And they're five Italian brothers down there -- the nicest people you'll ever meet and the most honest fish dealers I've met in all my life.

They were always, "Oh, the harpooned fish are better." They're old Italians and set in their ways. I guess it's six or eight years ago. We was unloading fish. We had beautiful fish -- all longline. A harpooner from Long Island, from Shinnecock, come in. And boy, his fish were bad. They didn't take care of them good. And we was unloading on one side, and they were unloading on the other. As they were weighing the fish, putting them on the pallets and putting ours on one side and his on the other, Louis Parascandolo come down -- the main boss down there. I figure, well, now is my chance. I used to sell my swordfish to Frank Wilkerson in New York, not to Louis Parascandolo, because with the mercury scare, Louis wouldn't buy fish. He wouldn't even pack them. They're that kind of people. If there was anything wrong, they weren't going to get involved. So we had to unload in Sandwich and other places like I mentioned before. Then, as things eased on it, Louis would pack the fish, but he wouldn't buy them. Finally he got to buying them, but by now I had been selling to Frank Wilkerson in New York who I sold to for years. Louis would get a set amount for packing and handling the fish, and Frank Wilkerson would buy them. But the harpooners Louis bought. And he was standing there, and our fish were beautiful, these longlined fish. This harpooned fish -- I guess

the fellow was a good experienced man, Danny Eames. The name of the boat was the Shinnecock. But I guess his crew didn't take care of them or something. I always figure it's the captain's job to make sure the crew takes care of [the fish]. But the fish were soft and very bad. Louis brought the crew over, and he says, "Phil show" -- I knew Danny Eames good. He says, "You've got to show Danny Eames' crew how to clean his fish." He says, "Them things are terrible." So it was my chance to prove to Parascandolo that it's not a question of the fish being longlined. It's just a question of the way they were taken care of, and there's no better proof than that. So to this day now, Parascandolos, their cousins have fish markets up around Johnston [Rhode Island], and they're always buying for them. When we first started, they would only take the harpooned. Now they'll take what looks good. They'll take anything. And you can get in a lot of arguments with people all over New England over -- they'll tell you that [harpooned swordfish is better.] The fellow I sold the Harry Glenn to has the Wharf Tavern -- Dave Brayton.

JM: Where is that?

PR: It's in Bristol or Warren [Rhode Island]. They'll advertise only harpooned, local swordfish. He used to buy his fish off of me (which were longlined) if he didn't catch enough himself or in off season. So

it's not a question of the fish being any better or any worse. It's the idea of how you take care of them. You can get in arguments over that -- especially up around here.

JM: People have strong feelings about that, but don't know?

PR: Yes, right. Like I say, I remember the boy delivered, I think it was three fish to that Coachman in Tiverton. The chef ranted and raged because they wasn't harpooned. The kid got out in the truck. He drove out of their parking lot, put three holes in them, rearranged the fish in the truck, waited awhile, took them back in. The next week when we delivered again or the next trip, the fellow was raving over how much better them harpooned fish were. We did that quite often. For a while, when Parascandolo wasn't buying the fish, and we had to unload in New Bedford and all over, New Bedford was --

[end of side one, tape five]

JM: New Bedford was paying a quarter more for harpooned?

PR: Right. So all we do is just before we put the fish down, put a hole in them, you know. And I told Frank Aiello who was buying them, "This is the dumbest thing you ever saw, Frank. We're taking a nice fish and just putting a hole in it for you to pay us a quarter more." So that didn't last very long. But just to have people get it in their head

that something like that is on, you know. And like I said, so many people got in the longline business that never was swordfishing, so they didn't know how to take care of them. And you just can't ice a swordfish off like you can other fish on account of its size. It takes, we figure, twenty-four hours to chill them before you pack them in ice. If you do it sooner or if you pack them right away, then the heat of the fish melts the ice. Then you get poor quality, you know.

JM: How did you learn all that?

PR: Oh, back when we was harpooning you always did it that way. You used to put salt on wherever you cut them years ago, but we got away from that.

JM: What did the salt do?

PR: I don't know. I guess it was to preserve them. You only put it on wherever you cut the fish like the harpoon hole and the belly cavity and things like that -- where you cut the head off, you know.

JM: What did you do with the sharks that did get on the lines?

PR: We used to cut them off most of the time. If the boat was rigged right and you had a good crew, you could usually save the hook. Of course, sometimes sharks would get so bad, especially when we first started, we were slower hauling. The sharks would get so bad that they could sink the gear. When that happens, you have to just cut them off as quick as

you can to try to save the gear. I have lost some gear where sharks sunk it and things like that.

JM: What other problems do you have out there with the gear, things that can hurt the gear?

PR: Ships go through it, but they're no big problem. I mean, they just might part it. Sometimes they'll go over it. When we first started in the sixties, I think at one time, there was sixty-five Canadian boats fishing with us. Most all of them were really gentlemen to fish with. There was quite a few American boats. But if you're running out like thirty -- in them days we fished twenty odd mile of gear -- we never tried to get closer than a mile to eachother. In other words, you could set down a mile apart -- two boats or three or four boats. What you do swordfishing is, as the warm water is moving in in the spring, the fish are coming in with it. When it meets the cold water, that's where they stop. The sharper the change is -- like if you can go from say sixty degrees to forty-five or forty-eight, something like that, in a very small area -- that's where the fish will be. So you try to get in that edge. And usually the boat that's right in it will do the best, and the boat outside him will do less and so forth. In the old days, you never had no problem. If you was going to set the twenty odd miles, you talked it over with the boats, and you set. Now they'll set in front of you. They

set across you. It's an altogether different [mentality] since all them Florida boats got in it -- boats that I don't think were too familiar with longlining and everything. And you've got a bunch of Texas boats in it. It's really bad now. In the old days, sometimes you'd get hooked with another boat. The gears would drift together or something. You'd watch very carefully, and if the fish was on that man's hook, all you'd do is tie a knot around it and throw it back overboard after you got it untangled from your gear, and they'd do the same for you. But no more now. Some swordfish will float on the gear. I've had boats run down the gear and actually take them off, which is something you never saw years ago. It was like fishing with gentlemen years ago. But that's all changed. The Canadians used to be very good to fish with, most of them. Of course, you had a few bad Americans, and you had a few bad Canadians. But most of them were real good to fish with. But all that's changed now. Now you can say you're going to set out twenty miles, and somebody will go five mile in front of you and throw a buoy or something. It really makes messes now which you didn't used to have.

JM: And there's nothing that can be done about that?

PR: No, not really. After they've fished a few years, they usually straighten out a little bit. It's when they're first starting they don't want to

[cooperate]. My son told me now it's getting a lot better than it was. But also, the Texas boats are all out of it. Texas boats is very bad. I'm very anti-Texan with everything. They have a very bad attitude, you know, like everything is bigger and better or something. I don't know. And there was a lot of Texas boats got in it. Nearest I know, they're all out of it now.

JM: Why are they out of it?

PR: They couldn't make a go of it.

JM: What's the furthest east you've ever done that?

PR: We ended up twelve hundred miles from Ireland. But my son last year was only 585 miles from Ireland, so they're going further every year, which we was doing too, when I was swordfishing. The fish got less and less, and you went further and further to catch them. See, when you're up that way, you're drifting in the Gulf Stream. So every night you're drifting. When I first went up there, if we didn't catch thirty-five fish in a night, we moved. And in them days the fish was averaging 200 pound, 208 pound. In other words, when I left here and went to the Grand Banks, when I set out, it was already in my mind if I didn't have thirty-five or better, I would move from that area, because I felt I could do better. Now, if you get a thousand pound a night, you don't move. And thirty-five fish then would be 7,000 pounds.

I think I was down there for three years before American boats come down there. That fellow from Portland, Maine had fished down there before I went there, before we even went to the Gulf of Mexico. But what happened there, when Food and Drug stopped us with the mercury, he went to Nicaragua to try potting these crawfish. I understand the boat got washed up on the beach down there. But he stayed there. He ended up divorcing his wife in Portland and everything else. I never really got the full story. His father was one of the best fishermen in New England -- Harold Paulsen his name was. In 1974, when we went back swordfishing, and we was doing good, I called his father to see if he couldn't get up with Dick, his son. But he said he was still in Nicaragua, and he only come home once a year. I guess it was last year, I went up to Portland to see this friend that I used to gillnet with many, many years ago who was this boy's uncle. And he says he still does -- he just comes home and sees his mother and father once a year. So whatever he found in Nicaragua, I guess he liked.

JM: What kind of a person does it take to be able to go on those long trips and work like that?

PR: Well, I like to have single men if I can.

JM: Really.

PR: But like I told you this morning, that John Erickson who used to fish with me from Montauk, he was very

good. And his son fished with us, Brucie Erickson. Before that I had two men that used to fish with me in Baldwin, which was a long, long time ago. They were very good. Now today, it's terrible. The manpower situation is horrible. I've got one fellow with me fifteen years. He's the cook and the engineer and everything else. He's from Florida. He's an elderly man. He lives on the boat. he's divorced from his wife. He's been with me ever since I got this boat, and he was with me on the other boat. The reason he was with us, he called me up. It was a funny thing. We was fishing out of Panama City, Florida. We still had the Harry Glenn. Some way or other, he got my phone number, and he called my house. Asked if he could go out with us. He had been running a red snapper boat out of Cape Canaveral, Florida. He was part owner in it, or just running it. They had bought this swordfish gear, and they wanted to see how it was done. We lived in Newport then. The only reason I was home was I had heard that the Audrey Lynn was going to be for sale. So I left my son, Phil, in Panama City running the Harry Glenn. And his name is the same as mine -- Phil. So this fellow, Jim, had called quite often. Finally he got a hold of me when I was home, and I says, "Yes, you could go out with us." I told him where the boat was, but I forgot to tell my son, Phil. So Phil was down there doing some

work on the boat, and this Jim come walking up. He's a great big man, well over 300 pounds. And he says, "Are you Phil?" The kid says, "Yes." So Jim's thinking he's talking to me, and it wasn't. It was my son who I forgot to tell. So they got that straightened out, and he went out with us. At that time, I had two Portuguese boys from Newport and Middletown. One of them is a captain on the boat down to Parascandola's now.

JM: Joe Garcia?

PR: Right. And the other fellow was Manny, and they were very good workers.

JM: Who was Manny?

PR: Manny lived in Middletown.

JM: Is he still here?

PR: Yes, but he does construction work.

JM: Oh, not Manny Silvia?

PR: No, Manny Alvernas. He was a short fellow -- good workers, both of them, real good. They were with me three or four years. They were real good. And then at that time Jim was there and a couple of my kids. So we had a pretty good crew then. But now, boy, it's unreal.

JM: Is there trouble out there with drinking and people using drugs?

PR: No. I don't allow nothing to drink, and they're not supposed to bring drugs. As a matter of fact, I have a typewritten paper that Pat Hayes, the lawyer,

drew up for me. It's saying that they've brought no drugs on the boat and that I have permission to search their belongings and their person. It's no guarantee, but like when the Coast Guard boards you and you show them this, at least the Coast Guard knows you're trying to do something. As a matter of fact, a couple of times the Coast Guard have asked me for a copy of it when they board. They asked if we had a blank.

Every man that gets on has to sign that, and now they got to sign an injury report or a history, because we've had two bad suits against us that were very phoney. That's the insurance company's fault, because they give in too easy and pay them. They'll sue you for $500,000, and they'll settle for $4,000. The last one, the guy sued us for $250,000, and he settled for $4,000. The insurance should have fought it, because he goes to the bar, and he tells people how he made $4,000 so easy. I was very upset with that, because I had fought with the insurance company to fight it. They guaranteed me they were going to fight it. I was in Florida on vacation. I had to break my vacation up, come home, because it was going to be in court Tuesday morning. And Monday we flew up from Florida. We talked with the lawyer in Providence. Everything was all set. We're going to court. To show you how nice people are, this fellow that -- I'm not going to mention names,

but it was a local man. When he come in on the boat, he claimed he hurt himself, hurt his shoulder. He had two different doctors treating two different shoulders. When he got off the boat, I told him that I was going to take him right to Newport Hospital and have him checked. We didn't even get the boat tied secure to the dock. He jumped off and run up the street. I never seen him again until he sued me. When he run up the street, he went in Mary Salas', which is a local bar. And there was a fellow sitting in there that knew this boy a little bit. And he says, "What are you doing in? I thought you was going to be out for a week." Because we had just gone out and had to come bring him back. And this fellow was in the Navy. And he says to him, "My girlfriend is a school teacher, and she's got an extra day off, and I wanted to be home with her." Well, this fellow got out of the Navy by the time we went to Court, but he offered his services. We had a lot of witnesses like that that this was a real phoney set up. We got to the lawyer's office Tuesday morning, my wife and I, in Providence. We were all set. The phone [rang]. He asked to call the insurance at the last minute, and they says, "No, settle for $4,000." See now they could have beat this and discouraged this being sued, but they didn't. I was very upset over that.

