

Name of person interviewed: Richard Canastra [RiC]

Facts about this person:

Age 43 at time of interview

Sex Male

Occupation Co-Owner and Co-Operator of RCC Foods, seafood auction house

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port,

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same)

Residence (Town where lives) unknown

Ethnic background (if known) Portuguese

Name of person interviewed: Raymond Canastra [RaC]

Facts about this person:

Age 46 at time of interview

Sex Male

Occupation Co-Owner and Co-Operator of RCC Foods, seafood auction house

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port,

and Hail Port,

Residence (Town where lives) unknown

Ethnic background (if known) Portuguese

Interviewer: Millie Rahn [MR]

Transcriber: Janice Fleuriel  
Erin Heacock

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Sept. 26, 2004

**INDEX/KEYWORDS****KEYWORDS**

Fish Auction; Display Auction; RCC Foods; New Bedford; Massachusetts; Electronic Auction; Yellowbird Auction; Corruption; Unity in Industry; National Marine Fisheries Service; Lumpers; Fillet Business; Environmental Groups; Stereotypes;

**INDEX**

[Start of Audio]

- [00:00] Both born in New Bedford, and grew up in Fairhaven; Attended school in Fairhaven; RaC initially went to college to play football but left after injury and went into fishing; RiC went into the snack food business; Went into business together in 1989;
- [04:43] Unloading and filleting business together; Started unloading scallopers, then draggers; Took advantage of the 1985 fishermen's strike to increase unloading business; Yellowbird Auction corruption; Story of spying on the Portland, Maine, display auction; Began own display auction in New Bedford;
- [10:08] Story of the first night the auction was opened; Wasn't sure how many buyers would show up; Canastra means fish basket in Portuguese; Knew Portugal was behind them; No one showed up so their filleting business bought all the yellowtail flounder stocked;
- [11:49] Buyers boycotted at first, because couldn't play pricing games with vessels like before; Buyers eventually came to the auction because their customers were buying directly;
- [13:56] RiC went to Brussels to sell skate, learned about Iceland's electronic display auction; Converted the auction to electronic in February 1997; Electronic auction made it fairer because it separated buyers and sellers; No more games;
- [17:35] RaC tells story of someone trying to blow up the auction in March 1997, never lit fuse after alarm went off; Other threats; Owns the software for electronic auction in U.S. and Canada;
- [19:43] Auction today has about 180 vessels, 42 buyers, lots of scallop business; Sales estimate at about 50 million dollars; Buyers from all over U.S.;
- [21:35] Have expansion plans to improve marketplace for buyers, sellers; Work well together because complement each other—RaC deals with vessels, RiC handles business end;
- [23:37] Only family fishing involvement was grandfather, came from Portugal, whaler for blackfish;
- [24:35] RaC tells story of wife running office at home in early days when unloading at night and running around collecting money in day; RiC went to "Market" University and RaC went to "Georges Bank" University; The business educates you, costs you money to learn; Story of RaC taking load back from buyer after wouldn't give bid price, selling on own with boat out at harbor, planted seed for auction work; System today works for buyers and sellers;
- [30:55] Festival has educated people; Festival has helped counter environmentalists' miseducation;

[33:26] Discuss old timers; Fishermen get bad rap in press; RaC more fish info now that talks with all captains than when working as one, they will share info; Appreciates Laura's, festival's work; Industry puts a lot of money and jobs into local economy;

[37:27] Fishermen need be a united front though different gear, vessel sizes; Environmentalists don't acknowledge all problems contributing, such as pollution, polar caps melting and changing ocean salinity;

[43:36] Government has stopped frivolous lawsuits from environmentalists; Fishermen always wrong; National Marine Fisheries Service can say fishermen are guilty until proven innocent and fine them, but not a problem if they themselves make mistake that costs fishermen; Magnus Stevenson needs be rewritten; Closing remarks;

[46:15]

[End of Audio]

**TRANSCRIPT**

[Note: Richard and Raymond's voices are very similar]

[Start of Audio]

[00:00]

MR: Okay. Now if you could give us your name please for the tape.

RiC: Richard Canastra.

RaC: Raymond Canastra.

MR: Okay, and tell me a little bit about yourselves, where and when you were born, your connection to the industry, what you do now, what you have done.

RiC: I was born in New Bedford, Mass, on May 20, 1961.

RaC: And I was born in New Bedford also. January 30, 1958.

MR: And tell me about yourselves.

