



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: March 31, 2017

Marujo, David ~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

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Background

Name of person interviewed: David Marujo [DM]

Facts about this person:

Age born 1968 in New Bedford

Sex Male

Occupation Supervisor, Crystal Ice Company, New Bedford

Residence (Town where lives) Acushnet

Ethnic background (if known) Portuguese (Lisbon & St. Michael heritage)

Interviewer: Laura Orleans [LO]

Transcriber: Millie Rahn [MR]

Interview location: New Bedford

Date of interview: March 31, 2017

Key Words

Block ice, crushed ice, machine ice, brine, fish hole, lumpers, deckhand, fish houses, herring, scallops, cube ice, plate ice, quotas, draggers, cod, haddock, squid, vats, harness, boots, gloves, safety glasses, hard hat, Boston, Connecticut, Point Judith, Maine, Scituate, P-town

Abstract

David Marujo was born in New Bedford in 1968 and has lived in Acushnet since age 18. He began working at Crystal Ice 31 years ago and has worked his way up to his current job as supervisor. He describes the process of making different kinds of ice, how the technology has changed in the last 30 years, reflects on the changing waterfront and the trickle down effects on shore-side businesses as quotas restrict fishing days and demand for services, and the next generations are/are not coming into the business. "The waterfront is nothing like it used to be," he concludes.

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[00:00] Introduction. Born in New Bedford and lives in Acushnet. Began working at Crystal Ice at age 18 and worked his way up to current job as supervisor. Describes the various jobs in an ice company.

[05:00] Continues describing different kinds of ice and the tasks involved in an ice company, and the ice company business overall.

[10:03] Describes seasonality of the ice business these days and with decline of fishing year-round due to quotas, etc., there's related effects in less need for full workforces serving the fishery in the ice and related shore-side businesses.

[15:33] More on the ripple effect of industry slowdown.

[20:17] Describes a typical busy summer's day at Crystal Ice.

[25:04] Talks about how much the fishing industry means to New Bedford and beyond and it's reflected in the industry and in the prices of fish locally and in other markets.

[30:30] Talks more about Crystal Ice picking up the slack for ice needs in Point Judith, Boston, etc. Also describes changes in technology and that machines are now run by computers in a central location.

[35:09] Talks about how he learned the business from the bottom up and general changes the workforce and in safety equipment and concerns.

[40:09] Describes ideal candidates for coming into the business, but also the reluctance of some people to want to learn from the bottom up and the uncertainty of the future of the waterfront. Says, "the waterfront is nothing like it used to be." Talks about favorite part of job.

[45:06] Final thoughts.

[45:10] End of Audio

[00:00]

LO: I'm being picked up your mic. Today is March 31st in the year 2017. This is an interview for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center funded by an Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress. As part of this project we are interviewing shore-side people in the New Bedford/Fairhaven fishing industry to record their sorties, document their skills and knowledge, and better understand their important role in the fishing industry. The recording and transcript will become part of the permanent collection at the Library of Congress. I am Laura Orleans and today I'm speaking with Dave Marujo. We're here at the Fishing Heritage Center and the time is approximately 9:15. As I said, we'll do a formal release for the recording, but do you give us permission to record your story?

DM: Yes.

LO: Great. Even though we just established your name, maybe you could just sort of introduce yourself. Name and where you were born.

DM: Dave Marujo. I was born right here in New Bedford. I lived in Mattapoisett till I was 17. Got married at 18 and been in Acushnet ever since.

LO: When were you born, if you don't mind?

DM: 1968.

LO: Just out of curiosity, Marujo is not a name I'm familiar with.

DM: Portuguese.

LO: Portuguese.

DM: From what I'm told, it means sailor. It's from Lisbon.

LO: How appropriate.

DM: My grandfather's side of the family was Lisbon; my grandmother's side of the family was St. Michael.

LO: So, St. Michael being the Azores?

DM: Yes.

LO: Lisbon proper in the city? I also heard many people come from Tierra de [unintelligible], which is, so proud I can now say that. [laughs]

DM: My grandfather's side of the family was all farmers. My grandmother's side? I'm really not too sure. [laughs] I'm not too sure what they were, but yeah.