I mean, I've had people hurt on the boat.

You're bound to. My son got banged around. They had to take his spleen out. Big Jim's had his nose broke, he's had numerous fingers broke, he hurt his back and everything, but never no suits. The way I worked it, if a man got hurt, he got paid the same share until he was able to come back, which I would take out of the boat or my own share.

JM: Is that what you called that man, Big Jim?

PR: Yes. James Dagley his name is. But like I said, he's big, so we call him Big Jim.

JM: Have you ever been hurt?

PR: Oh, broken fingers and stuff like that -- nothing serious.

End of Interview.

Interview with Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society, Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, by Jennifer Murray, October 9, 1987.

MURRAY: It's October 9, 1987. This is my fourth interview with Mr. Philip Ruhle.

I'd like to ask you a few more questions about the swordfish longlining. Could you tell me what life was like on those long trips, what it was like at sea?

RUHLE: I think it was nice. It was easier than the short trips, because the most aggravation, in later years was trying to keep a crew together to get out. Once you got them out on a long trip, it usually worked all right. There was no place they could go, so you was out there. I kind of liked it. It made it much easier fishing, I thought, as far as the captain's way of looking at things. Because you didn't have to worry about keeping the crew together and men getting in trouble when you got in. You could really concentrate all your efforts on the fishing. I think that helped a lot too. You kind of get into a routine, and it went along pretty good. The time would go by pretty quick. You'd be surprised. Always fed the men. We always ate very good. That was very important.

JM: What kind of food do you feed them?

PR: Oh, the same as you [have at home] -- roast beefs, steaks, chops, and fish sometimes. We always ate

very good. Like for six men, he used to cook eighteen eggs and a couple pounds of bacon -- things like that. He didn't make homemade bread, but I mean he made these frozen biscuits and things like that, you know. I found it was very important to see that the men were fed good. Of course, in later years you had a lot more comfort. The boats were air-conditioned, which really makes it nice, because it keeps all the dampness out. To me the air-conditioning was very important. We had one in the pilot house and one down below. The one in the pilot house kept all the electronics dry, so you didn't have the dampness, which is a terrible problem for electronics. The one down below kept it, you know, so you didn't get no smell in it. I was very particular. The men aren't allowed inside the door with their boots on or their oilskins or nothing. There's a rack in the engine room for them to hang their stuff. That way it gets dried, too, from the heat of the engines. But I was very particular on cleanliness. As soon as they come off the deck, they had to go in the bathroom and wash their hands to get the salt off mainly, because it was a steel boat. Whatever they touched, if they had salt, if their hands were wet, then it would get like the top of the salt shaker, [it would] stick. So cleanliness was a problem. I used to supply their towels and the sheets and the pillowcases.

I'd tell them they had to change them twice a week at least. They weren't allowed in the bunk with their clothes on, things like that. Trying to keep six other men clean was a small problem -- not really a problem -- but you had to be kind of strict on it. I guess it's very easy for them to figure, tomorrow's going to be the same thing. So they could get in a rut that way. But by being strict -- I guess you'd call it strict -- but that way you could keep things clean and neat, and that made it a lot better. In the later years, the boat carried plenty of fresh water. Had a dishwasher, which to me was very good. When we first started, we used to wash the dishes in saltwater, because we didn't have enough fresh water. We used to use a lot of ammonia, which helped. You'd boil up the saltwater and wash the dishes in ammonia. I found, once we got the dishwasher, that like if one guy got a cold, it didn't go through the whole boat the way it used to or if one guy got sick a little . . . It surprised me. My wife always told me that, but I didn't realize it until we got the bigger boat and then put the dishwasher in it. It really made quite a difference.

JM: That was on the Audrey Lynn?

PR: Right. Because she carried the fresh water and had the 110 generators and all that stuff.

JM: What other conveniences?

PR: Tape players and music things, which I never went in for much, but the men had them. As a matter of fact, now they got the VCR's. We had that the last probably six, seven years or so. So that kills a little time. There's a television in the pilot house and one in the galley, one in the captain's room and one in the mate's room. Sometimes there was one up forward.

JM: Was there much time for things like watching TV?

PR: Going and coming sometimes. They would watch it some. Or if you had a bad day like the weather was too bad to fish and you was drifting around or something, that used to kind of get on the men's nerves. But also it worked out pretty good on the long trips, because you could fish rougher weather than you would normally, because you was out there anyway. In the beginning of the trip, if you got a bad day, you might drift and not fish. But after that, you could fish the same kind of day, because the men were pretty tired of this. They didn't go for this drifting too much. But if you didn't drift the one day and you tried to fish, they'd kind of moan and groan that it was too rough to fish, and you shouldn't be fishing and this and that. But after you get a fifty, sixty mile an hour breeze and you drift that day, then the next time you had a fifty, sixty mile an hour breeze, there was no complaining if you did fish. Of course, if you was

catching fish, you would fish rougher weather. When we got fishing to the east'ard, there was always the problem with the hurricanes. But we had the Fax machine on the boat. I put that on when they first come out. That was a very good piece of electronic equipment.

JM: What is that? I don't know about that. What's it called?

PR: A Fax a weather Fax. It prints out the weather charts. I don't know. You've probably seen them on television -- the fronts and everything. The Navy puts it out in Norfolk. That's on twenty-four hours a day, but it only gives the weather you're interested in every six hours. But Nova Scotia in Canada puts out one every four or five hours I think it is. They also put out the sea temperature chart to tell you the water temperature.

JM: That'd be important for you.

PR: Yes, it was, and it kind of hurt us a lot. Actually, electronics hurt the old time fishermen a lot. Water usually follows a set pattern. For a few years we would be down to Grand Banks. Like I said before, we was the only American boat down there for a couple of years. Gradually more and more came. But from previous years, I knew about when the water should be where, and that was a big advantage as far as catching fish. Then when these weather Fax machines come out and the temperature

chart comes out -- the Canadian government puts out a temperature chart -- it used to be once a week, but now it's updated twice a week -- and they're putting them out in this country a lot now too -- then anybody could find the water. They get it from the satelites. It was very good for the younger fellows or the people just starting, but it hurt the old timer, because all you learned, you learned the hard way. Electronics made it real bad for the old timers. They had to learn everything the hard way, which took quite a few years. And then the electronics come along, the advanced age, and what took you ten years to learn, he [the younger fisherman] could learn in a couple of months. So in some ways it made it easier, but in some ways it wasn't quite as much help. Of course, when we first started going down, you used to catch a lot of fish, so a lot of times the men were very busy working. I've seen where we couldn't set the next night for the amount of fish we caught the night before. Like one time we had ninety-six big fish and the next night we had a hundred and twenty-six. So I couldn't fish the next night even though the fish were there. Because the ninety-six, they just finished getting them down the hold and all dressed out when it was time to start. I think they had an hour's sleep -- they finished at four in the morning. I let them grab an hour till five before

we started taking in the next gear. We didn't get that in until past midnight. It was aggravating at times. When you're fishing down there, just say you figure to fish twelve or fourteen nights, you might spend six or seven finding the fish or eight nights finding the fish. Then you do good after that. Then when you find them and you can't fish on them again, you know. . . That particular time, if we could have got one more night in, we could have been on our way home with the boat pretty well full. I have had 76,000 pound of swordfish in the boat. But when I'm down the Grand Banks, I don't like to put much over sixty, because it's a long ride home. I just felt 60,000 was a good trip anyway, very good. When I figured I had 60,000, I used to start home. Sometimes I've seen it in five nights fishing, and I've seen it in twenty nights fishing. But if we was fishing closer to home, I'd put more fish in the boat. I wouldn't worry about the weight. But it's a long ride from here to the Grand Banks, especially in the fall of the year. Of course, like I mentioned before, the weather Fax , you could plot these hurricanes pretty good, and you always try to get on the good side of them. A hurricane is not so bad like it sounds, because they're really usually not that big of an area. I've been oh, a hundred mile away from a boat, and they were in the middle of a storm, and we had no wind at all sometimes.

JM: Yes. Did you keep it to 60,000 pounds for safety?

PR: Yes. Of course, you didn't run into this too often anyway, and later years you don't run into it at all. But when we first started fishing down there, that's a long ride home, and 60,000 was quite a lot of weight. The boat was only actually 67 foot -- 75 overall. Like I said, we did have 76,000, but that was caught off Nova Scotia where it wasn't the long five day ride home.

JM: What are the worst seas you've ever been in?

PR: Hard to say. Pretty rough, I guess. We had one storm down the Grand Banks. See, you've got the Gulf Stream there, and the current is very strong, and if you get the wind against the current, it gets a pretty big sea. I think one time there, we had to just sit there and hold her head into the sea I think it was thirty some hours, thirty-six hours or so. I couldn't judge how big, but it was rough. Another time, we was in a storm off Nova Scotia, they clocked 125 mile an hour winds on land. I think there was three or four boats lost in that storm, but we didn't have no troubles. But you know, I found in later years, the storms don't seem to last as long as they did when I was younger. Unless it's you're out there and as soon as it starts to get nice, you start to fish. Maybe before, I just think the storms lasted long because you'd be in, and then you'd wait till it died out,

and you'd go out. Where if you was out, you might only lose two days. If you was to the dock, you'd probably lose four or five. And then some trips you had beautiful weather the whole time. A lot of fog -- always fog down that way.

JM: On the Grand Banks?

PR: The Grand Banks area, because you're usually fishing where the warm water meets the cold which causes fog. But I've seen twenty-six day trips never see the sun -- foggy the whole time. Then later on in the year it would get so it was beautiful.

JM: How is that for the men when you have a twenty-six day trip and it's foggy the whole time?

PR: They don't seem to mind it that much. You know, they're busy working. They don't notice it. I think it's harder on the captain, because it's harder to keep track of things. You've got to watch and your head's in the radar a lot more and so forth. But if it's clear, you don't have that problem.

JM: Are there any superstitions and things that you know about?

PR: Don't ask that question. I'm very superstitious. I am -- very, extremely. I can't tell you the reason why, but I'm very superstitious. I wouldn't let a man on with a black suitcase, and I never sailed on a Friday.

JM: What is the thing about the black suitcase?

PR: I don't know. Somebody told me you're not supposed

to years ago, and I don't do it, and I don't let a man whistle on the boat. There's quite a few of them.

JM: Have you ever been on a boat when people have broken those things and there's been trouble?

PR: Well, I tried going out on a Friday a couple of different times, and we always had breakdowns or something go wrong. I don't know. I guess if you get by, as long as you get by believing the superstitions that you believe in -- you're getting by and things are going good -- I think the stronger the superstitions get. Whenever I leave the dock, I always turn to starboard the first turn. You never say the animal with the curly tail. [pig] You never say that on a boat, never. I've always been a very strong believer in that one. You know, some don't. As a matter of fact, probably if a guy said it within the first twenty-four hours, I'd bring him back. And most of the men respect you. They may not believe it. I imagine they might say it when you can't hear them or something. [I'm] kind of very superstitious I think.

JM: Does that get worse the further you have to go?