RaC: Alright. With the fishing industry from the start. I went to school here in Fairhaven, brought up and raised in Fairhaven, went through the Fairhaven school system. Not knowing too much about the fishing industry at the time except for a few Norwegian friends of mine that their fathers owned boats and we heard a few stories there in the summertime. They'd make fishing trips on their father's vessels and that's about the size of me knowing anything about the waterfront as most people in this area, they drive across the New Bedford – Fairhaven bridge and they see boats, they don't have a clue what they do and how they make a living. Played sports in school. Went to one school play football in college. That was probably my first priority. Then I got injured. Then I left school, didn't know which direction to go. A friend of my dad's, Turk Pasquale, a famous lumper, one of the Pasquales. His kid owns Turk Seafood now in Mattapoisett. He got me to come down to the waterfront, and join the Fish Lumpers Union. I did that for a couple of years.

RiC: I remember, Ray, your first lumping job, when you had to get rubbed down with Ben Gay. You couldn't even move!

RaC: That's when the draggers would bring in, this was like in the late 70s, the draggers would bring in 120,000 pounds of codfish, filled up right to the hatch. You needed double takels to unload them. They had two crews to unload, and it was five vessels deep waiting to unload back in those days. And we'd unload boats then with Jimmy Dwyer, he was the boss lumper. He's still, he's the presidents of the Lumpers now. And he used to give me jobs. But then I see friends of mine who were fishing at the time, and the paychecks they were making and so I, of course, I was a little wild and crazy at the time, and wanted to go try that. First boat I was on was – Matter of fact, a few of my friends was on the Poseidon, it was owned by Bobby Birdo, John Isaksen, old Eastern Rig. I remember about a year I did gear work. I was still lumping for a paycheck. When it came in, I used to unload the boat, I used to work on gear for free, just hoping to get a site. Then one February, we was short a man, and Bobby Birdo asked me if I had my gear packed, which I always had my gear packed waiting to go. And he says go get it. So I made my first trip in the middle of February on the Poseidon. That was it. I spent the next five years on that vessel. Fishing with him.

MR: And what were you fishing for?

RaC: Scallops. It was a scalloper. As a matter of fact I just saw Bobby just now.

RiC: Did you?

RaC: Yeah.

MR: I interviewed Jimmy yesterday, so –

RaC: Jimmy Dwyer? Yeah.

MR: Got the story on lumping.

RiC: Well I started off, I went to Fairhaven High School, and after high school, I went into business for myself selling snack food. And I did that for a few years which I owned a wholesale [inaudible] in Rhode Island and Massachusetts at the age of 25. And at that time, Frito Lay and Anheiser-Busch was buying slotting fees in the supermarket chains and they kinda pushed people out of the business. I knew it was time to get out. Ray fished for like 14 years. He was a captain for a good part of that time, and he didn't want to fish anymore because he got married and had Cassie, his oldest daughter, and he wanted to stay more or less at hand, on land and he asked me if we wanted to go into business on the shoreside. So we decided to do that, I believe it was in 1988.

RaC: '89.

RiC: '89.

RaC: Yeah. That was my last trip in September '89.

RiC: So we started up an unloading business which we unloaded scallopers in '89.

[04:43]

RaC: Well, don't forget before that happened, I was a captain of the *Donnellan* at the time, working for Serge Sorenson, just passed away. And I, like Richard said, I wanted to try something different. When I stopped, I was actually doing a few restaurants, buying, pickup truck going from boats, I knew the captains buying bags of scallops, buying fish, peddling here and there, and getting involved that way. Then with my connections with the captains of the boats, we ended up getting unload trips, to buy the whole trips. That's when Richard came up, that's when we started doing vessels. We had like 25 scallopers that we used to handle their trips, selling wholesale their trips, and that's when Richard came on board.

RiC: Then started RCC Foods which we wanted to get into boat unloading. We did mostly scallopers before that, and then we started with draggers. As a matter of fact, our cousin, Ronnie [last name] on the *Donna Jean* was the first trip we took out as a dragger. And we had no idea what to do with that product when we got it. But Ronnie was to send it to us because we were fair guys and we'd take care of him.

RaC: The *Connie F*?

RiC: Yeah, the *Connie F*. Then we started unloading draggers, we started the business RCC Foods with Kenny [last name] and Michael [last name] in '80 –

RaC: '93?

RiC: No, yeah '93. So we unloaded product from the vessels. We had a processing and a fillet business.

RaC: And fish cutters.

RiC: We had about 30 fish cutters. We had a total of 150 people employed underneath us.