LO: Were they the ones to come over, that generation?

DM: No, it was the generation before them.

LO: Oh, your great-grandparents?

DM: Yes.

LO: Do you know what prompted them to come?

DM: No.

LO: Did they come straight to New Bedford?

DM: I believe so, but I'm not a hundred percent certain, and even on my mother's side, I know my great-grandmother, her, she lived until I was a teenager. She actually came over with her family on a boat. But she spoke broken English. Nobody taught us Portuguese, so we don't know all the stories, but yeah, she came over with her whole family. She was young. I think she was probably close to her early teens when she had come over.

LO: Was there any connection to the fishing industry other than the fact that --

DM: My grandfather was a fisherman for a few years. I don't know for how long, but I know he was a fisherman for a few years out of New Bedford. But I'm sure that was when he was a lot younger. Even that I don't remember too many stories about.

LO: How is that you got introduced to the fishing industry?

DM: My wife's uncle was a foreman, believe it or not, at Crystal Ice Company, and I was working two part-time jobs when me and my wife first got married. He was the one that told me, well, come on down and we'll see if we can't get you a full-time job. And the rest is history.

LO: Tell me your position at Crystal Ice.

DM: Right now I'm a supervisor. I oversee day-to-day operations. I schedule all the icing for the fishing fleet. Not so much the boats that come behind the plants, but if they need deliveries they pretty much call me and I set up all the deliveries between here, the Cape, Point Judith, Connecticut, so we go quite a ways.

LO: Backing up just a bit, talk to me a little bit about Crystal Ice. Obviously, mostly I'm interested in Crystal Ice's relationship to the fishing industry for this project, but I'm just curious. What are all the different things that the ice plant does?

DM: We make crushed ice. We make block ice. We do the fishing fleet. We do the fish houses. Most of our company is based on the fishing fleet. I mean, I would say at least 85 percent of our business is between the fishing fleet, fish houses, so on and so forth.

LO: And I was not aware of the fish house piece that's sort of obvious but I...

DM: Oh yeah.

LO: It hadn't occurred to me.

DM: Yeah, a lot of these guys put in their own ice machines over the years, but we still, during the summer, they can't keep up so we're the guys who bail them out when they're running out of ice.

LO: I'm assuming you didn't start out as a supervisor?

DM: No, I was just a regular worker. Of course, I had to work my way up. I pulled ice.

[05:00]

I iced boats from inside the building, maintenance work, so yeah, I had to dig in to get to where I am today, but it's been a long haul. [laughs]

LO: Do you remember that very first time walking in?

DM: Yeah, I do as a matter of fact. My first day on the job we had a breakdown in one of our ice bins. I spent the day shoveling ice. [laughs] And believe it or not, I came back to work the next day because that was a horrible, horrible day. But yeah, I mean, it's work. No, I was young. I had just gotten married. We were talking about starting a family. I had to grow up quick. I was only 18, but I had two kids by the time I was 22, so I had to stay working; that's all that mattered.

LO: Tell me about the different sort of jobs that there are at Crystal Ice. You kind of went through some of the things you've done.

DM: There's a tank floor operator, which is a guy who pulls block ice. Block ice isn't as big as it used to be, but if you remember the, everybody remembers the Boston tunnels. We supplied the ice for the cement companies. That's what it was. It was all block ice. Years ago when I first started down there, that was big with the fishing fleet. They all wanted that block ice. What we did is we put it into a machine that would crush it up and blow the ice right into their boats. When I first started down there, that was really big. We were doing that all day long, summer, winter, year round we were doing it. Where now, it's very rare that we do a boat with that.

LO: How does the process begin, I guess, is the question? Where does the water come from?

DM: With the blocks, it comes right out of the city. We fill these cans. They're in the floor. We fill the cans with water and we introduced, we call it brine. It's like cold water with calcium in it,

so we can bring the freezing point down really low. It circulates between all the cans and you'll see it, it eventually will just start freezing the block. We put air in the blocks so the blocks are crystal clear. Once you get to it where it's only a couple of inches wide, we'll drop all that dirty water out, fill it with clean water, and usually we can probably freeze a 300-pound block in 36 hours.

