



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: January 4, 2017

Rochford, Eoin ~ Oral History Interview

Madeleine Hall-Arber

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Background

Name of person interviewed: Eoin Rochford [ER]

Facts about this person:

Age

Sex Male

Occupation Plant Manager, NORPEL (Northern Pelagic Group, LLC)

Residence (Town where lives)

Ethnic background (if known) Irish

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

Transcriber: Laura Silverman [LS]

Interview location: NORPEL plant

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Key Words

Fish processing, by-catch, herring, mackerel, Nigerian fish market, aquaculture, pelagic fish, sardines, by-catch allocation, RSW tanks, Merchant Marine Engineering Exam, fishing regulations, New England Fisheries Management Council, immigrants, unions, safety regulations, sulphur hydroxide, gang violence in New Bedford, future of the fishing industry, wind energy, solar energy

Abstract

Eoin Rochford is the Plant Manager of the Northern Pelagic Group (NORPEL) fish processing plant in New Bedford, MA. In this interview he discusses the evolution of the fishing industry in New Bedford and New England. He also explains his personal history and career, including his time working as an engineer on fishing boats, fishing in Alaska, updating fishing boats, working at the NORPEL plant in New Bedford, and exporting fish to Nigeria. Mr. Rochford explains his opinions about immigrant workers in America, the future of alternative energies, and the fishing industry.

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[00:00] Eoin mentions fish processing plants that have closed down in New England. He also explains the effects on fishermen of the mid water fishing ban in the Gulf of Maine in 2006, including the difficulty in avoiding by-catch.

[5:29] Effects of ecosystem on fish size, market for inexpensive fish in Nigeria.

[9:49] Economic disparity in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, problems with chicken farming or aquaculture in Nigeria.

[15:07] Brief introduction to Eoin Rochford and the price differences between lower and higher level pelagic fish, process of offloading and freezing mackerel, penning tuna, teaching tuna to eat dead fish

[22:46] Differences between herring and sardines, producing fish for pet food

[25:14] Explanation of how plants avoid taking in too much by-catch, informing fishing fleets of higher than normal by-catch, scallopers using grids to avoid too much by-catch of yellow tail flounder.

[29:10] Eoin explains how he got started as a fishing boat engineer in Ireland and his time overseeing construction of factory fishing boats in Norway in 1987, emigrating to America, the process of updating a boat in a shipyard, installing and using RSW tanks. Eoin describes his experiences modifying a variety of boats in New England, the abundance of mackerel, as well as fishing for a year in Alaska.

[49:20] Eoin describes seeing the NORPEL plant while it was being built and being hired as an engineer. He discusses the emergence of other mackerel plants, the effect of regulations on the fishing industry.

[53:20] Eoin recounts having to take the Merchant Marine engineer's exam in Ireland to prove his ability to be a ship engineer. He discusses the differences between the fishing industry in the northeast and the west coast and Europe, and the negative effects that regulations have had on New Bedford's fishing community, in particular. He also explains why he thinks the commercial fishing industry doesn't need as many regulations.

[1:04:23] Eoin discusses attitudes towards commercial fishermen around the world and his employees at the NORPEL plant. He also explains the value immigrants add to the American fishing industry.

[1:11:10] Eoin explains how he checks potential employees' Social Security numbers and his experiences with union-like requirements at the NORPEL plant.

[1:16:39] Eoin continues to discuss unions, and also explains the safety procedures in place in the NORPEL factory for things like ammonia leaks.

[1:19:35] Eoin explains the danger of hydrogen sulphide gas and what he looks for in employees and his struggles finding plant engineers.

[1:25:01] Eoin continues to discuss the difficulties he faces finding young people to mentor in the fishing business, as well as the differences he has noticed in the work ethic of different groups of people.

[1:30:12] Eoin describes incidents with gangs and muggings in New Bedford.

[1:34:07] Eoin summarizes the economic history of New Bedford's industries, the possible future of the fishing industry in New Bedford, and the problems with and effect of regulations on the fishing industry.

[1:43:48] Eoin explains his opinions of the New England fishing industry regulations, including overregulation of fishing. He also discusses the reduction of the fishing industry in other New England cities, and his thoughts about green energy.

[1:51:14] Eoin explains the problems with wind energy.

[1:55:54] Eoin continues to explain the problems with wind energy, and considerations for using solar energy.