RaC: At that time, well before – push it back a little bit, so we can get into the Yellowbird Auction. Before this happened, I was a fisherman during the '85 strike. The Fishermen's Strike. Probably heard about that one, right? And we're at the, it was the New Bedford Auction, public owned auction here, and at the time, a few vessels did break the strike lines and went out fishing. Well, they had to have a place to come sell their catch. They came to this auction that was always up and running. It was pretty exciting back then

because it was in the morning, and these boats posted up their vessels with their catches, and you had this whole area outside this building here just loaded with fishermen. Police, they did their auction when it came out, all hell broke loose. The police been sort of knowing our side of the story didn't actually get involved that much. And a lot of them cars got beat up. A lot of the fish buyers, their lives were threatened. That's when they decided, the fish buyers decided not to come to this auction anymore, and they started their own auction, which was a couple miles down the road in South Terminal, which is what's called the Yellowbird Auction. A famous auction because of everyone almost went to jail there from price fixing

RiC: Yeah, as a matter of fact, they wouldn't let us become buyers in that auction when we had RCC Foods.

RaC: Because at the time we had the fillet room like Richard was saying, and we needed more fish to keep our business going so we wanted to join the auction so we could bid on fish, and buy fish, and unload at our docks. We had water access. We applied, they wouldn't let us. Which was a good thing because they all had their own little club going already and they didn't want us in on it. And we came to – We thought about doing our own auction at the time because we knew what was going on in that auction. And we jumped on a private little airplane and flew to Portland, Maine, because they were doing a display auction which is publically owned by the city of Portland. And we went up there to pretend that we were gonna join their auction to be buyers. Actually we were spying to see how they displayed fish. We flew back, right? We flew back, and the timing was right on all this, because what was going on in Yellowbird was already out in the newspapers, a lot of government contracts were being price fixed. They weren't actually bidding on, they were just sharing the profits. So the timing was right and we get the building down at Northern Wind.

RiC: So that auction ended up being getting closed down, and Jimmy Dwyer wanted to keep an auction for the vessels because the vessels needed some time of price instruction to go by, so he started up an auction underneath the overpass here. Right underneath the stairs here just to keep an auction going for the city. And at that point we said, 'Well let's do the auction. Let's do a display auction.' We wrote software for that auction and it was with the NetYield system with Mark [last name]. It was done in like 24 hours, 24 hour software for the auction. We opened up a space in the building for the auction. We brought in an air conditioning unit used from some salvage company that we hooked up just to get cool air blowing in there.

[10:08]

RaC: When we set that up, it was actually, it's pretty funny. When we set up this room, it was stripped down so we could display the fish. And we punch a big hole in the wall. And Kenny [inaudible] found this huge fan –

RiC: It was blowing air conditioning.

RaC: And what we did was, so we had circulation. Because we didn't know if it was gonna work, be successful. So we had the air being pushed around, and we strategically put ice carts in the room, around the fish, so we could pretend it was like a cooler.

RiC: Thank god it was September of 1994 that we opened up. And it was funny because we didn't know if the boats would be behind us or not. And Ray and I are Portuguese and what's kinda funny is that our last name, Canastra, means fish basket. It's a basket in which the fishermen brings his fish to auction in Portugal. But anyway, we didn't know

what we were gonna do. The first night, well the Portuguese were behind us because they used a fish auction, a display auction in Europe, in Portugal. All European countries have a fish auction.

RaC: Which they display the fish then bid.

RiC: Then bid. So the first night we opened up, we had over 200,000 pounds of yellowtail flounder and we were the only buyers cause none of the buyers would join the auction.

RaC: But we had our fillet company, so we were buying fish.

RiC: We were buying fish. Forced buy it! We're filleting fish coming out of ears.

RaC: We were unloading boats. We didn't sleep for a week. We unloaded around the clock.

MR: Your lumping background –

RaC: Yeah!

[11:49]

RiC: We were like in a coma, so what happened were all the buyers were boycotting because they didn't like, they didn't want a display auction because a lot of them made their money, quite frankly on overages from the boats, cut in the boat because they overyield. Meaning if a vessel is out at sea and he comes in, he puts 10,000 pounds on the blackboard and if he weighs out 10,600 pounds or 9,400 pounds, he over or under yield, so there is cut in the price. It was just a game, where buyers would say 'Well you didn't have enough fish so I missed my orders so I'm gonna have to cut you. Or you have too much fish, and I can't process it, so I'm gonna cut you.' There was always problems with quality no matter what fish you brought in, it was always number twos. The quality wasn't good enough so they were getting cut here on that. And after they unloaded them, there was funny weights going along, where they would fix scales, in which they would make their money that way. Also, the fishermen didn't care too much about their quality only because they knew they were gonna get cut anyway. They were gonna get cut no matter what if they brought 10 ton of ice or 30 ton of ice, they were gonna get cut on the quality.

RaC: There's no incentive to actually want to have excellent fish.