LO: Why is it important that it be crystal clear?

DM: You don't want to put crappy product out there.

LO: I see. Crystal clear means it's clean.

DM: Yeah, you can actually see through the block. I mean, you might see some white in there a little bit, but if there was no air, that thing would be completely white. Not that it affects anything, because all it is, is water without air, but it looks so much nicer when you open up the doors of your truck and you can see, wow, you can see right through the blocks, you know? That's the main reason. I mean, we don't do it for any other reason.

LO: So, once the block is frozen, what happens next?

DM: We'll take that cold brine out, we'll introduce warm brine, and that brine might be anywhere from 60 to 70 degrees. That'll loosen the blocks from the metal cans and we'll pull them right out with a crane. Put them on the end of the belt and put them into our storage. It's a sight to see, but like I said, we don't do it --

LO: How big are the blocks?

DM: They are I think they're 4 feet by 2 feet by 12 inches or 10 inches.

LO: They must weigh quite a bit.

DM: 300 pounds, each block. Yeah, it's a sight to see if you've never seen it before, but like I said, we don't do it nearly what we used to. We're lucky if we, I mean, all winter long, that whole floor is completely off, because it's not a year-round thing anymore, you know, like it used to be.

LO: Is that primarily used now in the construction industry? Those blocks?

DM: No, because we still use it. We use it as a backup in case we have a breakdown and we can't give ice in a certain spot. We'll introduce that back to the guys and say hey, you know what? So you don't have to wait, because we're broken down over here, let's get you the ice and you can get out of here. Yes, it's just not as much in demand as it used to be.

LO: Okay, so we've covered the block ice.

[10:03]

DM: All right, next would be machine ice, which is like tiny round cubes. That we make plenty of. That's all done by machinery, by refrigeration. Same aspect. You got water running over tubes. The refrigeration gets rid of the heat, freezes it, and introduces the warm gas. Drops it, crushes it all up, delivers it through stainless steel screws into our bins, and that's what 90 percent of the fishing fleet uses. And the fish houses.

LO: [overlapping voices]. Okay. How is it delivered to the fishing fleet?

DM: We have a huge rig system. It's actually four, what we call flights, that dig into the ice. It'll drop it into the screw. The screw will deliver it to an airlock system. All it is, is a rotary airlock that produces air and the ice will drop into the hopper, the hopper slings it around to the bottom part of the cylinder where the air's blowing through and it blows it down a pipe onto the hose right into the boat.

LO: Is that something that you guys do or the lumpers do? Maybe both?

DM: Well, the lumpers are the ones that are in the fish hole. Even now, I mean, there's not too many lumpers that ice boats anymore. Usually it's whoever the deckhand is. Yeah, they're usually the ones in the fish hole. They'll let us know how much ice they need. We have scales and everything that count out how many ton are going out the door and yeah. Even the fish houses, we load trucks that have one ton carts in them. We fill them with the same ice. Instead of coming of an air blower, it would come out a screw into a chute and just drop straight down and the guys load their carts individually and we'll deliver them to the fish houses. I don't know how interesting it is for ice, that used to be, it used to be nonstop. It's just not nonstop anymore.

LO: Talk to me about how that's changed.

DM: Well, when I started down there, it was definitely a year-round business, I mean, because you had of course during the summer you were busy. Boats just kept coming, the fish houses just kept calling, and as the boats came in, we were delivering to fish houses, we'd be delivering to the fishing boats; it was just nonstop. It was even like that a lot during the winter. I mean, during the winter we still had a full crew. We're noticing now more and more and it seems like every year, okay, well, we don't have 18 guys anymore. We're down to 15 and oh, crap, you know, two years later we don't have 15 guys anymore, we have 11. I mean, even for me being down there as long as I have, it's a scary thought that it looks like this is eventually going to turn into being a seasonal thing because of more and more cutbacks. I mean, it just doesn't look promising. It's sad to say, but I would hate to see it become just a seasonal thing, you know? You're talking about a lot of livelihood down there that they could be out of work or even worse, they work during the summer and now they're sitting home during the winter. It's just, it doesn't look good at all, it really doesn't. I'm hoping maybe not in my next 20 years, but within the next 10 or so years that something changes, because the path that we're going down right now is not good. Not at all.