PR: No. I guess it's like I said, the longer you go and things go smooth . . . A friend of mine out of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia fished twenty-eight years, and he had 28 dories on deck -- an old schooner man. He was very superstitious, and in twenty-eight years

he never lost a man. I always thought of that. His name was Owen Creser. He fished out of Lunenberg, but the surprising part, he was born in Brooklyn. I guess his family moved to Nova Scotia when he was very young or something. We used to swordfish together in later years. It always amazed me, and it was easy to remember, because he went twenty-eight years with twenty-eight dories. In them days they didn't have the radar or nothing. They fished in the fog and down the Grand Banks all the time. And it always amazed me to go that long, and he never lost a dory or a man or nothing. And he was very superstitious, so that only builds up a younger fellow's superstition, you know. I guess that's why you get your superstitions and that's why they grow. I really don't know. I would never go to sea with a woman on a boat either. I don't believe in that. Maybe I'm prejudiced or whatever you want to call it, but I just -- they're bad luck on a boat for my money. One trip I did take my daughter-in-law to Florida. She wanted to see how it was, and she had come down to see my son. But it wasn't a very long trip, and I didn't particularly care for it myself. But, like I said, I'm probably old-fashioned. Because nowadays a lot of boats have women crews and everything. I don't go for that. So that's about it on the superstitions.

JM: What were your quarters like?

PR: Really nice. When we first went on the longer trips -- like with the Harry Glenn, we would go I think thirty some days was the longest. That boat didn't carry the fuel, and we only had 300 some gallons of water, so you can figure . . . That's why we used to do the dishes in saltwater. You would have four men sleeping up top and three down below, but it would all be in a very small area. On the big boat there is three different staterooms for the crew. There's four bunks in the forward room, two in the mate's room and one in my room. It was much easier living, a lot of comfort. And then the boat was a very, very good sea boat. Well, I've been lucky. All my boats have been very good sea boats. That's important. After you get in a real bad storm and you don't have no trouble, you get a lot of faith in the boat. So do the men. Then stories get around how long you been doing it and everything else, and I think it gives the men a good feeling of security. But a good boat is very important. I think preventive maintenance on the boat is very important. I guess the longer you fish, the more you know about things breaking and everything. A lot of times, when you go fooling around with this and that, you find things that would have probably broke if you didn't fix them. That I think, is very important. Try to go the longest you can go without

breakdowns. Financially, if you fit out for a Grand Banks trip, oh, seven or eight years ago, you was talking over $20,000 expenses. If something happened and you had to come in, you'd probably add another $10,000 or $12,000 to that, not counting the expenses to fix whatever broke. So you used to rebuild the engine every time you thought it needed it before it actually broke. If you figured you had 12,000 or 14,000 hours on the engine and things didn't sound -- Well, I had a very good mechanic, and I kind of left it up to him. Ride up and down a couple of times even if nothing was wrong just to look around and check things out. When he thought you might get next year out of it, and you might not, then we'd overhaul it, because you try to keep up on things like that. And you try to have back-ups for everything. Like right now there's three lorans, and we had a satellite navigator. You need a lot of extra equipment on them long trips than you would if you was, not day fishing, but close by -- two or three day trips. It's confusing when you start, because you steam usually five or six days to the Grand Banks. Then you start fishing. But you're going to the East'ard all the time in that current, and you can end up ten or twelve days. You can end up actually twice as far as where you start. Now, when we first started going down there, Loran C wasn't out yet, and Loran

A was no good down there. You'd only get one bearing in the daytime. So you had to kind of use, I guess you call it dead reckoning. You'd find the Grand Banks on the one bearing and the sounding machine. But then we're always fishing off the soundings and we're fishing in deep water. Sometimes, if you fished ten, twelve nights, maybe after the first night you really wasn't sure where you was. I mean, you had a general idea. But it's not like today where you got the Loran C. You know exactly where you are all the time. That made a difference. I mean, you had no idea how far you drifted. I remember one time, I think we fished six nights. We had started just outside the thousand fathoms down on what you call the tail of the Grand Banks, which is the Sou'west corner of it. And I think, in five nights fishing, it took us something like forty odd hours to get back to soundings, just back to the Grand Banks. In them days we used to just steam her up in the Nor'west, because we knew we was off on the east side of the Grand Banks, you know, Soud'est and you'd be going to the East'ard. We knew that. But it was surprising sometimes, but you never had problems. Nowadays, like I say, we put in a satellite navigator, but I wasn't happy with that thing. As a matter of fact, I finally took it off. Of course, they've improved. Now we've got a Loran station in Greenland that you can

use. Even when Loran C first come out, it wasn't that good down the Grand Banks, but it was better than none. But now I think the last four or five years, they've improved the Canadian stations, and you use the Greenland station when you get down there. So you know pretty well where you are all the time now, which is different than it used to be.

JM: Did you learn all that as you went along?

PR: Yes, just trial and error. Like I said before, fishing was good when we first went down there. And I never particularly cared to catch small fish if I could help it. They're not worth as much. I don't like to kill the little ones. Like when we first fished the Grand Banks, we used to average over 200 pounds, but as the fishing pressure increased, the average went down. Now they're down I believe someplace around 100 pounds. I think the last year I went we had 140 pound average. No, we got less than that. We got 120 the last year, I think it was. And to me that's a sign of overfishing, when the overall average starts to go down.

JM: Do you fish different grounds at different times of year?

PR: Yes. We only fish the Grand Banks from May until October. We used to have good fishing on Georges Banks. Sometimes we wouldn't have to go to the Grand Banks till maybe July. When they started this offshore lobster potting, that hurt us swordfishing

a lot, more in the fall than in the spring. Because in the fall of the year, when we first started, and that's when a lot of Canadians was in it -- wasn't too many American boats then -- you used to start right up on the 90 fathom, and you'd drift off overnight with your gear. And really, to catch the fish, it wasn't two miles wide -- the area. I remember we come out of Newport and run off here to what you call Vearches Canyon, south of Nantucket, and got on the radio and talked to the Canadian boats and the American boats. Vearches was the Northeast end of it. The next opening that a fellow could have got a set in in that two boat wide area was down below Norfolk. In other words there was boats from Vearches -- the northern boats -- and the southern boats were down in Norfolk Canyon. But like I mentioned once before, you used to have good communications, and you fished with good people in them days. You know, maybe a fellow would say, "Well, I only got one more night, and I'm going to go home. If you want to come here, by the time you get here, I'll be ready to go home. You can take over my set." Something like that. And if you did that, the boat outside of him would move in, and you'd go where that fellow was, because the inside boat always did the best. But after they got all these offshore pots, you can't do that no more. They're fishing from 90 to a couple a hundred

fathoms. You can't get in that area no more, because they got their pots there.

JM: And they leave them there, don't they?

PR: Yes, yes. So that really knocked our fall fishing out a lot. I've caught swordfish off here in snowstorms in January and February. It was good. But you can't do that no more.

JM: By off here, do you mean on the --

PR: Off Rhode Island and Long Island. We used to fish Hudson Canyon right up until the middle of January. And now, you just can't get there for the lobster pots. You do damage to your swordfish gear, and you do damage to the pots if you get in it. The gear don't fish once it gets in the pots. It tears the fish off, so you're better off staying away from it. But that hurt the fall fishery, I think, more than any other time.

JM: Was there another place to go?

PR: No, not really. Because if you went outside of that, you didn't catch the fish for some reason. It seemed that the biggest majority of the fish, in my opinion, used to get to that 90 and 100 fathom and they'd follow that right on down to North Carolina. That's what we used to think, anyway. I don't know if that's right. As the warm water moved back off in the fall and down, the fish would follow it. If you set out, like over the thousand fathom, you wouldn't do much. If you could set it in 90 to 150

fathom, I guess you'd say -- because you always drifted off. It always went offshore during the night, you know.

We'd leave the Grand Banks. Then we'd fish Georges, and we'd work our way down to Hatteras. Then from Hatteras, we used to, most of the time, jump around into the Gulf of Mexico. When we first found them fish in the Gulf, we stayed there a whole year, fished them year around. But it was pretty tough in the summer for the sharks, pretty tough for all year.

[End of Tape 6, Side A]

And if you stayed on the East Coast and tried to fish between Hatteras and Florida, which we did for a few years, you get back into them ripe females and small fish, which wasn't really that exciting. You didn't have to kill them. You could fish in the Gulf and do all right. And in the Gulf you got much better weather. I think we fished there one year and had only two or three nights we lost for weather. There was more bad nights than that. Whenever we was out, I think we only had to lose two or three nights that one year, that one winter. That was very good. A lot of time when you was fishing down there, you wouldn't stay out as long as you would up here. In other words, if you got a bad storm coming and you had twelve, fifteen, eighteen thousand pounds of fish in the boat, you might go in

and get them out. Figuring you're going to lose time with the storm, you might as well go in and get the fish out and then start over. So that was another reason why the weather seemed better -- you wouldn't lose the time. Of course, as more and more boats got in it, it got harder and harder. I'm very anti-Texan for some reason. When you got Texas boats in it, they wouldn't cooperate with you. I know as a fact they used to come up here and when they got on Georges, they'd just go and cut all the lobster buoys off so they wouldn't be in their way and things like that. And of course, the lobster men come out, and then all the swordfishermen are bastards because the buoys are gone. And you wouldn't tell them it was the Texans, but it was. I talked to crews that worked on them, and rather than take the chance of getting tangled in them, they'd just go cut them all off. That was things that you never did if you was an old timer. Like I mentioned before, I've been hooked up with Canadians. You don't even see the boat, and if the fish was on my hook, we would keep it, and if it was on theirs, we'd just put a hitch around the tail and let it overboard, and they'd do the same. I mean, I've hauled gear and all of a sudden you come to a fish and he's all tied up around the tail, and you can see where he's been banged up or marked up a little. They would do the same. Nobody would ever touch

another man's fish in the older days, but that don't hold true now. Might be there's a lot more boats.

JM: When you say that a trip cost $20,000, what did that $20,000 cover?

PR: That was back before the fuel went up. You'd probably burn over 10,000 gallons of fuel. The grocery bill used to be somewheres close to $2,000. I used to take 15,000 pounds of bait, of mackerel, sometimes 16,000 pounds. You'd be paying a quarter or thirty cents -- usually around a quarter [a pound] for that. And you know, your other expenses. It adds up pretty quick.

JM: What kind of a living did those men on the crew make?

PR: Oh, they could do pretty good -- somewheres between $18,000 and $25,000 if they stayed. That was good back in them days, you know.

JM: Yes, around when was that?

PR: Oh, mid-seventies. When I first started swordfishing, I got as low as twenty-four cents for big fish in February when we was unloading in Carolina -- when we first caught them off Carolina. That would have been 1964 or 1965. I guess it was after 1976 that fish started to go real high. We used to be happy to average a dollar a pound. That would be like in the early seventies. If you averaged a dollar and you got 60,000 pound, that'd be a $60,000 trip. That'd be pretty good in them

days.

Now it's, boy, a lot of money, but they're not catching the fish. Like the boy just now put into Newfoundland. He was gone from here a little over a month, and he sent I think it was 15,000 pound home with another boat, which we didn't used to do, but we're doing it now. You know, this boat was coming home anyway. So my son met him in Newfoundland, and that's legal. You have to get the customs down, but it's legal. And you just take your fish off of your boat and put them in the other boat. But in the old days you couldn't do that, because your boat was full, and the other guy would probalbly be full. You didn't have the room. But that's when there was a lot more fish. I think the summer before last my son was ninety some days away from home because he kept doing that. I think it was ninety-four days they told me, yes, ninety-four days. I don't agree with that. The men, you're not going to keep them happy. As it was, everytime you'd get in, some guy is going home. Another is coming up. You fly a guy up to St. John, Newfoundland, you're talking $300 or $400. And you paid a lot of money for everything in Newfoundland. It's very expensive. This time, here, fuel was pretty good, he said. It was about the same as American. You get five quarts to the gallon, and I think he said it was $1.20 Canadian money. So that would bring it compatible with ours

at 70 odd cents. But I've seen the time where it was I think $1.60, American, for a five quart gallon, so you didn't save that much. In later years, my son was running a boat for a company, and that boat he had was the same size as mine, but it was built for shrimping off South America, and it had a tremendous fuel capacity. I think he carried 20,000 gallon or something, which he never would burn. So as the trips got longer and the fish got harder to catch, we would work out the timing that he'd be going home, and I'd still be staying out. He'd come alongside. We'd throw a rope, and we'd tow him along easy. We'd have a hose and electric pump, and he'd be pumping fuel from his boat into mine -- three or four thousand gallons, sometimes five thousand. That way you wouldn't have to go in for fuel, which earlier you wouldn't have to do, because by the time you burned up your fuel, you usually had your trip. But now it's got so you don't, because you're going further and looking harder. Also, we put a bigger engine in the boat after -- I think I bought it in 1974. In 1978 I bought a bigger engine. It burned more fuel, but you went faster. Another time my other son -- he owns a 90 foot boat in North Carolina -- he didn't have an ice machine, and we did. So I've seen us taking these, I think they call them olive barrels, these plastic barrels that you see around the docks.