RiC: To have good fish! So getting back with the buyers. The buyers brought part of the auction and what happened in that week's time, we cut maybe a million pounds of fish and we're selling to everyone else's customers. So the buyers, their customers were calling us, so they weren't getting the business.

RaC: Fulton Market, Philadelphia.

RiC: So they woke up and said we better go join this auction or RCC Foods are gonna take all our business. I remember Tony D., from D. Fillet, his famous saying was, 'Move out of the way, I'm going to the display.'

RaC: Cause we were taking all his customers. Right! So thank God! We didn't want to be in fish business, we wanted be in auction business.

[13:56]

RiC: So we had our ups and downs with the auction. We had skate wings coming out of our ears. We gave credit to companies that I wouldn't even let them borrow a pencil, but we got through the rough times. We lost a lot of money. But we knew that was gonna happen, knew it was gonna work because it was the right thing. It was the right thing for the boats, and it was the right thing for the buyers. So we ran the auction from '94 right up until February '97. I went to this international seafood show up in Brussels, Belgium,

in which we were trying to move skates for RCC Foods. The skate wings which were a product used in France.

RaC: We had freezers full of them. We didn't know what to do with them!

RiC: Two million pounds of skate wings in the freezer. Not knowing what to do with them!

RaC: So we sent Richard to Europe to sell them!

RiC: To sell them! What good came out that, we did sell a lot of containers into the European Union of skates, but we also met up with a company out of Iceland. It was FishMar, and they had an electronic auction system, which they ran the whole country of Iceland on. And they were advertizing their software, so I sat down with those guys. Both Kenny [last name] and myself. We sat down and spoke with these people and spoke about the electronic auction software. And we thought it was a great idea. So we met with the guys in Iceland. I spent the month there in Iceland, more or less changing the auctioning system they had in Iceland to Americanize it to the way we sell fish here. And we came back and put it all together with communications and phone lines and we opened up the electronic auction in February 1997.

RaC: Ok so now –

RiC: No one likes changes!

RaC: So no one likes changes!

RiC: The buyers again were, they didn't want to be different room, not being with the boats. Because the buyers together, they could talk each other, they could feel where the market is, and they wanted to be with the boats.

RaC: And they couldn't, you wouldn't bid against other company that you did a lot of business with because they could give you a hard time all day selling your product, or giving you credit, so you know eye contact would stop someone from bidding. Or eye contact with a vessel or someone, the vessel doesn't like you, he's gonna scratch on your fish. It was a very good way to do business, but lot of deals still going on, so we wanted to fine tune it. This electronic system kept the buyers at their place of business.

RiC: We separated the buyers and the vessels, we didn't keep them together. Meaning that the buyers would come down to the auction in the morning between 5 and 7 a.m., they would view the fish that's out on the auction floor, view it as far as quality and what was available, and they'd go back to their office, and the auction would start at 7 a.m. It's all done through phone lines, digital lines, they all have a separate PC in their office just for the auction system. And so separating the buyers and the sellers created a problem because we realized in March of 1997 they tried to blow up our building.

[17:35]

RaC: And this is how this story goes. At the time, I was living right over here on Bridge Street, in Fairhaven, which was only a few minute drive over the bridge. And the alarms went off as we were unloading boats, we were unloading boats at the front, on the waterfront. The alarms went off. The alarm company calls me at home which I live so close I was jumping in my car and I was flying over the bridge. When I arrived there, I go running into the auction where we housed the computers for the auction. At the same time we had been getting threats on the phone, we'd been getting verbal threats, just the way it goes around the waterfront in those days. I ran into the auction building where we housed the computer, we actually had the auction, not knowing what was going on, and stumbled into a room full of gasoline. So trying not to vomit, we found out, the fire department was arriving when I arrived with the cops, what happened was somebody was



getting paid from somebody which we don't know went and put a five gallon drum of gasoline underneath the auction with a wick out of it. Then he went up and smashed a glass container of apple juice but it was filled with gasoline in the window setting the alarm off which scared him, made him run. He never lit it. But the gasoline bomb, the cops were laughing, they weren't just trying to blow up this place, they were blowing half your building up with this!

RiC: The fire marshal said the whole building would have been gone. So it took us a while to clean up that episode meaning replacing computers that was doused with gasoline. We've been doing it since again, the electronic auction since '97. We own the software for the United States and Canada. With that software, we're the only electronic seafood auction in the United States. A lot of people asked us at this time the age of going on the Internet, but the Internet wouldn't give you real time. We need real time to sell seafood.

[19:43]

RiC: Right now we handle about 180 vessels, we have about 42 buyers, we introduced scallops three years ago. I believe it was in 2001 to the auction. The scallopers are coming to us, and we're selling quite a load, loads of scallops. This year we estimate to do about 50 million in sales, with about 30 million in poundage.