LO: Do you service, I'm aware that there's a major scallop industry, a major ground fishing industry, and we also have other fisheries. Crab and clam.

DM: Yeah.

LO: Lobster...

DM: Not so much those. It's mainly just the fish, scallops. I know like the crab and lobster, the guys basically just put their product in water, so I mean they really don't refrigerate too much. It's mainly just the fishing industry, scallop industry.

LO: What about herring?

DM: Herring a little bit. I mean, we'll put the ice on the boat if they're going whiting or herring or anything like that, but other than that we don't; wherever they unload, we don't have anything to do with that.

LO: We were starting to talk about all the different aspects. We got the block ice and we got the, what do you call it? Cube ice?

DM: Yeah, you can call it cube ice. Machine ice. Yeah, that's basically what it is. Just machine ice.

LO: Since I have no sense of this, this isn't being videotaped to anything, when you say small, around?

DM: It's probably maybe 2 inches by an inch.

[15:33]

LO: So a little smaller than maybe an ice cube from an ice-cube tray?

DM: Yeah, about that size. Just round.

LO: Just out of curiosity, is there a reason for round versus square?

DM: Those are the machines that we have now. Our old machines used to make, it was called plate ice and it was just big sheets that would drop into a crusher bar. A crusher bar would just beat it up and you'd get all different size cubes. But now this is a little more, it's a little more uniform. Everything dumps exactly the same way, so it's more uniform. It's more energy efficient. And we can make a lot more ice that way than our old way.

LO: Tell me about, are there other jobs within the ice plant?

DM: The maintenance. Anywhere from fixing machinery, painting, a little bit of everything. It's mainly repairs or whatever needs to be done, which now this time of year, for us now it's getting everything ready for the summer because we're not that busy anymore, but when summer gets here, knock on wood, hopefully we'll be busy. Because the last couple of summers really haven't

been that good either. Again, because these guys only have a limited amount of days and pounds they can catch, so it's just nothing like it used to be. But we try to get ready for summer, just in case --

LO: Is the season actually more to do with, I mean, obviously, it's warmer; you need ice to cool your product more.

DM: Right.

LO: Also, does it have to do with the fact that fishermen are trying to use the limited days they have in weather that's more --

DM: Right. Yeah, that has a lot to do with it. I mean, if you really watch these guys, a lot of them will, they'll be all done fishing by October. Then for the next six months their boat is tied up. If you have guys that own multiple boats, they might use this boat for four or five months, then go to their next boat and use that for the next four or five months. But, I mean, for the most part, especially like the scallopers and stuff, a lot of these guys are all done by October/November and you don't see them again till March. They're tied up all that time, which it's a long time, that's even, I mean, not only does that affect them, that affects us because okay, we're not busy and now the fish houses are not busy and nobody's buying groceries, nobody's buying nets. It just affects so much. But that's exactly what's happening. If there's bad weather, these guys don't go out anymore. They don't want to waste their days. If they go out for two or three days and there's a storm, they come in. Well, those are lost days. The weather plays a lot of it. But a lot of it's got to do with like quota and crap. It just, I don't know the terminology I want to use, but it's just, it affects so much. It affects so much.

LO: Because you mentioned terminology, I'm curious. I've asked some of the other people in other parts of the industry: are there words that you use to talk about different machinery or different types of ice or whatever that would be kind of specific to your business, you know what I mean?

DM: Yeah. Not really.

LO: Like one of the electrician folks said something about Medusa's hair when he gets to a boat and all the wires are tangled up. And they all know what they're talking about.

DM: Right.

LO: Nothing you can think of?

DM: No, not really. I think everything's pretty much just straightforward. You have block ice, you have machine ice. Screws, conveyors. Yeah, it's pretty much just straightforward.

LO: This is always sort of a trick question, but take me through a typical day. Is there such a thing?

DM: A busy day? Or a winter day? [laughs]

LO: [laughs] Let's try a busy day.

DM: A busy day more than likely, if it's like during the summer, I'll get there early. I'll get there like an hour before everybody else.

LO: What time are we talking?