We always carried a couple of them that the cover fit on good and tight. We used to transfer ice. You know, you'd fill the barrel up on your deck and then throw it overboard, and they'd have a rope on, and they'd haul it in on theirs. That was a slow procedure, transferring ice. One time we transferred fish from my son's boat to mine in the ocean, but that was pretty tough. It just happened to be a real smooth day, and we tied up alongside each other. But that's still risky; you're banging together and things like that. I guess [it's] because I'm older, but I figure once you put in close to forty days, it's time to come home -- hope you got the fish, that's all.

JM: How long do you stay home or did you when you would put the trip on?

PR: When we first started, like I said, when I had a good crew -- Joe Garcia, Manny, Big Jim and a few of my sons -- they kind of understood fishing. You could be out for twenty or thirty days, and you was doing real good near the end of it. They would think nothing of coming in and getting the fish out and be back out in two days on your way. It's pretty tough to do it now. I think you'd lose about half of the crew. But them fellows understood.

I remember one time we was fishing the Laurentian Channel, which is between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. In the fall of the year, the fish

come out of there, and there's one area we used to fish called Hospital Ground. I don't know why it's named that, but the Canadians named it. You can get a couple of trips there -- real good fishing. I guess I caught more fish there than anyplace I ever fished. An old timer -- that fellow I told you about from Lunenburg -- he told me how to fish it, because he retired. If you fished it right -- I'm trying to think now -- I know we had over 100 fish. Just before we got ready to set out, a boat from Maine come. This fellow was running Canadian fish. By that I mean, when the government stopped us with the mercury, it put the Canadian boats right out. Their government give them a subsidy to get into different fisheries, but a few of them stayed swordfishing, and they were selling to American boats. I didn't approve of that. It went against my grain altogether, because part of fishing in the old days is you knew when the boats were going in. You tried to spell it so that you could get in when there wasn't too many boats. But when they started running these Canadian fish, you never knew. It was illegal, so they weren't talking. You didn't know just when. I mean, you could sit and figure, well, I've got 50,000, 60,000 pound, and nobody's gone in this week or the beginning of this week or something, so I'll shoot for the market. And you get in, and you find out there's a load of Canadian

fish been smuggled in. We called it smuggled. This particular boat I knew was smuggling Canadian fish. I had come on him in the fog one time, and he was transferring the fish from the Canadian boat, so there was no doubt in my mind that he was doing it. But anyway, like I say, this old fellow taught me how to fish that place. I know we had over 100 fish. Before we set out, he [the smuggler] asked me how I was going to set, and I told him such and such. So he says, "I can either go inside of you or outside of you." I said, "Yes, suit yourself. If you go inside me, you're going to be in cold water. If you go outside, you're going to be in hot water." At that particular time, the temperature, I think, went from 56 on the inside to 64 on the outside. But being we had been fishing there a few nights, I knew that all the fish were in 62 degrees. If you got in 64, you didn't see any, and if you got in 60, you didn't see any. Anyhow, we shot the gear out, and I know we had over 100, and that fellow had five fish. And I mean you could watch him hauling. That's how close we were. But that was mainly through that Canadian that told me how to fish it.

We fished that place quite often. But we had good fishing, and we shot home. I could make it home in 72 hours from there if I run hard. I think we got in on a Saturday morning if I remember right. We sent the cook up to get the groceries. I had

called ahead to order bait, and that was there in the truck. I think we had 56,000 pounds [of swordfish]. We finished unloading late Saturday night, and we was on our way Sunday. I think Sunday evening I left the dock. But that was when you had good men, and they understood. And we went back up there, and we fished three nights. The last night we fished, a hurricane come. We had 176 fish, and they were big fish. So we went in Louisbourg, and we laid in the harbor in Louisbourg, Nova Scotia gutting the fish, dressing the fish because of this hurricane. I called my son who was fishing on Georges and told him what we had. Well, he come up, but that hurricane chased them [the swordfish]. We went back out, and they were gone. But that night we had 176. I don't know. We didn't fish many nights, and we had about 40,000 pounds if I remember right. But it was good, you know. And that was the time we went right back out. You could do that in the old days, because the men understood it. They knew there was a lot of slack seasons that you didn't do much. Then you wouldn't fish as hard. But the men you get nowadays . . . I don't even say men. I say people -- bodies really. To me it's very aggravating.

JM: About how many years did you do that -- the longlining?

PR: About twenty-four years. There was a couple

interruptions. Like I said, we did that Scottish seining, and we spent one winter dragging. Most of the time was strictly longlining.

JM: What did you like the best about it?

PR: What did I like the best about it? I liked the money, and I liked the fishing. It wasn't very expensive for the boat. Your gear replacement costs weren't bad if you was careful. And I think the more you do something, the better you get at it. You know, if you're trying to do a lot of different fisheries, you're not going to be as good as you would if you just stuck to one where every day you're learning something new. Like with the longlining, every day you learned something, and you added to what you knew. It was a big help. Where if you did a lot of different fisheries, you're still learning something every day, but it's not applying to the same fishery. It's applying to fishing in general, but -- And you could keep better track of the fish if you fished steady too, the movement of the fish, things like that.

JM: What did you like the least about it?

PR: What did I like the least about it? I don't know. In later years it was the crews. But that wasn't true most of the time. I don't know what to say. Sharks were an aggravation, but it was all part of it. I don't know what to say. I guess there was not just one particular thing that I could say I

liked the least about it.

JM: Do you see a lot of life out on the water on the Grand Banks and the Georges Banks?

PR: Oh yes. Grand Banks, there's a lot of life. You see a lot of whales. You see all kind of birds -- a lot of bird life on it. Then, of course, when you get to the East'ard, then you don't see much no more. You get out of it. It's very dead, you know. I've seen -- oh gee, you might see one ship in a week or something, and that's the only thing you would see. That was when we first went down there, when there was no other American boats down there. You always get different clouds and different sea conditions. It's never the same, so it's always nice. I had a funny outlook. If it was rough, it was going to get better, so there's no sense worrying about it. If you had faith in the boat, you didn't worry about the weather, really. A lot of people say I maybe should have been more careful with the weather, but I've never had no problems.

JM: Did you sell the Gloria and Doris when you bought the Harry Glenn?

PR: Yes. I kept it for awhile, and then I sold it.

JM: How about the Harry Glenn? Did you sell that when you bought the Audrey Lynn?

PR: Yes. I had to sell that when I bought the Audrey Lynn.

JM: Did you primarily work on the Audrey Lynn the whole

time after you bought her, or did you buy another boat too?

PR: No, no. I stayed on that. I stayed on that until last year.

JM: Do you still have that boat?

PR: Yes. My son's running it now.

JM: Okay.

PR: I sold the Harry Glenn to a local man, and I think he kept it about ten years. I think he sold it a man was running it for him. The fellow I sold the boat to had a lot of money. He just used [it] to go harpooning in the summer. He enjoyed that. He was well pleased with the boat. I mean, five years after I sold [it to] him, if something went wrong, he'd call me up and ask me what to do about it and things like that.

JM: How big was the Newport fishing fleet when you came here in the early seventies?

PR: The actual home base Newport fleet?

JM: Yes.

PR: It was kind of small, but there was an awful lot of boats coming into Newport to unload. There was a tremendous bunch from Stonington, Connecticut area and Long Island -- eastern end of Long Island. Because there was no filet houses left in New York City, so if they were catching yellowtail flounder, they had to bring them to Newport to unload. That was one of the reasons why we moved to Newport.

When we lived in Montauk and we were Scottish seining, we was catching yellowtails. You would bring them to Newport. You'd get into Newport during the night. You'd unload the next day, and they'd pay you. You'd go back to Montauk, and you had to give the men a day off. It seemed foolish to me to be living in Montauk. If I lived in Newport, the day you got in the men would finish unloading in the morning. They'd have the afternoon off, you know, and you wouldn't lose as much time. That was one of the main reasons. Plus the fish dock here in Newport is the most honest on the coast. Funny thing, the book you gave me, [Men's Lives, Peter Mathieson] it's got an article about that, and I've always claimed that. I've unloaded fish from Texas to Boston, and even Gloucester I unloaded one time. But I've never been in a place as honest as Newport. You don't have to watch the scale. You don't have to count the boxes or whatever it is. I've already sold grey sole at a price and come in the next trip and the man give me more money because he said he did better than he thought. I never seen that nowheres else.

JM: Was that all at Parascandolo's?

PR: Right.

JM: Did you ever unload at Anthony Bucolo's?

PR: Yes, a couple of times when Parascandolo closed. In later years they closed 4th of July week so they

could go on a vacation. A couple of years ago when we was tilefishing, I could see the trips were going to work out so that I wasn't going to be able to get in and be out the whole time they were closed. I went down and talked to Anthony and Richard down there. I've always gotten along very good with them, because they used to buy a lot of my swordfish. I didn't unload at their dock, but they'd come up and get them off Parascandolo's when I was unloading. We've always got along very good; I've unloaded there a few times. When I first started fishing, like when I first went to North Carolina, the first dock I went to was the dock I always stayed with. I did the same thing here. I come into Newport, and there was two fish docks. I happened to go to Parascandolo's first, and I just stayed there -- nothing against Bucolo's. Probably if I'd have went there first, I'd have probably stayed there. I don't believe in changing docks.

Like I mentioned, we sold an awful lot of fish to Frank Wilkerson in New York for years and years, especially when Parascandolo like wouldn't buy the swordfish or wouldn't handle them for the mercury. If I was in Texas or Florida or wherever we was fishing, I'd send everything to Frank Wilkerson, another very honest, honorable company. We was unloading some fish in North Carolina one time. When you take these swordfish out of the hold,

you've got to wash them with the deck hoses. They get a yellow oil on them. You wash it off and scrub them, and it kind of freshens them up a little bit. There was an awful smell in the water. So to make the long story short, I decided that I wasn't going to wash my fish. I didn't want to put this smelly water on them. I don't know what it was -- some kind of algae or something. We didn't even break the ice out of the fish. I just unloaded at Davis Company, a big fish company in Morehead City. He had never handled swordfish before. This was one of the first times we unloaded in Morehead City. They were all going to Frank Wilkerson in New York, and I said I didn't want to weigh them, because I couldn't weigh them with the ice in. So we just put them on the truck. And fish were, I don't know, two or three dollars a pound then. So I got the fish unloaded and the truck on its way. And he was going to get paid. He gets paid by the weight, and Wilkerson was going to let him know what they actually weighed, because we didn't weigh them. He called me in the office. He knew me. He was one of the people that recommended me for that state job. When I was running that state boat, I'd go down and talk to him once in awhile. So he knew me a little bit. He says to me, "You know, I can't understand it. You've probably got fifteen, twenty thousand of fish, whatever it was. You're talking a lot of

money here, and you mean to tell me you trust that man in New York to give you the honest weight on them?" And I says, "Yes. He'll give me the honest weight. I have no doubts about that." It turned out he sells Frank a lot of fish now, and before that he never did business with him. You couldn't do that with many places in New York, but I could with Frank. It's him, his brother, and son. I did business with him so many years, I just knew that he'd pay me for what he got. It's nice when you got that kind of relation. Plus he was good for the money.