[1:59:35] End of Audio

[0:00]

ER: ...be out of business, which actually happened in quite a few of the plants. So, I mean, when we started in 2002, well, they start, had one day's production in 2002. At that stage, you had Cape Seafoods, Lund's, The Atlantic Frost in competition. And within two to three years there was Dumstein [sp?] started up in Gloucester and there was Mars Pelagic started here in New Bedford, and within a few years all of the plants basically disappeared, because they weren't committed enough financially to basically making it work. Mars basically pulled out and The Atlantic Frost, they went bankrupt, as far as I know. I think the boat is down in the Chesapeake somewhere now. It was basically a mobile factory because they took the propellers off the boat so it wouldn't have to follow Coast Guard regulations as regards, you know, a factory fishing boat, right? So it doesn't need licensed personnel on the boat. [cell phone ringing] Sorry about that. It doesn't need licensed personnel on the boat to operate without propellers. Dumstein [sp], I'm not sure what level of commitment they had in Gloucester, but basically they closed shop as well. So it's just ourselves and Cape Seafoods are left. But since 2006, a lot of things happened in the industry in 2006. The environmental groups lobbied the New England Management Council to ban mid-water fishing in the Gulf of Maine, which is area 1A to us. And they were very successful in doing it. And like that basically is contrary to Magnuson Stevens, because you're not supposed to discriminate on gear type. So what that basically means is, you know, your fish aren't in jeopardy depending on how you catch them. I mean, it doesn't matter if you catch 20,000 ton of fish with a seine net or a mid-water net or by hitting them over the head with a frying pan for that matter. It's still catching 20,000 ton of fish. But because we weren't attorneys, we didn't understand the implications and it wasn't until it was too late, which basically was a month after it went in, we could basically have sued and they would have to overturn it in a court of law. But after the thirty days passed, it was written in stone and there's no turning back the clock. So we were banned forever and a day from going into 1A. So the thing, the problem with fishing area 1A is in the summertime the fat goes to an all time high in the herring before they spawn and milk develops. And that's when the fish have the best flavor. And when, in actual fact they're, the most pristine to most of the human markets that we'd sell to. Now you can get fish on George's at that time of the year but we didn't understand the migratory pattern of the fish to the extent we do now. The fish basically, on George's, they can cross over the Hague line which is into Canadian waters, and as such then we can't catch them or harvest them. The other problem we have is there's a huge abundance of haddock, and there's been huge year classes over the last ten years, and haddock have swim bladders the same as herring, so when you're going out looking for herring on the boat, you actually never set the net until you see enough fish. So what you're actually seeing in your sounders are fish with swim bladders. And you can very easily mistake haddock for herring, right? So now you can have an interaction with haddock. Normally you couldn't catch them with a mid water net, but because of their overabundance you could catch them with a Wellington boot out there. So the problem is we're on this choke species, so we're only allowed one percent of the ground fish allocation on haddock, as a by-catch. So just by accident, you could very easily exceed this figure. And in the summertime the haddock and the herring swim very close together, in the months of June, July and August. And if we're fishing out in George's, we could catch our entire allocation until the following May, which means we wouldn't be allowed fishing area 3 until the following May, which happened last year.

So, you know, in the winter time, due to inclement weather, these boats, despite what people say, they're not big enough to go to George's and bring fish all the way home from George's. Because the weather out in George's can be just as bad as it would in the Bering Sea, or off the west coast of Ireland, which I'm familiar with. And the boats here were never designed for that for those heavy seas.

[5:29] MHA: Can I ask you a question?

ER: Sure, yeah.

MHA: When you say the haddock and the herring swim together on George's, do they also do that inshore? So if you... in 1A, for example?

ER: No. They don't, because you don't really get haddock in 1A, they don't seem to like that ground. And from talking to ground fishermen years ago I've learned that if we fish deeper as the summer goes on, the haddock will go shallower. So you'll get a separation then, which is good in a way, because the deeper you fish for the herring, you don't get an abundance of herring there, but you actually get very adult fish, which are probably seven plus years, which means they're over 200 gram. Now there's an overabundance of herring around these waters as well, and that sounds good like it is in one respect. The reason it isn't good is the ecosystem can only support so much fish. And because of the overabundance, the fat in the fish is diminished for its physical size. And also its growth is stunted because it isn't getting enough food to sustain it in a healthy manner. Like if you look at the human race, the same thing happened in the 1800s. I discovered this when I visited the whaling ship, the WB Morgan. The bunks in the ship could only accommodate about a person of five foot six, but then I discovered the average height of an American back in the day was only about five foot two. But because of, you know, the better quality foods that are available, the average height of an American now has to be over five ten or five eleven, you know? And I'm talking average heights, I'm not talking about these basketball players like Shaquille O'Neil at seven foot six or something, you know? But the same with these fish. They're just, their growth is stunted and their fat is diminished, so a lot of the fish that we process here would be 120 to 140 grams. You know, you're limited on the markets where you can sell it. It's still a very good protein but, you know, it's hard to make a living on it.

MHA: So unfortunately when I set the recorder on I missed the first couple of minutes of our conversation. You were saying that you sell to Nigeria. But they don't seem to mind that it's a little less fat?