DM: Well, we'll say like six o'clock I'll get there and I'll start pulling out trucks. If our open-body trucks need carts from fish houses, I'll go out and get carts.

[20:17]

I get there early to get everything ready so when the guys come in at seven o'clock, we're ready to roll. Because there'll be times I get there at six o'clock, you'll have boats already lined up waiting, okay? So, it's just to get everything, not completely set up, but get everything ready so when the guys get there at seven o'clock, okay, well, they don't have to go out, they don't have to waste a half hour going to look for carts, come back, load up, and then you're already looking at quarter of eight, eight o'clock before the first delivery goes out. I try to make sure that I can get all that stuff so when they do load up, quarter past seven, they're already on the road. It's just to save time, because you don't know, you never know how that day's going to go. Because it could be first thing in the morning, you could have four or five boats lined up out there. You could have we'll say 30 carts of ice that you have to deliver already first thing in the morning, you'll have two or three trucks that have to go either to Hyannis or Connecticut or Point Judith. So, I just make sure all the trucks are out; they're all where they should be. If I have to get the vats, I get the vats. But then again by noontime, it could be we're all caught up. Or, if I don't do that or if nobody comes in early and we do get slammed like that, you're already starting behind the eight ball, you know? And it can be like that all day long. It can just be nonstop. We've had it where I've had three trucks do turnaround trips, you know? Two or three loads to Point Judith, a load to Scituate, and a load to Boston. Usually I'll know a couple of days in advance, because all those trips that are like out of town and stuff, I try to have these guys call me at least two or three days in advance, just so I can set up the schedule so it's easier for the drivers. So, they already know okay, well, they came back at four o'clock today, they can see already on a board, because I'll have everything marked down. All right, it looks like I got a late day tomorrow, so they already know ahead of time I could be working late or more than likely I'm going to have two trips tomorrow: one to Boston and maybe one to Hyannis or one to, I may only have one trip today because I'm going all the way to Connecticut. Just I'll have it lined up and a lot of times I'll even put their name next to it so they know, all right, this is what I'm doing tomorrow. But, that's only during the summer. During the winter, I may have nothing on the board for a week. Even with the fish houses, we may go a full week and I only deliver Tuesday and Thursday.

LO: Does your workforce, the number of workers, change through the season?

DM: For the most part, it's been pretty good. He's tried his hardest to keep everybody year-round, but I mean, we're not stupid. We can see that if it keeps getting slower, there's just no

way he's going to be able to do that. That's why I keep saying and even my manager will tell you, it just looks more and more like it's going to become a seasonable thing. It's a lousy way to go, but I mean, you can't expect these employers to keep people year-round when during the winter, you don't need the ice like you used to, you know? Because even you'll have boats, you'll have some boats like this time of year take in anywhere from 15 ton of ice up to 30, 35 ton of ice. Well, back in the day, even during the winter, they were still taking 10, 12 ton of ice, where today, boats can still take 35 ton of ice, but he's tied up during the winter. So, that's 10 ton maybe three or four trips, you're talking 30 or 40 ton. You don't have to make that anymore because that boat doesn't move anymore. It happens more and more with all these, even the draggers. I mean, the draggers right now, they'll take anywhere from 10 or 12 ton. During the summer, they'll take more. But in the dead of winter they may take 10 or 12 ton and you don't see them for two or three trips, because they're not catching as much fish.

LO: Does the tonnage have to do with I assume how far out they're going partly?

[25:04]