If you happened to come in with a big trip of swordfish, maybe over $100,000 worth, you want to make sure you're going to get paid. When we were selling down the Cape, with this mercury business, we'd give a fellow seventy odd thousand dollars worth of fish. It was 76,000 pound -- that's what it was. He agreed to pay us $1.25 a pound. The trip before, we had fifty some thousand pound, and we wasn't too long. I think we was only six nights -- yes, six nights fishing for this 76,000. So we come back in and we unload. It took a couple days to unload them I remember -- a day and a night or something. Anyway, the fellow give me, I don't know, like $10,000. He give me a few thousand dollars cash and a check and said he'd have the other money in a couple of days. It was only the

second trip with the Audrey Lynn. I had Joe Garcia, Manny and them boys with me. And he give me a check. It was seventy some. He agreed on $1.25 a pound. It ended up he paid me a dollar when we finally got the money, which took four months. I kept getting bad checks. I had a check that was around sixty thousand dollars. He had a bank in Chatham that the check was drawn on. My son come in with his boat and had, I don't know, $40,000 worth of fish he sold to him. Well, his check was good, but there never was enough to cover my check. Finally I got Pat Hayes, the attorney downtown here who has been very friendly with me, and he finally told the guy we were either -- You know, his check bounced so often it was unbelievable. But it took four months to get the money. In the meantime, you can't pay the crew. I had just bought the boat, so all the money I had was in it. My son's coming in. Other boats are coming in, but they don't have the amount of fish, so the checks aren't as big, and they're getting paid. I made it my business every time I went to the bank in Chatham, which was quite often, I'd take a different crew man with me so they could see -- I didn't want them to think I was using their money, and giving them the excuse. But finally he did cut us a quarter a pound, which is a lot of money. He agreed $1.25, but he paid us a dollar -- finally. But I think it was about four

months before we [got the money] and only through Pat Hayes. He threatened to put him in jail.

JM: And you had all the legal fees, too, to pay.

PR: Yes, well Pat wasn't bad that way. He was pretty good. I don't know if you know the man, but he's quite a gentleman.

JM: Yes, I do.

PR: So that's what I'm saying about you've got to know who you're selling to. Needless to say, I never sold to that fellow again. As a matter of fact, we got in a fist fight after that.

JM: It saves you a lot of time and hassle when you have an honest buyer.

PR: Right. You asked me what the bad part of the trip was about. In them days it used to be Food and Drug, because you knew they could grab the fish whenever they wanted to. So you not only had the problem of trying to catch them; after you caught them, you had the big worry of where you were going to get them unloaded and get paid for them. Because if Food and Drug grabbed them, that was it. You didn't get paid for them. So I guess that was the bad part that you asked me about before, the real bad part, yes. Outside of twelve original fish that I got subpoenaed in Florida with, we never had no trouble. So that was I guess what you call the bad part of it.

[End of Tape Six, Side B]

JM: When you were out on the Grand Banks and Georges Banks in the sixties and seventies, did you have much trouble with the Russian factory ships and foreign boats?

PR: No we didn't. There was plenty there. Of course, now see, we were swordfishing. They weren't swordfishing.

I remember one time we harpooned twenty-four fish for the day. And John Ericson, who was in that book you give me, he was with us -- from Montauk. He was an excellent man, harpooning. He was an excellent man on the boat for anything, but he was a real good mast man for harpooning. Years ago, when you harpooned a fish, you put a man alongside of it in a dory -- to tend the fish, tire him out and get him in. All of a sudden, I got the bright idea, I ain't going to do that. I'm going to use these radar buoys on the fish. That way I'm not losing the time and a man and a dory and all this stuff. So we used to just harpoon the fish. We used 120 fathom of line on it and these big polyfoam balls and a radar buoy. That worked very good. We harpooned 24 fish that day, and I think we had 18 out at one time. Because as soon as it got a little slow harpooning, you'd go to the first one you harpooned and haul it in. By that time he'd be dead, and you could get him in quick. And then maybe you'd haul a couple of fish.

But anyway, one time I think it was eighteen fish we had overboard. There was sixty-five of them Russians dragging back and forth. Now these weren't the big factory ships. These were the smaller ones. They were just a little over 100 foot if I remember right. And they're dragging all around and everything else, and we figured we're going to lose these fish. We never had a one lost. One of them got one caught -- and that was early in the morning -- got it caught in his cable, and as soon as he seen it, he hauled back his net. When he did, as he was hauling the net in, it come off the cable and got in his propeller. But it just hung there. His propeller wasn't turning. He was laying to , hauling. We backed up to him. We grabbed the buoy, and we backed up to him. He grabbed a grapnel and caught the line on the other side of the boat and held it up for us to see. And then we cut it. I pulled it clear of his propeller, threw him the other piece,and he tied it back together. They all clapped their hands and were happy when we finally got the fish in. I think that helped us that day, because I think he told the rest of them on the radio to be careful of these buoys and just give them enough room. He could see about how much line we had. That was in 60 fathoms, so we was using 120 fathom of water -- of warp. So there was quite a little slack line laying around them buoys. I think

that helped us, because they never got in another fish, and it was after dark by the time we got them all in. That always amazed me.

Another time, we was fishing on the Soud'east part [of Georges Bank] with the lines, and the gear took off and went inshore on us. We used to get these funny drifts sometimes. And it was a big fleet. Now these were the bigger stern trawlers. They just kept moving in, moving in, moving in as our gear went moving in. Then as we hauled it along, we was pretty close to them, but they never cut it or nothing. As we got the gear in there, they'd move off behind us.

JM: How big were those stern trawlers?

PR: Two or three hundred footers. They called them factory ships.

JM: How big would their nets have been?

PR: Pretty good size. I've seen drawings and prints of them -- pretty good sized nets -- [made] according to the boat.

JM: What do you think the main reasons were for the 200 mile limit?

PR: We had to do something. Like I said, swordfishing they didn't bother us. But I should retract that statement. It did bother us, because when I first started swordfishing, you'd go down Georges Bank, and you'd turn the sounding machine on, which showed you the fish on the bottom, and you'd see stuff all

over the place. A lot of it was bait, and a lot of it was hake and whiting and things like that, and now it's just bare. They were catching a lot of hake and whiting, herring -- all fish that swordfish eat. I mean, when I first started, when you used to go down there, if you was harpooning -- which we used to do a lot of in the summer months -- you'd get up like three o'clock in the morning. You'd ride around, and you'd find the best of the bait. Usually that would be the general area where you'd end up catching most of the swordfish for the day. But now you can't find nothing like that on the machines. They were catching yellowtail flounder, which our government kept saying they weren't, but they actually were. Because I've been close enough to watch them hauling in and all that kind of stuff. They knew they were catching fish they weren't really supposed to, because sometimes they wouldn't haul the net in if you'd lay close to them. They'd just keep towing. Or if they were hauling, they'd stop hauling. I think they raised cane with the yellowtail flounders -- with all our fish -- not our fish, but all the fish that was on Georges Banks. they just couldn't stand that much of a pounding -- not as many boats as actually was there. I think we've counted over 400 foreigners in a day's running.

JM: Were those mostly Russians?

PR: The biggest percentage was then, but later on it got all nationalities. You had a lot of Spanish and East German, West German. Of course, you always had the Japs with the longlines. I've been tangled with them a few times, but never no big problems with the Japs, with the longlines. A lot of American boats do, and did have problems with them, but like I mentioned before, we used to try to stay a mile apart. But the Japs would only go a quarter of a mile. And they'll do that to themselves. I mean, if we set up in a little spot of water, we'd go a mile and come back. But the Jap, he'll just go a quarter of a mile. So when an American boat sees him go that close, he gets all nervous and starts yelling and screaming and everything. But it's just their way of fishing. And of course, they fish all kind of weather. They're bigger boats than us, and they just -- I've been laying to in 80 mile an hour winds and watched them set out.

JM: You mean the Russians?

PR: No, the Japs. But all the foreign fleet, I think you had to do something. I think I mentioned before it's not been handled right, because our government is not doing what that was supposed to be [done]. We should have had a lot stricter conservation on all our fisheries. I think you'd have a much better fisheries than you've got today. I'm very concerned that it's so far gone, it can't come back. With all

the pollution in the estuaries and everything else, everything is stacked against it. What's saved the fishing industry, I think, the last few years is the increase in price on the product. But that's got to reach an end eventually. Right now, for many fish, you're paying more than you are for good steak. You just can't keep going up. Even though a lot of people want fish, they're not going to pay. So you're not going to see the price keep increasing. It's just impossible. And then I don't know what'll happen, because that's the only thing been keeping us going. My son was here yesterday. He told me they paid $3.25 for grey sole down the dock yesterday. 1974, 1975 that was a twenty-five cent item. You know, when you start, what are you geared at -- maybe a third? The fillet is about one third of the fish. So if you're paying three dollars, it's nine dollars a pound. I mean, you just can't keep going that way.

End of Interview.

Interview with Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society, Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island, by Jannifer Murray, October 21, 1987.

MURRAY: It's October 21. This is Jennifer Murray. I'm talking with Mr. Philip Ruhle for the Newport Historical Society's Oral History of the Fishing Industry in Newport, Rhode Island.

The last time we were talking, we left off with the 200 mile limit. Were you involved in any way in the I.C.N.A.F. talks [International Commission for Northwest Atlantic Fisheries] before the 200 mile limit?

RUHLE: No, just that time I mentioned when I went to Atlanta in 1970 when I worked for the State of Carolina. I don't think that was I.C.N.A.F. I think that was the American. I.C.N.A.F. is the international. And this was just the American. I guess it was from N.O.A.A. This was the first talk I heard that there was going to be a 200 mile limit. That was, what, six years before it went in effect. After the 200 mile limit went in effect, then I was an advisor to the Fisheries Council in New England.

JM: The New England one.

PR: Right.

JM: Not the Rhode Island one?

PR: No, no. It was Federal, not State.

JM: Okay.

PR: And oh, I went to quite a few meetings -- I think I

told you all that -- in Florida and all over, and finally I just more or less quit. It's only been a couple of years, because they kept sending me all the literature and everything. But I went and told them I wasn't interested. Then they kept me on for another year or so (I think it was or two years) even after I told them I wasn't interested, and I didn't go to none of their meetings. And then they still put me back on it. But then I see they finally took it off. It's just a losing battle. I don't know. I think politics got into it, I'd have to say. The people I talk to, and we all feel the same way, we think they're really not doing nothing. They're afraid to put the measures in. I don't know the reasons. Matter of fact, I think if I was a little younger, I'd try to get a class action suit against the Fishery Councils for not taking action. The grounds would be that by them not taking action, which Congress wanted them to do on the swordfish in particular, they're actually putting us out of business. But I'm getting too old. I'm not interested in it no more.

JM: What were the most important issues that came up while you were on the New England Fishery Council?

PR: Oh, I kept fighting for closed areas, mainly the Straights of Florida -- the areas where I knew there was ripe females, spawning fish. And couldn't get nowheres. And I wanted a limit put on the size.

Anything under 50 pounds you wouldn't be able to sell. But you've got no backing. The biologists, they didn't have no history. They didn't know nothing about them, so they couldn't really commit themselves one way or the other. Actually, I've been told many times that the only records they really had on swordfish that amounted to anything were my own and my two sons, and that only went back to the early sixties. But it was the most complete records they had so they tell me. But it was all in one family, so they didn't amount -- You know, in other words, if like Jack Casey tried to fight on them records, and then the other biologist fought, "Well, it's all one family, so those two sons are going to think like the father," and everything, you know. Even though he had computerized all the [data] . . . This Jack Casey over in Narragansett had a graduate student, John Hoe. And this graduate student computerized all my swordfish logs. He used to take the logs, and he computerized them all, and he come up with a lot of [data] -- how many fish we caught, how many sharks we caught, and species and all that kind of stuff, and where. I'd say, as late as probably 1980, it was the only real records the government had that was available. I mean there's some "historic" history that goes way back on this catching swordfish, but no real information about it. They can get some landing reports and things

like that, but no actual fishing things. But whenever Jack tried to fight -- and he felt like I did that they should close the spawning areas, the nursery areas -- they just would say, "It's only one record." They can't base nothing on that. When they should have, because they had no other. One was better than none was the way I looked at it. And I've noticed on the groundfish they don't act. They're waiting too long. And if I remember right, on the swordfish council, there was a thing where they could put it in. It was an emergency. They could put it in under some kind of an emergency wording where it wouldn't definitely be a law. I mean, if it didn't prove out, it could be taken out. I can't remember the name of it, because I'm not that smart on that kind of stuff. But there was some way that they could put it in, like just say well, we'll close the nursery area of Florida, and it wouldn't be a permanent thing. They could have put it in for a year or something like that, which would have been a start. But they didn't do it. And they really only started getting interested and started to keep records -- I would say it was close to 1978. The 200 mile limit went into effect in 1976. I would say it was about 1978 that they started, so the records have no history behind them. By the time they started keeping records, the fisheries was in trouble. So the big thing we run

into is they'd say, "from 1980 till 1982 we can't see much of a decline, so we don't believe you need this." But by 1978 there was a rapid decline already. But see, they didn't go back far enough to catch it up. After all that, you're up there and you're arguing and you're not getting nowheres, you finally just give up. It's not worth it. And like I mentioned before, it happened to the New York area -- a lot of the party boatmen, the old timers, and they all resigned. Everyone that I know that was in it resigned.