RaC: We have buyers anywhere from Point Judith, Rhode Island, Fulton Market, New York.

RiC: Seattle, Washington.

RaC: Boston.

RiC: Boston. Maine.

RaC: Portland, Maine.

RiC: Portland, Maine. So what we did is that we brought buyers and sellers together. We have another company that owns the software which is BASE Incorporated. BASE Incorporated which is the Buyers And Sellers Exchange. And we make a fair market for the vessel and also for the buyer because the buyer can buy what he wants, when he wants, how much he wants at one particular time. He's not troubled buying a whole trip and spinning off the product that he doesn't use. And they can see the quality before they buy it. It's not sight unseen the way the auction was run years ago. And the fishermen are getting top prices for quality product and everyone's happy.

MR: And no one's trying to blow up your buildings now?

RiC: No.

RaC: No. They've seen the light.

MR: But didn't light it!

RaC: The waterfront has changed over years.

[21:35]

MR: It's a whole new meaning [inaudible]. So where do you go from here?

RiC: We're doing it – We do have plans for expansion. Different plans for improving the marketplace for the fishermen and for the buyers. And maybe if you interview us in a few more years, you'll see exactly how our plans went, and how they took place.

MR: You were in the foodways tent yesterday?

RaC: Yes.

MR: There's a lot of action down there.

RiC: Scallop shucking contest!

MR: Yes, I interviewed Sean Sipple [inaudible]. Well, he was a champion at one point.

RiC: He didn't fish for 12 years through.

MR: Did you ever fish?

RiC: No. I came from the snack food business into seafood business. That's where some people call me Fish and Chips.

RaC: Then you see a lot of families, brothers, cousins, all brothers brawl, right? The reason him and I work together is because I'm ex-captain, I take care of all the vessels, all the scheduling, talk all the boat talk with the boats. Richard takes care of all the business end of it which I don't have to worry about anything that's going on. The boats are getting paid. The money's being collected. I can do my gig and he does his. It works out well.

RiC: So we complement each other. I was more into sales, and he was more into, cause I was a buyer, and he was more of a seller on the vessels. So I understand that aspect of the business, and he that aspect of the business. If we're gonna get into a beef, it's because a buyer and a seller get into a beef about something but we're over it in five minutes and we just go on. But having that differences only been positive for us because we're just not looking one way, we're looking at all the aspects of the business.

[23:37]

MR: So with your name and its fish association, did your families fish?

RiC: My grandfather came in from Portugal in the 1900s. He did whaling out of New Bedford. It wasn't sperm whales, it was called blackfish, which is a smaller whale. But he did whale here when he came here in the early 1900s.

RaC: They actually used to push the blackfish into small coves and then they actually speared them and harpooned them right there.

RiC: I don't believe any other fishermen in the family.

[24:25]

MR: You come around to getting some fishermen in the family. So anything the family wants to add about fish stories?

RaC: My wife, when we wholesaling out of a pickup truck, and running around, this is a good story. She ran office for us at the house, my daughter was just born at the time. She ran it, and Richard and I sell, we only had a couple of employees which was my kid brother and us. And we'd stay up all night long unloading boats. We had a pickup truck and we were moving 20, 30,000 pounds of fish and scallops and delivering them, and most of it by hand. Getting it from the docks, we didn't even own a truck at the time. We would, after we sold all the fish, she'd be paying the boats, making the checks for the boats, which we didn't enough in the account to pay the boats, so we spent the rest of the afternoon collecting the money so we could make the deposit before 2. And sometimes we had three, four scallopers coming in, and a quarter of a million dollars of funds that we had to push out, and we had to make sure we collected it, and no one bounced checks on us. So we were very busy. We were unloading boats all night. Some nights we'd go days without sleeping, just doing it. She'd make the deposits for us, it was a lot of running around. Yeah, she remembers.

MR: But it's all fun together. And these are great stories.

RiC: Well the funny thing about this business is people would ask me, 'Did you go to college?' I says, 'Yes I did go to college.' They said 'Where?' I says 'Market University.' 'Wow, Rich you went there?' I says 'Yes.' The fish market, that's the market university that we went to is a fish market. And the money that we lost by bad deals or investing in gambling and different ideas that changed the industry, we probably could have went to Marquette 10 times.

RaC: I went to Georges Bank University. That's where I went. I went off shore.

RiC: And you definitely get an education in this business, but it's gonna cost you. It will cost you because there's always someone wiser, slicker, than what you are.