DM: I think it's got a lot to do with what the quota they can catch, you know? Because if they can only catch we'll say for instance like a scalloper, if they're doing a trip and they're only allowed 20,000 pounds, they're not going to need a ton of ice. But if they can go out and catch 40,000 pounds, well, all right, that's a little more ice they need. Same thing with a dragger. If they can only catch this much of cod, this much of haddock, and this much of say hake or something like that, okay, well, if they only need 10 or 12 ton, that's all they're going to take. They're not going to take more than they need. Unless, you know, unless we've had some 90-degree heat that they absolutely need it because they're melting the ice. But a lot of these fishing boats today have a lot better fishing holes in them too. They're better insulated and that affects things too, but I think if you were to ask around, it's mostly because of the quota. These guys don't come, I can remember when I started down there. We had boats that would come in 80, 90, 100,000 pounds of fish. I can't remember the last time I've seen... Now you see a boat come in with 30,000 pounds, that looks like oh, my God, where'd they get all that? That's really nothing. That's nothing. I can remember fishing boats coming in, in the morning, and we're going back late '80s, early '90s, that they would actually pull up to the dock, they put ice on the fish because they had so much fish in the fish hole. And then they would go unload. You don't see that anymore. You know? You just don't see it. It's just funny how you're talking, I know well the early '90s, you're talking 25, 30 years ago. Yeah, but that's really not a long period of time, where you've seen such a drastic drop off. Because even the late '90s, these guys were still really doing good. And it affects everybody because if you look at it, if you're able to bring a hundred people a day into this place and if you were charging, well, you don't have to charge as much, because that's helping you pay for everything. Now you're down to 20 people a day, well, now I have to start charging a little bit more. It's the same thing out there. Okay, well, you have 200 fishing boats, they're not going to bring in 40, 50,000 pounds of fish anymore. They can only bring in 10. Well, now instead of paying \$6 a pound for that cod, I'm paying \$10, \$13 a pound. Now it's costing me more money. It's costing the guy who's taking out the fish more money. It's costing the guy who's filleting the fish more money. It just builds up and before you know it, you go to a store to buy a pound of scallops, you're talking \$22 a pound. For a pound of scallops? Are you kidding? I don't even want it. Okay, well, now you're going to have more and more

people, because prices are going up. I don't want to buy that fish. I'm not buying fish anymore. I'm not buying scallops anymore. Now what do you do? You keep cutting back, keep cutting back, eventually people are just going to say I can't afford those prices.

LO: Tell me about the price of ice. What is the price of ice today?

DM: Today is 68 a ton, I believe. When I started --

LO: 68?

DM: Dollars a ton. What it was when I started, I couldn't even tell you. [laughs] I don't even remember, but again, insurance on the trucks have gone up, electric's gone up. And it costs more to start the machines to make the ice and it's just, it's not the 1990s anymore where you can pay people 10 or 12 dollars an hour and they can live. They just can't live off that anymore, so this fishing industry really means so much, not just in New Bedford, just to people in general. I mean, you're devastating a lot of stuff, because you don't know how much product leaves New Bedford. I mean, I don't know personally how much fish and scallops we ship out of New Bedford, but if you're pushing out a hundred thousand pounds of scallops out of New Bedford into the Carolinas or Florida, something like that, I'm just snowballing here, but if you're charging people in New Bedford \$20 a pound, what are you charging them? And how long before we had to throw away our scallops because nobody bought them. You know what? Instead of sending us a hundred thousand pounds of this truckload, why don't you just send us 50? Okay, now what do you do? I just feel that that's just going to be a big snowball effect. With more and more cuts happening, you can't help but look at the end of the tunnel and not see the end, but see that it's getting smaller and smaller and smaller, and there just seems to be no light at the end of it.

[30:37]

LO: I was interested to hear, I kind of knew that you serviced everybody in New Bedford or mostly?

DM: Yeah.

LO: Are there some companies that do their own ice?

DM: Oh, you have Eastern Ice right down the street, They service --

LO: Okay. They mostly service their boats?

DM: Their boats. They service a couple of fish houses down there, but even them once in a while, you'll see their boats docked up outside of us, only because basically we're the biggest ones on the waterfront. If they run out of ice, yeah, you have to come and see us, too.

LO: But I didn't realize you were servicing boats in Point Judith.

DM: Oh yeah.

LO: And Boston.

DM: Boston. Connecticut.

LO: Tell me the range.

DM: We've gone as far as Maine. I mean, not often, and that was actually an ice house we delivered to, but we've done boats in Point Judith, we've done boats in Connecticut. We have a few boats in Connecticut that we take care of.

LO: Where would that be?

DM: That would be, you throw me on the spot here.

LO: Down to Stonington?

DM: No. Ah, man.

LO: That's okay.

DM: It'll come to me too. It'll probably come to me when I walk out the door. We've gone as far as P-town [Provincetown]. Boston, Scituate.