JM: How many commercial fishermen were on it when you were on it?

PR: I think there was eight advisors. And up here we was going against the harpooners. There's always been some friction between the harpooners and the longliners, even though we did both. We did the harpooning and the longlining. Harpooning, you're coming up on the fish, and you throw the pole at him. I've been harpooning many years. If you sees a little fish, you don't have to harpoon him. Longlining, you have no choice. He bites on the hook unbeknown. The only thing, longlining you can move from an area if you see you're catching too many small fish. But the harpooners, they wouldn't budge at all. They're a very thick headed bunch there in New Bedford. I will say that. I tried to get them not to bring in nothing under 100 pounds.

In later years they started using airplanes, and airplanes got so much a fish. Well if they brought a fish in around, say 100 pounds for a figure, they didn't really make much, because the airplane got paid $75 for a fish in them days. So if you caught a 400 pound fish, the plane got $75. If you caught a 100 pound fish, the plane got $75. So they weren't making that much on them when they were $1.25 or something like that a pound. And I felt that if they would have committed themselves to a 100 pound limit, then that would have given us a start to maybe making longliners go to 50 pound. But we didn't get nowhere. They wouldn't do it. Chet Westcott in Point Judith, I think he agreed with me -- I'm pretty sure he did -- quite strongly. He was a harpooner, and he felt he could have got the Point Judith boats to go along with that when I talked to him about it. The nearest I know -- and I'm not one hundred percent positive -- but I think he resigned too. I think he got fed up with it. We just wasn't getting anywheres. So then they come with all this plastic we call it, you know, the monofilament and the sophisticated gear, which is fine. I mean, you improve your fishing. But you also -- I think you're outsmarting yourself. I really think that the original old fashioned gear with just a small piece of monofilament by the hook -- which was just there so the sharks could bite it

off -- it wasn't as efficient catching as all this new fangled [gear]. Now they use lights, they use rattles, they use all kind of things. I think they hurt themselves. I think we outsmarted ourselves. In other words, if we'd have went along with the old fashioned gear, some law would have been passed, maybe to stop getting better at it. You know, a certain amount of fish would get by and . . . And it's just -- Well, you know, it's progress. When new people come into the fisheries, they're going to try to improve it, which is good most of the time. But I just think in this case, with swordfish, we over smarted ourselves.

JM: How do the lights and rattles and things like that work on the new gear?

PR: You put these light sticks on. They're expensive, and they will catch fish. They attract the fish. It's a little chemical light underwater near the hook. The rattle is also on there. It makes noise and attracts the fish -- different things like that. Plus they went all monofilament. Most of it is pretty invisible in the water. I think we got too smart. We outsmarted ourselves too much. It's the same in all the fisheries. We're getting more sophisticated fish finding equipment and electronics, and we ain't giving the fish much of a chance no more. I think that was one of the problems with that.

JM: Who's going to take responsibility for that?

PR: I guess it was the fishermen's fault. You can't really put the responsibility on anybody. I mean everybody tries to improve it. I just figure that in general we outsmarted ourselves. We've improved it so much now that there isn't much of a fishery left. My son just sent some fish home from Newfoundland -- over $4 a pound to the boat. That's an awful lot of money. He was over a month for 15,000 pounds or 16,000, and that used to be -- You know, I've caught more than that in a night quite often.

JM: Did you catch your 60,000 pounds in a month before, that you would put on the boat?

PR: Well, one trip we had 76,000, and we only fished six nights. It took us seven because we lost a night in between, because it was so many fish you couldn't handle them. But it was actually six nights fishing.

JM: Where was that?

PR: Off Nova Scotia, off Sable Island area. Another time we had 56,000, and I think that was only six nights. There used to be a lot of fish, especially in the fall of the year. But all that's [over]. For one thing, you can't fish them areas. The Canadians are fishing them and not doing no good either.

JM: Are the domestic swordfishermen forced now to go to

other species?

PR: A lot of them have been chasing tuna. Tuna's become a big thing -- sold in Japan. When we were swordfishing, you didn't get nothing for tuna -- eight, ten cents back in the sixties. Matter of fact, we usually didn't even save them, because you needed the hold room for the swordfish. But now tuna is very high priced, and it's a big thing. But I understand this summer, they had a very bad summer off Long Island where a lot of the Florida boats come to do it. And this summer's been way off. So it looks like they're cleaning them up too quick. I've never been into it, so I can't say for sure. But I was talking to a fellow the other night, and he says it's been very bad this year compared to last year.

JM: Getting back to the 200 mile limit, did the industry expand a lot after that was voted in?

PR: Yes, too much, which was the government's fault, because they made a lot of money available for the fisheries. The government had a thing where the Russians had the great big boats and we didn't. But I don't think they took into consideration the Russians had to cross the ocean to get here. They had to have the big boats to do that, and they had to have the big boats to hold the volume of fish. But we didn't have to cross no ocean, so we didn't need these big boats. As a matter of fact, they

tried it with two of them the government built, and they both went broke. We didn't need the big boats. What they did is they made a lot of money available on cheap loans and things like that, and they did it wrong. The reason I say they did it wrong -- they started companies. They'd give money to [people] like Fass in Phoebus, Virginia [near Hampton]. He ordered forty boats, and it was like doctors and lawyers that owned them and bankers. They were the money. Southern Airways in Texas got into it, and they had a lot of boats. Well, they were supposed to have forty some. I don't know how many actually got finished. Then there was a Deco fellow. He got into it. What I'm getting at, is when they made this money available, they should have said you have to have twenty years experience or something to qualify. But they let all these other people in. Some people say it's for write-offs, but I can't see people going into business to lose money. I don't go for that. Maybe it's true, but I don't believe it. Every boat they replaced -- like for the New England groundfish, just as an example, it might have been like a 65 or a 75 foot wood boat and 300 horsepower, they come along with a 90 foot steel boat with 700 horsepower. So in reality every boat they replaced, you was replacing it with something twice as efficient. If you look at it that way, we replaced fifty boats -- really that was equivalent

to 100 of the older boats. Plus they got bigger, and they got all weather boats now. They fish almost anything short of a hurricane. Years ago, you used to have to worry about the weather and give it up a little when the weather got bad, which give the stocks a little rest and all that. But I blame that on that easy money. I think that feeling is agreed upon by a lot of the old timer fishermen. The companies, every one of them, went broke. Fass went broke. Southern Airways went broke. Deco went broke. And I'm just naming a few. There's many more. But that still don't take away the boats. In other words, the companies go broke; the boats are sold to individuals. So you still got the boats. So that was, I think, a very bad thing when they made that money available. I'm sure you've heard for years that they claim the oceans can feed the world. But they're finding out now that that's altogether different than they figured, because they have a very poor way of judging things. Scientists do. They figure so many mile of ocean has got so many fish. But the fish really don't go beyond the Continental Shelf except your tuna and swordfish and that kind of pelagic fisheries. But anything else don't do that. So it's not that the fish are all over like they originally figured. And once in awhile you'll pick up something, and you'll read where they're saying there's not the stocks in the

ocean that they originally thought there was. I noticed that when I worked for that State. We would tow a net for a certain length of time and catch some fish, and then the biologist would take that whole area, figure out how far we moved and then multiply it. Well, that wasn't true. I remember one time we had a little tow of porgies, but I run around with a sounding machine and everything for four or five hours before we made that set. So we actually found them, set on them and had them. Then he divided that whole area of the same depth all along -- this happened to be off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- and he come up with a population thing. I sat and argued with him. I said, "Jesus, how can you come up with that? We run around for four or five hours all over here and didn't see nothing. Finally saw something. We towed the net for twelve minutes, and we had 5,000 pounds." As a matter of fact, they were all juvenile scup. When I looked over the stern -- she was a stern trawler -- I said to him, "Look, they're all alive. Why don't we reach down and just turn them loose." He says, "No, we have to weigh them." I said, "Well, judge them at 5,000 pounds. You won't be far off." "No, we can't do that." So we had to put all these fish on deck. The outcome was we killed them all. We had 5,200 pounds, and we killed them all. And I mean all little juvenile fish -- eight, ten to the pound.

So I wasn't very impressed with the way they had to do things. Now, I understand they've got to be accurate, but we could have [saved the fish]. I talked to the mate and everything, and between us we figured 5,000 pounds. So we was 200 some pounds out. But they would have all lived, because it was only twelve fathom of water. You know, it wasn't a deep thing where they'd have died from the pressure change and all that. But that's how they figured it. When I read the report that that fellow put out a few months later, it was hard to believe. I mean, if you read the report, you assumed anyplace in that depth along that area you was going to catch that many fish, when in reality we had looked, over four hours before we found that little bunch. So, that makes it tough when that comes up later on and you're trying to argue conservation with these people.

JM: It's a shame that they don't listen more.

PR: Yes, well, I guess it is. I've talked to other captains on other research boats, and it's all the same. It's a hard thing. Like I mentioned before, that was like a year in jail for me.

JM: How did all that investment into the industry change the kind of person who was attracted to being a fisherman? You started out with very close knit groups.

PR: Yes. Well, you got a lot of people in the business

that were running boats with hardly any experience. You can see where a few of them went on the rocks in this Newport area and stuff like that. When I first started fishing, you had to be on deck and had to have the experience and everything before you worked your way up. But here, with all the new electronics and everything else, it didn't take much experience to find out how to catch the fish. Of course, it took a little more than most of them had I would say. You know, there's been some real good young ones. So what else you want?

JM: There are people who don't know as much about fishing now that can just go right out on the boats? They don't have the experience.

PR: Yes. That's a pretty common thing now. They got these fishery schools, and I think they're a good thing. I think the boys come out learning a lot. But you got all this electronics, which made it much easier. I think the electronics was kind of the ruination for the old timers. I mean, things that took you years to learn they could learn very quick with the electronics and everything. I guess they call it progress. But I think it's like we were saying before. You're outsmarting yourself, and the fisheries can't stand it. All of a sudden you're getting too smart. You're catching too much, and the fisheries just can't stand it, you know.

JM: Are there any other people you particularly

remember? Like Owen Cresser you were talking about who was a schooner man. Are there any other older people like that that were fine fishermen or highliners or would be willing to go further and longer?

PR: Oh yes. There was a lot of them. I mentioned that fellow because, like I told you, 28 dories, 28 years. That to me is quite a feat. And I was very friendly with quite a few of the older Canadians. Most of them are retired now or out of it, or died, I guess. Then in America, you got some real good fishermen. You got some real good young fishermen. Don't misunderstand me. You got some excellent young fishermen. Most of them may be young, but they've been in it a long time. Let me put it that way. Then there was the company boats, as I call them -- them outfits that went broke that was putting people on because they couldn't get nobody any good, because they wanted too much for the boat percentagewise and things like that. So they couldn't get anybody any good to run them. They were putting anybody on. Then, of course, drugs got into it bad. It was just a bad situation.

JM: What would you say the biggest changes in the industry have been since you've been in it?