RaC: And being a skipper – I remember when came in from trip, sold at this old auction, when I was the skipper of the *Donnellan*, we bid up price to 5 ¼ a pound. And Seaview bought my trip. Seaview Fillet. Known for cutting deals, not paying what they were supposed to. So I brought the boat over there. And as soon as we unloaded the first bag of scallops, went on the dock, they looked at it and they said this stuff, it smells a little gassy. We're gonna pay you five dollars. Knowing me, I flipped out. Took all their bags, one bag on the chute, put them all back, I already gave them my monkfish, put that back on the boat. And I was pissed off, [inaudible] as I usually am, and went out in the middle of the harbor. So I knew a few of the players, so I had their phone numbers people who I had their card, so I started calling people selling my scallops. I sold my scallops to Pilgrim. Pilgrim Fish bought my scallops. And I made a better deal with my monktail, they could pay with [inaudible], David Pelletier, sold my monkfish. I could do this, even though it was my trip. So it was in the back of my mind to do this, and that's what got my wheels spinning. Then when we started unloading boats, and we saw how the real players worked, and how some worked so dishonest, and how they scammed. Rich and I always said if we could always had some kind of unload these boats and have the buyers come down and bid on it, and weigh them up with digital scales. We were the first company in New Bedford to have digital scales that are checked monthly just for their accuracy. And actually have a fair system that it was like a dream that we talked about. It would be perfect! Perfect would be impossible with some of the players!

RiC: You couldn't make a living on waterfront without stealing from vessels because everyone was all cheap prices, and what they stole from the vessels was their profit and what they sold it for was they just moved the product. And that was our dream that, I told Ray and Ray told me, I said we can't go on like this. I don't want to steal from the vessel because then you start stealing from them, and then you start stealing from family and you start stealing from friends and your whole lifestyle just changed, and it's just a screwed up mess. And if we could do it without stealing from the vessels and without beating up buyers, we'd have something good. I guess to end this that we can say that at night when we're done with work, we go to sleep and we rest well.

MR: You look like it. You're not looking over your shoulder.

RaC: And the system's great for vessels. The old way, you'd come in, when you started at the auction, you'd post your trip on the board, and hopefully you got your weights right. They bid on it, they tell you were you went to unload, we went to unload, then you fought all morning long. Sometimes you'd have to bring in mediators for fish quality and why they cut your price and guys stealing it while you're unloading. Now a vessel comes like this morning they're unloading it for tomorrow's auction. The boats there, brings the boat there, unload the quality, we ice them up, we separate them. And then the next morning, Monday morning at 7 o'clock, the captains, the boat owners come to our auction dressed up like a million dollars. Businessmen come back and when they say yes to the bid, it's a done deal! Not one time did someone say yes to bid since we opened in 1994 did the man didn't get paid on that price. For no reason! Any reason right! They've always been paid!

RiC: Always paid for that price.

RaC: So we know who – When he comes back to get his check, he's just to go make the deposit. Not to say why he was cut.

RiC: And it was funny because a lot of them they were waiting for the arguments. Where's the arguments! Who am I gonna argue with? Half hour later the check's there, and the check's in hand, and he leave and it's done with. These guys go through enough at sea, and what we're seeing this weekend at the Working Waterfront Festival, they go through enough with the weather and the stories that they told. And when they come into land, they want to unload, they wanna get back to their families. They don't want to be hassled on price and quality and we eliminated that.

[30:55]

MR: Yeah, I was gonna ask. That was gonna be my last question was how has festival so far had an impact on the local community do you think?

RiC: I think it woke up lot of people to what's going out there. Especially yesterday when we're doing the scallop shucking contest, which went over really big. People were amazed! I had some people ask me, was telling me I thought scallops came out of the ocean as is. They didn't realize that they had to be shucked out at sea. And just doing the comparison of how much 20,000 pounds of scallops, how many shells, how many scallops they have to open, it was like 500,000 thousand scallops. Seven men, in ten, twelve days, they have to do that. And people don't realize that. So when they see scallops at nine, ten dollars a pound at the grocery store maybe they'll appreciate it now seeing what these men go through.

RaC: And at the fillet demonstration with Carlos Rafael, his famous fillet demonstration, and he was talking about regulations as he was talking and how much fish was just discarded and not brought in. And regulations, how it hurts the fishermen, and a couple came up to me and started asking me some good questions about the seafood industry, and wanted to know where she could write a check to an organization to help us fight these causes. She didn't have a clue. She came right out and said it. People know the story. These make believe stories that the environmentalists come up with to create the crises, to create the paycheck for them.