LO: Is that a change since you started there? And are the smaller ports just not able to, they don't have the infrastructure that they used to have?

DM: Boston used to have an ice company right the pier and that actually, that just crumbled up and they never replaced it. I know they have some machines there that they can provide some of their boats with stuff, but again, as it gets warmer and busier, they can't produce as much ice as we can. And depending on what time of the season it is, if these guys are fishing for squid, we usually take care of all those squid boats out there, especially like in Point Judith, because that's mainly what they do out there. Not that they don't fish for other stuff, but a lot of their squid boats we'll go out there and ice up their boats, or even the ice company on Town Dock, if they're running low, we'll blow it right into their building.

LO: You referenced it a little bit, but how has the technology changed in the time you've been involved? The machinery?

DM: It's definitely become a lot more energy efficient. Everything in our company right now, when it comes to making the machine ice, it's all computerized. Everything is done on a computer. Where before it was manual startups. If there was a breakdown, there was more to the machinery than there is now. So, like breakdowns would take that much longer to fix. If you have a breakdown on a machine now, which is very rare, it's to replace a motor or a gearbox. You know? It's not chains, belts, and any other number of things because everything's done on

the computer now. It's just not as hard to maintain as the older equipment was. The older equipment during the winter, there was a lot to it to get it ready for summer, where this new stuff, there's very little you have to do. Again, everything's done on a computer, so you can see everything on a computer screen. You can click in and see what each machine's doing and what compressors are running, how they're running. You don't have to actually go over there. You can see it all right there. And if there's something wrong, it'll show you right on the computer and then you can go over and investigate what it is. Where before, you constantly had to keep checking every single machine. We used to have guys that would go down there at night just to check machines. Well, you don't have to do that anymore.

LO: Tell me a little bit about how people learn. How did you learn all these different skills?

[35:09]

DM: Basically just by watching other guys and getting involved. You got to want to learn it, first, you know? You don't see too much of that today either [laughs] with the new generation, where they don't want to get too involved. You've got to want to learn, you know, you've got to want to learn something new. The training that we do there now is a lot different than when I started there. When I started there, there was so much hands-on stuff that you really had to get into everything you were doing, where today, like I said, where the machines are all computerized, these guys can look at a computer screen and we can do a lot of teaching right there. I mean, we still have like safety stuff that we have to go through and things like that, but I mean, nothing, nothing like it used to be. Nothing like it used to be.

LO: Is there danger in the work?

DM: Oh, there always is. I mean, [laughs] no matter what you do, there's always dangerous. I mean, anything can happen, you know? But, it's more safety for our guys to have knowledge that you need to pay attention to what you're doing so we don't have any accidents. If you're loading a truck, you make sure you put on a harness to make sure you're all tied in. All that stuff matters.

LO: I just got a text saying that Rob is here, but we're going to go on for a few more minutes.

DM: Okay.

LO: You mentioned the harness. I'm curious, is there other clothing or gear that is particular to the work you're doing? That you don't put on at home, maybe?

DM: No, other than that I mean, you just got to make sure you wear work boots, gloves, safety glasses --

LO: Hard hat?

DM: In some places if you feel that you should have one. I mean, we have hard hats there. I mean, for the most part you really don't need them.

LO: What do you look for when you're hiring somebody new?

DM: [laughs] That's a good question. It's hard to say because the generation, and I hate to keep bringing that up, but you want a, I say a kid, they're not really kids, but you want these, I don't do much, I don't do any of the interviewing things, but you can tell usually within a few weeks if anybody has interest in what they're doing. I even hate to, I hate to say it but these younger guys today, I'm talking guys in their 20s, mid 20s, late 20s, they just, they don't have any drive, you know what I mean? Not that I'm using me an example because I was young, I got married young and I had kids young, but this younger group coming through is just, they want the money but they don't want to work for the money. You know what I'm trying to say? I was brought up, you want something, you work for it. I wasn't handed a supervisor's position. I had to start scraping, painting, fixing things, getting, not that I don't get dirty now because you can see that I do, but I had to work my way to that. I busted my butt. I earned my way to where I am now. It took me a long time to get there, but I earned my way to do it. I just notice with this, and not that they're all like that, because they're not, I just notice with a lot of the younger group coming in, it's I want to start here. You know? I don't want to earn my keep. This is what I feel I'm worth. Well, you know, just because you feel that doesn't mean you can start there. Everybody has to start somewhere and nine times out of ten, when you go into a company, you have to start at the bottom and earn your stripes. But, you really want to look at somebody who wants, who's eager, who wants to learn, who wants to know.