PR: The modernization. That would cover it all. Yes, I guess you'd have to say modernization. Technical advantages -- all that kind of stuff. Like I said,

you've got so much electronics. Years ago you used to put a buoy out and work from that. Now you've got equipment that tells you where you are within 50 feet or even closer. That and the increase in the boats just put too much pressure on the stocks. Especially, where I mentioned the new boats, they're so much bigger, so much more powerful, so much more efficient. I think all that combined. Plus pollution don't help. I think that's a very bad thing. You're going to kill off the places where fish spawn and everything so they can't spawn, then you're not going to have no fishery of no kind. I think pollution is happening all over the world -- bad.

JM: What's the biggest offender?

PR: Oh, I don't know. [Sigh] It can be blamed on everything. Plastic is bad. You can go anywheres in the ocean now -- at least I say anywheres, but places that I've been, which is quite far from shore -- and look down in the water and see plastic stuff floating, which you never saw before. That stuff, it don't seem to ever [disintegrate]. Nothing destroys it. That's real bad. I don't think oil rigs is as bad as people make them. That's just my own personal opinion. They keep fighting down this Georges Banks [lease sale program]. In my own opinion, I think they'd be good. The reason for that is, by law you have to stay a certain distance

away from each well for fishing and netting and things like that, and it's a pretty big area in square footage. So my idea, it would make a bunch of little conservation zones, which we don't have now. Of course, you've got to worry about the spills, but you've got to worry about a tanker running aground, too (the Argo Merchant, for example). But I don't think I'd get much support for them oil wells. But that's my own opinion. I really think they'd help, because we've got no conservation now whatsoever, regardless of what they tell you. If we had the oil wells, at least there'd be something. You hear some talk that there'd be a lot of them. You take each one, and the square footage of conservation around it and you multiply it by a bunch of them in a bunch of different areas, and it could be something we don't have. I think I'm probably the only fisherman would feel that way.

JM: So far. [Chuckles]

PR: I guess maybe the idea's wrong, but that's the way I feel about it. We fished around them oil rigs in the Gulf, and I never seen no problems.

JM: What about the soaring costs in the industry, the insurance and --

PR: Yes. The insurance is the bad thing, and a lot of it's to blame on the insurance companies. From my own experience, we've had three phoney lawsuits. By phoney I mean the boys never were hurt on the boat,

but they claimed they were. And you've got these lawyers advertising now -- P and I, personal injury claims. It's always been if a man got hurt, you would give him your share. The way I worked it, I'd give him my share until he was able to come back to work. I could get by on my captain's share. So if a man got hurt, the insurance would pay the hospitals and all that and give him a small amount. They didn't give him much. It used to be something like $7 a day. But I'd see that the man got whatever he would have had coming if he was still on the boat -- whatever we shared. Most of the time they'd come back, and everything would be fine. But now you're getting into where they sue you for these false claims. The reason I say it's the insurance companies [is] the last claim, a fellow started out, he was going to sue us for $150,000. It was a local boy that (I'm not going to mention names) that we had to bring in. The lawyer felt we had very strong proof. It just so happened I was in Florida, and the lawyer called that I had to come back. The case was coming up. So I said to him, "Look, I've been through this before. I mean, is it definitely coming up? I don't want to come from Florida to Rhode Island and have this thing postponed, which usually happens." And he assured me no. To make the long story short, we got here, went through the deal in Providence. We was supposed to be in court

the next morning. We got there ahead of time which the lawyer told us. And I don't know, it was a very short time before we went in court -- an hour or so -- they had settled it. And they give the boy -- $4,000 is what they settled it for. Well, that encourages these fellows. He got $4,000.

[End of Side A, Tape 8]

So that encourages them to keep trying.

Another boy sued us. It was in the local paper where he got $86,000. He was suing us for $500,000, and they awarded him $86,000. I found out later on that when the lawyers and the experts and everything got done, the kid got $11,000. But when they wrote it in the paper, it said $86,000. So that encourages somebody else to try it. I wasn't very happy with the way the paper -- I guess the paper just put down the information they got, which was handed them by the lawyer. [It was a] free advertisement the way I look at it. But they didn't stipulate that. He was awarded $86,000, but what he ended up with was a lot less. So things like that don't help it.

Plus for awhile you had the inexperienced people running the boats like we mentioned before, which didn't help. We lost a couple of boats off of here. With the equipment you got nowadays, there's got to be something wrong with somebody if they run the boat on the rocks.

JM: Were you still fishing when the World Court decision was made?

PR: Yes.

JM: How did that affect you?

PR: The particular fishing we was doing was tile-fishing. It did affect us, because we was working up in that area. I got into tilefishing after it was started. Most of them boats are in New York and New Jersey, so we was kind of the eastern end of the fleet. So I was working to the East'ard more. I talked to some Canadians, and they've seen them off the Canadian coast at times, so I kind of felt that with a little exploring I might have found some areas where we could have worked. But you was afraid to waste the time doing it if the World Court was going to give them [that part of Georges Banks], which they did. We knew we was going to lose some [ground], but we didn't know how much. It was foolish the two years or so that we was waiting for the World Court until they settled it, to spend the money and the time to look for new grounds or new areas when you figured you wouldn't get them anyway. You know, if you found the fish, you wouldn't be able to catch them. That's what I'm trying to say. Because it'd be ending up in Canadian waters. And it hurt the swordfishing a lot.

JM: It must have.

PR: Yes, because that was a good little corner for

swordfish.

JM: The Northeast Peak of the Georges Banks?

PR: Yes. We used to do very good there in the spring and in the fall. The Canadian government was pretty good about enforcing it, because swordfish gear drifts. At times I've drifted 40 mile along that edge in the spring when the warm water's moving fast coming in. If your gear happened to drift over that line -- you know, it's just an imaginary line. It could happen very easy. All you had to do was call the Canadian Coast Guard and tell them, and they would give you permission to go in and get it. You might have to wait until a Canadian Coast Guard boat come or something so they could escort. But at least they let you go in and get it and didn't fine you. I thought that was fairly decent. But it definitely hurt. And the Canadian fishermen don't want it no more than we want it. That's another one of them things that's political. For years the Canadians fished down here, and we fished up there, and everything was fine. Everything I read and the ones I've talked to -- the Canadians, that is -- they don't want it no more than the American fishermen want it. But you got it, so that's the way it is.

JM: Have the foreign imports from Canada -- the subsidized fish -- hurt you at all?

PR: No, not really, not really. Again, I'm probably the

only one figures different. We can't produce them, so they've got to come from somewhere. Like I mentioned to you before, smuggling the Canadian swordfish was a tough thing. That was with the mercury business. That was bad. It put the Canadians out, because they've got a pretty good subsidy to go into different fisheries. But a lot of the old timers retired. I called them good fishermen, you know, nice people and gentlemen and all that. And the smuggled fish did hurt you some. I guess they're all claiming that imports is hurting us. But we've got to get the fish from somewhere. Fish have been terrible high for a long time. I mean they still go up and down, which they'll always do, I think. LastI I knew, seventy odd percent is imported if I've got the figure right. So that's tough.

JM: I want to ask you about what you think the future of the industry is right here in Newport?

PR: Here in Newport, it's a bad thing. You've got one main fish dock left. You have a lobster dock, and you have Parascandolo's. The lobster dock will stay, because it's not really that big of a piece of property -- Fatulli's. Parascandolo's is the main fishing dock. It's just a question of how much longer they can resist the big money they're offered for that land. Thank God they're the kind of people they are. I don't know if you know them, but

they're five Italian brothers. Their sons work there, and they've been in the fishing business all their lives -- very honorable people. You'll never come across better people. It's the last dock we've got in Newport. I'm sure you know better than I do what's happened down around the waterfront. It's real bad. It's real bad. The older Parascandolo's, the original five brothers, they're all my age. They're older, you know the same [age as I am], a few younger, but all around my age, and they're all old timers. I know as long as they're in charge, it'll stay a fishing dock. But after that I don't know what'll happen. I'm sure you know the property I'm talking about. It's such a valuable piece of property that what they must be offered for it, the younger ones could probably all live the rest of their lives without a big job.

JM: How many million do you think that's worth?

PR: I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know, but it's worth money. It's in an ideal location, and it is a big piece of property. I don't know.

JM: Where did you dock the Audrey Lynn?

PR: Right there.

JM: At Parascandolo's.

PR: Yes. It's the only place I ever docked. Well, one year we rented a dock over at Newport Shipyard when it was downtown -- before they moved. It was Newport Offshore then. And it was like anything

else. They were looking for money in the winter. I had the dock for the year, and the first time I think it was $1,500. They asked me to get some other boats. The thing was, in the summer when they needed the dock, we wasn't in that much. I told them I could lay to Parascandolo's the little we was in for the summer. So it worked out all right. But like anything else, the next year they doubled the rent. They were getting too many boats in there. These fishing boats are steel, and you're maneuvering around in amongst these yachts. It got too risky, plus the increase wasn't worth it. So we stayed over to Parascandolo's.

JM: How about the State Fish Pier?

PR: That's mostly lobster. There is a couple of fish boats. I never really tried to get in over there. I was told I could get a slip there though through a fellow named Elmer who has a fish boat over there. I just never pushed it. We used to not be in that often, so I never worried that much. We never paid no dockage at Parascandolo's. It's a part of selling your fish to them. I don't know. Newport's getting bad. I'm a little concerned about this Rose Island. I just wish they'd leave it alone, fix it up maybe for a historical thing or something. But to develop it, I don't think it's [a good idea]. I guess it might be moneywise, but I don't think it's a nice thing. I just don't. Maybe I'm old

fashioned. I don't know. But if they're talking a 350 slip marina, that's a lot of people, and it's a lot of water. I got the rudest awakening of my life this summer -- the first year I ever worked on the yachts. The amount of water that them yachts use you could never believe. I mean, we used to scrub her down twice a week, and it'd be an eight hour job. You figure the garden hose is running full blast for eight hours or probably six of them eight hours. When you look at the amount of yachts, I couldn't believe the amount of water we were using. You know, and then in the fall you always read about the water shortages and everything else. I know Goat Island where we was we used more water in the summer months than all the city of Newport probably uses the year around. It amazed me. It was the same thing when we was in Florida. So if they're going to develop some more, I don't know. But then I guess you call it progress, right?

JM: Some people do.

PR: Yes. What was it, a few years back there was something like 41 yachts in the country over 100 foot or something. Now there's something like three or four hundred. So they're on the increase, and they've got to find someplace to put them. You know, there ain't many places like Rose Island left. So I don't know.

JM: You are part of an occupation that is very old. It

goes back to the beginning of history as we know it. How do you feel about that?

PR: What would you say? I don't think you're going to see it ever as good as it was. There'll always be a certain amount of fisheries, but I don't think it's going to have the importance it used to. And as it loses the importance, it's going to lose any clout it had politicallywise. All politicians can understand really is votes. So if you've got an organization with no body behind it, you're not going to get any help. And without help it's going to be in trouble. It's in trouble now, and I believe it's going to get worse.

JM: What affect did being a commercial fisherman have on your family life?

PR: I thought it was good. When I was fishing hard, I wasn't home that often, so we didn't have no time for arguments. It didn't pay. We did move around a lot, and some people frown on that. I had the kids in a lot of different schools. I think this is the thirteenth house or fourteenth house we've owned or lived in. Let's see, I had the kids in Morehead City, North Carolina, and I had them in Wanchese, North Carolina. I had them in Panama City, Florida. I had them in New York in Baldwin and Freeport and in Montauk. So it was a lot of different schools, but then again they made a lot of different friends. They learned different ways of teaching. I think it

was educational for them. Some people wouldn't like that, but I didn't see nothing bad come out of it. As a matter of fact, I thought good come out of it. They made a lot of different friends, and to this day you've still got friends from wherever you was. So I don't think it was that bad. I remember in 1964, the year I bought the Harry Glenn, I was only in the house twelve nights for the year, which my wife kept record of, not me. But that don't mean [we never saw each other]. You know, she used to come up wherever I was. In my own house, I think I spent twelve nights she said. Something like that never bothered me, because I never thought about it.

JM: How about the financial uncertainty? Is that hard for some people?

PR: Yes, you get used to it. One day you're a millionaire, and the next day you don't know where you're going to get the money for the food. That's the way it goes. It's always been that way. When there wasn't such a thing as overfishing, you still had off seasons or fish didn't show or bad weather or this or that. It's always been up and down. I think that's part of it.