RiC: They're not getting the right message, and as you can see with this Working Waterfront Festival, you don't see the CLF, Conservation Law Foundation, you don't see Oceana, you don't see the Pew Foundation with their bullshit talking to people to support them. They're out in the Midwest, with Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so doesn't know the difference between a codfish or a rainbow trout. And all their putting out the message that the poor fish are dying and they think they're good people, and they give money to these organizations and they really don't know what they're doing. We welcome anyone to come down and see what fishing is about, and how the fishermen are conservationists, and the fishermen doesn't want their species to be vanished because a lot of them are family oriented people, the pass their vessels down to their children, their grandchildren, and they have a lot of pride.

[33:26]

MR: And that's definitely comes through with a lot of the interviews that I've done. The old timers, the younger guys.

RaC: The old times love this huh? I've seen some old timers that I fished with. As a matter of fact, the guy who did the fish demonstration, he was the cook when I was 18 years old on

the Eagle. I was the only one who speak English on the boat! It was all Norwegians! I was eating those funky potatoes, and fishing whitefish.

RiC: Kumla!

RaC: Oh kumla. And the jelly, and the yam, not jam, yam! Oh my god! All the old timers, they're here, I seen plenty of them.

MR: Before the electronics. Just the fact that they are here to tell their tales is amazing! They've got their toes and their fingers and stuff. And that's where – I used to live in Newfoundland, and I've spent – That's where I went to folklore school and it would really bother me when somebody would say, 'Oh I'm just a fisherman.' What do you mean, you're just a fishermen? Your family's been fishing for hundreds of years. It's the hardest life. The tragedies! The conditions!

RaC: It's a hard road.

RiC: Lot of fishermen were put down because they were put down as drunks, druggies, drunks. And you'll see it even in the Standard Times, you'll see an article 'Drunken fisherman beats up girlfriend.' I don't see any articles in that paper about drunken carpenter beats up wife or drunken machinist beats up woman, drunken fishermen! And it's getting the bad rap from the press, mostly all the press is green papers anyway that support the conservational groups anyway because let's face it they do have a lot of money behind them. And people tend to go with organizations that have the money behind them not the commonsense. I think that's about all I have to say.

MR: It's great that you're making it happen and you're here at the waterfront.

RiC: We can go to work and be proud of what we do. Not to go home that night and be ashamed of what you did and you're kind of at your conscience, and then your conscience goes and it becomes a way of life.

RaC: Even people ask me, 'Oh do you miss it Ray? Do you miss it?' 'Do I miss it?' I said. I talk to fishermen daily! I know where people are catching scallops, are catching fish, where they're going. More information than if I was a captain now. They don't share among captains but they're telling me everything. I'm there all the time. Things have changed. They all use the internet, they all got email, Sirius radio, satellite radio, satellite TV, so things have changed to make things comfortable for them. But they still gotta go out there and they work some hours.

RiC: And we do appreciate you people. I knew that we were involved setting up this waterfront festival. I appreciate Laura, and the whole staff for what they have done down there. Because with our working and buying, we're so busy every day, that I think Laura and everyone involved here gave us the time to sit down, relax, smell the roses, and see what we're doing, because we take everything that we do for granted. And the outside person doesn't seen what we do, and doesn't understand what we do, and hopefully, we opened up a lot of eyes of people, local people in this area, because the fleet itself, with the scallopers and the draggers, this year, we're looking at reaching about 1 billion dollars going into the economy. One billion! Last year it was about 850 million, this year we're hoping to reach 1 billion dollars in our local economy. That's a lot of money! That's a lot of jobs!

[37:27]

MR: Well, you know, I do a lot of festivals around New England. I live in Watertown. I do work in Lowell. I've worked with Laura for a long time. What I always tell people, the value of festivals is, for the local community, but it's also the educational factor. None of

us, unless we're working in this business, get to meet people who're doing, fishing, or lumbering, or whatever it where we're working. We don't get to meet people like that every day. And if we can bring them to the public to see what is going on, what the issues are, not what you read in the newspaper, and really get – You know, we're folklorists, we want to listen to the people who are doing it every day, they know what is going on. If we can bring these together and get funding, get a process of respect and education, and mutual trust, and – this festival has really raised the bar for a lot of us I think. It, just seeing the enthusiasm and the community that is here, it's not people coming in from somewhere away, but it's mostly this community and the sense of pride and the opportunity to tell their stories and show off their recipes and their shucking and their rig.

RaC: Even that band Souls of the Sea. When they were up there, we were talking, cause they're from Gloucester, Gloucester is a big seaport up there, but not the same type of fishing vessels that we have here. We have big vessels. He was explaining to us I came here, and saw these big, huge, beautiful boats all lined up perfectly, all painted up, he goes 'You guys are real fishing people here. You guys are real serious!' We are! This is serious work! Right, this is the number one in value in the whole country, right? Number one on the east coast.