[40:09]

You can usually tell when you're talking to them when they say, you know, I want to do it. I want to be involved. I want, hey, can you teach me that? All right, this is somebody who's really, and you'll have other ones where hey, you want to come over here and just take a look at this? I'm trying to teach. Yeah, all right. Okay, well, you really don't have any interest in this, you know? But again, the way the waterfront's going, it's going to be tougher and tougher to introduce new people to this way of life, I guess you could say because it's just nothing like it used to be.

LO: What do you like most about your work? What's your favorite part of a day?

DM: Believe it or not, if people heard me say this they would say no way is he saying that. It's all the people I deal with, you know? Because I'm really not a big people person, but I've known these guys on these fishing boats for so long and if you would have told me, oh, John So-and-So said hi and, tell me what boat. Tell me what boat. I know these guys by their boat, you know? Or, if they call, a lot of the guys who call me, I know them on a name to name, face to face, and it's more the relationship that I've built with guys in the fleet, not that the guys I work with are any less, but it's the relationship I've built with the guys in the fleet; the guys in Connecticut, you know? These guys that call me all the time. I have a guy in Point Judith and a guy in Connecticut that I don't with all winter long, you know? I'll hear from them. I'll get a text at Christmas. Hey, Merry Christmas, Dave. That means a hell of a lot because that means I built a good relationship with these guys, that they like dealing with me. So, I mean, stuff like that. That is probably what, as hard as it is for me to say, that's probably what means the most to me down there. It's what I've built with the people outside of Crystal Ice that I wouldn't have met without

being at Crystal Ice, but it's those relationships with some of the captains and some of the boat owners that you might see me down there. It looks like I'm not doing anything, but I may be talking to a captain of a boat or I might be talking to an owner of that boat. And I try to make a point that if they are out there and I know who they are, I go over and say hi and a handshake and can walk away. If they want to talk for a couple minutes, that's fine, I'll talk for a couple minutes, but it's just a good relationship that I've built with some of these guys. They may not even know me by name, you know? But if they see me. [laughs] I ran into a captain of a boat, no word of a lie, in Florida of all places. A hundred thousand people in this place and he picked me out of a crowd and he come walking right over. Shook my hand. My wife was like who in the heck is that? Oh, that's I'm not sure of his name, but I know he's a captain of this boat, you know what I mean? I mean, if the guy didn't like me, he definitely wouldn't have come and approached me. If I didn't have some type of relationship with him, he would have just kept walking right by, but to go out of his way to come over? Dave, Dave, Dave.

LO: It seems that the waterfront is kind of a special place that way.

DM: Yeah, and that's why I keep saying, you are slowly but surely, well, not you but I mean, they're slowly but surely just tearing that place apart. They really are. Because there's some people, you know, not me, but I'm sure there's some people down there that that's family. And you're slowly but surely just okay, you're not working anymore or you're not working anymore. To some people that's all they know. They know the fishing and that's it. You keep taking the carpet out from underneath them, there's nothing left, you know? Unfortunately, that's exactly how I think that waterfront is going. As far as I'm concerned, I think there has to be some type of change because you're going to put a lot of people on unemployment. You really are.

LO: I'm afraid we have to wrap it up because we have our next guy waiting, but is there some that we didn't cover that you want to talk about or share?

DM: I think I pretty much covered everything. I mean, you ever come out with more questions, I'll answer them. I don't care.

LO: I'd love that.

DM: I don't mind doing this.

LO: I'd like the opportunity to come and see the plant too.

DM: Yeah. That's fine. Either see me or Rob. We'll bring you on through. Yeah, if you come up with any more questions, don't hesitate to ask.

[45:06]

LO: Thanks, Dave.

DM: Thank you. No problem.

LO: I will do this.

[45:10] End of audio