JM: What about physical hardships? Do you think it was particularly hard on you physically?

PR: No, I didn't think so. I guess it was more than I ever expected. Now according to the doctor with this last operation, he claims so many years at sea

on my feet -- I guess forty-three years he says -- he couldn't find nothing to work with when he cut me open. He says everything's all worn out down there. And I think he's a very good doctor. He's a local doctor, Dr. Henry. This was the third operation for the same thing. Before he did the last one, he says the only conclusion he can come up with is that it's from the motion of the boat and standing up and all that sort of stuff. And I've been losing weight, and we can't find why. All the tests come back right. Then here about a month or so I found out I don't drink water. Now I've been drinking eight glasses a day at least, and I've started to gain a little weight. I think the reason I don't drink water is back in the old days, you didn't have that much on the boat, and it always tasted bad. Boat water always tastes bad. I think, after awhile, you got away so you wasn't drinking it. This fall I went through all kind of tests and went in the hospital for tests and all this, and they couldn't find no reason why I'm losing weight. And I got to thinking, I says, "You know, I never drink water." Like if I take a couple of aspirin, I take just a little swallow of water to swallow them, not a glass full. I think that's something to do from being on the boats where the water always -- First off, you didn't have much, so you conserved it, and second, it never tasted very good. That would be

about all.

JM: What did you get from being a commercial fisherman that you couldn't have gotten from any other occupation?

PR: Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't know how to answer that, because I didn't have no other occupation. You was really your own boss, and I guess it was always a good challenge. I think that was very important. I guess you didn't realize it, but it was. I tried different fisheries a lot. I think it was the challenge more or less. I guess you'd have to say that. I really don't know, because it was the only thing I knew. I remember when I was a kid, my father says, "Well, whatever you do in life, I don't care if you're a garbage man or a politician, do the best you can at it." So you know, I guess fishing is more or less the challenge.

JM: Well I've gone through all of my questions. What would you like to add?

PR: Nothing.

JM: It's been a really wonderful experience talking with you.

PR: I hope everything comes out all right for you.

JM: And I want to thank you.

PR: You're welcome.

End of Interview.

Philip R. Ruhle, Sr.

NORTH KINGSTOWN – Philip R. Ruhle, Sr., 56, of North Kingstown, RI was lost at sea on Wednesday, July 23, 2008 off the coast of Atlantic City, NJ.

Ruhle

He was born in Oceanside, NY, the son of Gloria Ruhle, and the late Philip H. Ruhle.

He is survived by his wife Donna (Peckham) Ruhle, his two sons, Roger Ruhle and his wife Kimberly Ruhle of Coventry, and Philip R. Ruhle, Jr. and his wife Susan Ruhle of Peace Dale, RI, and his daughter Alicia (Ruhle) Eastwood and her husband Norman Eastwood of North Carolina, and seven grandchildren. His older brother James and his wife Kathy Ruhle of North Carolina, and his brother William Ruhle of Fall River, MA also survive him.

Brothers, Thomas and Robert Ruhle, also precede Phil in death.

He also leaves behind many nieces and nephews.

Phil Ruhle, Sr. has accomplished many things for the local and national fishing industry. Such as the 2007 Grand Prize for the "Eliminator" in the World Wildlife Federation's International Smart Gear Competition, 2004 NOAA Environmental Hero Award, member of the New England Fishery Management Council, 2003 Vice President of RI Cooperative Research Trust, and faithfully attended and supported all Fishery Meetings that involved the East Coast of the United States.

A memorial service will be held at the Calvary United Methodist Church on Turner and Wyatt Road in Middletown, RI on Monday, July 28, 2008 at 10 a.m.

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.

Tape I Side I

Biographical interview
Work in the fishing industry out of Long Island during World War II
- Day fishing
- Different species, different seasons
- Fishing off Long Island coast
- Species-Abundance
- Boats and equipment
- Crew and work they did
- Conservation

- Surf clamming off Long Island

Fishing community, Milburn Creek, Long Island
- Boats, shacks, net reels

Description of mackeral gillnetting operation out of Long Island 1940's
- Boats
- Navigational equipment
- Range of the fishery
- Where nets were set
- Problems with ships and tugboats
- "Close calls"

Fishing as a dangerous occupation
Making gillnets
Description of net reels used for drying nets
Lack of pollution in Milburn Creek
Seasonal fisheries out of Long Island, 1940's, 1950's
Wintertime fishing
Old-timers

Tape I Side II

Milburn Creek fishing community
- Integrity of people involved
- Way of life

Seasonal fisheries out of Long Island, contd.
- Lobster fishery
- Sea Bass
- Weakfish gillnetting

Beach seining on Fire Island
- Dories
- Nets
- Species
- Sportfishermen
- Model A Fords with big tires used to convey fish and equipment along the beach
- Good relations with residents of Point of the Woods
- Carl Chichester

Day fishing out of Long Island
- Verity skiffs

Ruhle's experience codfishing off Long Island
- Line fishing
- Selling catch to people who came to the docks
- Baiting lines
- Increasing the gear
- Crew shares
- Work of fishing
- Marketing the cod

Ruhle obtains a larger boat

Tape II Side I

Ruhle buys his 45' boat (1957)
Learning to trawl by trial and error
Whiting fishing out of Brooklyn, N.Y. (day fishing)
Mackeral gillnet grounds
Codfish depletion
Marketing mackeral

Tape III Side I

Decline of Brooklyn, N.Y. whiting fleet
- Depletion of whiting
- New York pollution problems
- Garrison Beach, Sheepshead Bay
- Boats and barges

Fishermen in Milburn Creek and how they made their living
How and why Long Island oyster industry went out of business
Swordfish harpooning (1945)
Swordfish abundance and depletion
Depletion of various species, inshore Long Island
Description of menhaden seine fishery
- Menhaden processing factories

Ruhle's first trip to Georges Bank made without navigational aids
Boats Ruhle owned
How codfishing by foreign boats on Georges Bank affected Long Island swordfish stocks
Fisheries Ruhle was involved in on his boat, Gloria and Doris
Mackeral gillnetting
- Unsuccessful attempts to find mackeral below Cape Hatteras
- The work of mackeral gillnetting

Trawling for fluke off North Carolina
Summer swordfish harpooning
Year-round dragging offshore
- Grounds and species

Navigation
- Use of Navy surplus Loran, 1958
- Fathometer
- Leadline
- Loran developments

Offshore fishing compared with day fishing
Fishing alone

Tape III Side II

Offshore lobster industry, late 1980's
Review of fisheries Ruhle was involved in on the Gloria and Doris on a seasonal basis
Development of the swordfish longline industry
Rigging Gloria and Doris for swordfish longlining in 1964
Description of the work of swordfish longlining
Ruhle's idea to attempt swordfish longlining off North Carolina during the winter
Swordfish migratory patterns
    Lack of knowledge by most people concerning swordfish migratory patterns
    Ruhle's work with N.O.A.A. tagging swordfish
    Ruhle's work as an advisor on swordfish for New England Marine Fisheries Council
Swordfish longlining in the Gulf of Mexico
Swordfish longlining out of Mississippi and Florida
Swordfish filled with roe off Miami
Damage done to swordfish by the practice of catching "ripe" females
Swordfish and mercury problems, 1969
    F.D.A. involvement in the swordfish industry
    "The Government vs. Twelve Swordfish"
Formation of the American Swordfish Association

Tape IV Side I

Mercury poisoning in swordfish
Canadian swordfishermen put out of business by mercury poisoning issue
Swordfish spawning areas
Swordfishing in the Straights of Florida, 1970's
Swordfish harpooning, a selective fishery
Swordfish depletion
Frustrations of a fisherman on a swordfish advisory council
    Ruhle's resignation as a swordfish advisor
    Ruhle's anger regarding the government's failure to regulate the swordfish industry
Ruhle's knowledge of swordfish and their habits through first-hand experience
Attempts to prevent the catching of baby swordfish
Lack of interest shown by younger fishermen concerning conservation issues
The fishing industry and the government
Party boats, pleasure boats and the fishing industry in Freeport, L.I.
Ruhle's moves to different different places to work on various fisheries
Scottish seining

Tape IV Side II

Ruhle's role as one of the originators of the swordfish longline industry
Description of early longline methods
Boats and equipment
Grounds fished
Trip length
Catch size
Effect of the 200 mile limit
Crew
Way of life
North Carolina state fisheries research boat Ruhle worked on
Difficulties between fishermen and biologists

Tape V Side I

North Carolina research boat, contd.
Swordfish longlining, contd.
The work of fishing
Various jobs on a swordfish boat
Pattern of the work day
Meal schedule
Standing watch
Amount of work depends on how many fish are caught
Setting the gear
Number of miles of gear set
Hauling gear in
Largest number of fish caught
Grounds
Hurricanes
Dressing the fish
Importance of dressing the fish properly
Radar buoys to mark the gear
Harpooned swordfish, swordfish caught by longline
The Parascandolo brothers-- Newport fish wholesalers

Tape V Side II

Harpooned swordfish, longlined swordfish, contd.
Learning how to care for swordfish through years of experience
Problems with longline gear
Sharks
Ships go through the gear
Rules of conduct among swordfish longliners
Swordfish and water temperature
Changes in rules of conduct as more and more people from different places become involved in the swordfish longline industry
Swordfish grounds further east every year
Changes in calibre of crews on fishing boats
Memorable people who have worked for Mr. Ruhle
Drugs and alcohol in the fishing industry
Insurance companies and the fishing industry

Tape VI Side I

Life at Sea
Effect of electronic equipment on the fishing industry
Early days of the swordfish longline industry
    Catch size
Rough seas and storms on the Grand Banks
Superstitions
Life at sea
Importance of a good sea boat
Grand Banks swordfish trips
Navigational aids
Increase in pressure on Grand Banks swordfish
Different grounds fished at different times of year
Gear conflicts between swordfish longline industry and the offshore lobster industry
Communication and rules of conduct among fishermen and how they've deteriorated
Swordfish migration patterns
Grounds Ruhle fished for swordfish at different times of year

Tape VI Side II

Swordfishing between Cape Hatteras and Florida
    Ripe females and small fish
Swordfishing in the Gulf of Mexico
    Rules of conduct
    Texas boats in the fishing industry
Swordfish longline trips
    Expenses
    Living made by the crew
    Comparison of price for swordfish 1960's and 1970's
Swordfish depletion, 1980's
    Changes in the industry
    Longer trips, fish harder to catch
Length of time between trips
Swordfish smugglers
Perceptions of being a swordfish longliner
Life at sea on the offshore grounds
Ruhle's outlook
The Newport fishing fleet during the early 1970's
Food and Drug Administration

Tape VII Side I

Swordfish harpooning
    Marking fish with radar buoys
Russian ships on Georges Bank during 1960's and 1970's
The 200 Mile Limit
Effect of foreign fishing on Georges Bank

Tape VIII Side I

The 200 Mile Limit
The New England Fisheries Council
Ruhle's disillusionment working on a government fisheries council
Important issues on the agenda when Ruhle was a member of the New England Council
Conflict between the government, biologists and fishermen
Significance of Ruhle's swordfish records which comprise the only comprehensive data on swordfish
Problems of fisheries management
Conflict between swordfish harpooners and swordfish longliners
Technological advances in the swordfish longline industry and depletion of swordfish
Comparison of swordfish catch over the years
Severe depletion of swordfish stocks
Depletion of tuna stocks
Expansion of the fishing industry after establishment of the 200 Mile Limit
Mistakes biologists make when making conservation decisions
Changes in the sociological makeup of the fishing industry
Calibre of people involved in the fishing industry past and present
Changes in the fishing industry
Environmental problems
Offshore oil exploration
Soaring insurance costs in the fishing industry
World Court decision, Northeast Peak, Georges Bank, 1984
Subsidized Canadian fish on the domestic market
Future of the fishing industry in Newport
Tourism, development and the fishing industry
State Fish Pier
Future of the fishing industry
Fishing and family life
Financial uncertainty
Physical hardships
Perceptions of occupation