RiC: But there is separation among fishermen, meaning different ways that they go fishing, your dragging, your gillnetters, you have your scallopers, you have your big vessels, your small vessels. And that's been our really problem that we've had in the past, and hopefully in the future we can get together and realized that everyone is a fishermen, and that all these environmental groups cannot break us down and have us fighting among each other. Like the large boats, the small boats, the gillnetters. Because they all fish different gear, different openings, and different closes. If we all can get together, hash things out so it makes sense of everyone, I don't think we'd be going through the cutbacks and economic hardships that we've had in the past years because most of the fishermen are fighting against each other. Instead of the real issue which is these conservationalists need a reason for being. And they're not picking on the beef industry, the poultry industry, the dairy industry. They're picking on us because they know how diversified the industry is and how they know that we have a hard time getting together to fight the issues. Its problems with bycatch, incidental bycatch. I don't see these people going after the automotive industry that are driving their cars down the road and then the car will run over a squirrel or a skunk. Killing that. I don't see them going after that industry for incidental bycatch. It was an accident; they killed the squirrel or the skunk. We're easily to be picked on because we're not as large as those other industries.

RaC: And all the rules and the different ways catch fish, gill netters, long lining, if you're a hook fisherman, or you're a trawler. If they're into these boats, and looked around, they're all living underneath the same rules. Oh that's a gillnet issue! Oh no that's an issue for everyone. Because it's the same – They don't say this is amendment 13 just for the gillnetters, or this amendment 13 just for the small draggers. No! This is Amendment 13. So if everyone gets together, and they can have their fights in-house, not exposed, make their decisions, and come forward as one solid group, going forward they'll get a lot more accomplished. That's one of our next missions, is to open up some eyes. You know what I mean?

RiC: I told everyone of those so-called environmentalists that if any one of them would like to sit down with me and talk about fisheries issues, where they want a close on the industry because of turtles, because we're overfishing this species, that I would listen to them if they came to my office, maybe with a robe around them, no shoes, that they didn't drive up in a vehicle. Because a lot of what is going on in industry is a lot of the pollution that's in the air, and pollution from industry efforts, or making washing machines, cars. Everyone's contributing to it, it's not just fishermen who are overfishing. They're contributing because of the pollution in the air, polar caps are melting because of ozone, global warming. We're all in it together. And they should look more at that end, then on our end with the fish because with the polar caps melting there's more freshwater getting into the ocean. Salinity is not as salty as what it should be, and that causes a lot of this. So there's so many issues behind it that they want to talk, let's compare apples with apples, not apples with oranges.

[43:36]

MR: That was big awakening for me in Newfoundland when Greenpeace came in with seal fishery. Wiped out a way of life!

RaC: Those people, they're out of business. You hear Greenpeace now? Those people hurt so many people, people stop donating to them.

RiC: People stop donating to them and there was an act that just came out in Congress. What was it?

RaC: Frivolous lawsuits.

RiC: Frivolous lawsuits from environmentalists, from environmental groups. There's over seven thousand lawsuits in the federal court system just from environmental groups suing different organizations that they bankrupt the federal wildlife – fish and wildlife association. They bankrupt a government agency! So you sit back and you think about that and you say, 'Anyone who has money behind them can do whatever they want in the government. You can just sue them.' Finally the government is saying enough is enough.

RaC: And we have organizations where vessels, businesses donate, kick in money, trip by trip, yearly. And all that money goes to defending ourselves in lawsuits. Instead of taking that money to get into more research, getting the vessels going out there to do different tows, surveys for us. No, we're up against the wall. Always fighting lawsuits instead of going forward getting better science, so that we can prove that –

RiC: The fishermen are always wrong with anything from the National Marine Fisheries Service. It's like you're guilty until proven innocent. But if the National Marine Fisheries Service makes a mistake it's okay, it's no problem. So it's a lose-lose situation because if you're guilty for doing something you get fined, and if National Marine Fisheries Service made the wrong call, alright but too bad. Sorry about that, and the fisherman loses again. It's like banging your head against the wall. They have to restructure the National Marine Fisheries Service, they have to rewrite the Magnuson Stevens Act, and which was written for the industry, for the fishermen and for environmental issues but these top notch lawyers from these groups they can tear anything apart and they got different words in there and the different explanations of overfishing, bycatch, loop holes in which we're fighting with today.

MR: Well I hope this all help in things.

RaC: You've got Carlos at quarter of two.

MR: Oh ok, great!

RaC: Right now! Yeah, cause I called him to get him here for you!

[46:15]

[End of Audio]