ER: Well you must understand, like, I mean, if you're starving, any protein at all is good protein. And like the people in Nigeria, the only protein they can afford are herring and mackerel. Obviously they'd like something that's a bit more flavorful, but like, people fail to realize, and I discovered this in this country, one guy saw me eating biscuits and gravy for breakfast, I was fishing in Alaska, and he says, you must really like biscuits and gravy. I said, no, I says, I'm really hungry. And he couldn't get that concept, you know? And like, when you're brought up in a different culture, you don't have to necessarily like the food. If you go hungry enough, you'd be amazed what you'd eat and appreciate it. And that's the same thing out in Nigeria. I mean, people fail to understand a lot of fishing, I mean, people ask me some, what I deem crazy questions, like

when do you go to sleep, or you can't be serious like you'd sleep in that bunk? And they don't understand what working to exhaustion is. And how grateful you are to get any few hours of shuteye at all. And the same with hunger, I mean, if these people don't get the herring, they're going to starve and die. I mean, that's what it comes down to. Obviously if you had a better quality of goods you might get a more lucrative market with them. But basically, you know, the Nigerian market is, you know, the last straw basically for everybody because they can only afford minimum pennies, and that's what we're basically trying to provide them with a food source for pennies. I mean, nobody's getting fat on the hog on this.

MHA: So, I'm curious about how you make the contacts, for example in Nigeria. Who actually purchases?

MHA: ...purchases...

[9:49] ER: It's very, very strange, I mean, I, I've been in the fishing business all my working life and the, the world is actually a very small place when it comes to fishing. It doesn't matter whether you're fishing in Ireland or in Japan or in Alaska, on the west coast, the same players take place. And you can't mess up without people knowing where you were last, you know? I mean, the way you make contacts is in trade shows, but I know the previous company I worked for in Ireland, Atlantic Dawn, we used to sell to the same people years ago. I mean, I'm talking like, I've been here for twenty something years, so I'm talking thirty years ago we were selling and dealing with these people, you know? And we're still dealing with them today, you know?

MHA: It's interesting, I'd be curious to know more about the chain and how it gets to, um, because I spent a year in Senegal so, I wasn't dealing with the people that imported fish, but mostly the people who actually fished and they brought the fish into the wives or other associations to actually sell it to the consumer. So I'm curious about the chain once it gets imported, who gets it.

ER: Yeah, well, you see, one thing about Africa, it's very, very strange, like people come to power in Africa and they usually are pure dictators, or they get executed. And then the dictator takes over, right? Now, there was a gentleman I knew years ago when we used to sell fish up in Scotland, right? Paul Plumis is his name, he now is an agent for an insurance company, so he would insure the product, the frozen product, you know? To make sure it gets to its destination. And he was telling me a story about being in Lagos in Nigeria. Now Lagos would be the capital and it's one of the biggest ports there, where they import the, and I heard a similar story, well, not a similar story, but the end result was the same, how people there have no regard for human life over something as simple as a few fish, that literally cost pennies. We're not even talking scallops, now. We're talking herring and mackerel. Paul Plumis was explaining to me, like, that he got picked up at the airport in this real fancy limo, and he wasn't allowed out of the limo because the way he's dressed he would've gotten mugged on the streets in daylight. He was brought to this office. Now the office, you had this bling factor all over the place where the guy pressed the remote control and the screens came down over the windows; this screen like dropped down from the ceiling and they showed him a video of whatever it is they were selling. And he was blown away by the bling factor of all this automated stuff there. And most of the

people outside didn't have a pot to piss in, you know? I mean, so, like, the people that are wealthy are exceptionally wealthy and then the rest of the people are only living, basically, hand to mouth. Now, we've had inspectors come here to inspect the fish that we're selling, you know? And from talking to these people they give you a bit more insight into why the country needs so much fish. Now they're dealing, they're buying nearly a million tons of pelagics a year, right? They're probably buying more now, I mean, this was quite awhile ago. And I was saying, well how come that they can't farm or raise chickens, you know, like you have these massive chicken farms in this country and, you know, they're talking about from hatchlings to the table in six weeks, you know? And I thought that might be a more lucrative way of doing it than importing all this fish. And he said, no. There's some fly that in Nigeria, and they've never found a way of controlling it, and it will bite the chicken, or the cow, and they will die. Now they can't seem to control it, and they can't get, there is one thing, he says, there's a thing called a hard chicken. It's a real gamey animal, right? And the problem with it is it's not prone to, you know, populating like the way these hybrid chickens that they have here, like Tyson chickens or that. So they haven't come up with a way, yet. Now they've tried, there's a big push on for this aqua-farming, right? Aquaculture, over there? But again, if you look at the aquaculture anywhere in the world, it's all very highly valued stuff like oysters, salmon. Like nobody is farming like herring and mackerel because you'd need such a vast area, and then trying to control it from predation, from seals, whales, you name it. Like, you know, the salmon farms have enough problems with them. And they'd be more partial to eating mackerel and herring anyway, you know?

[15:07] MHA: It's interesting. Yeah. So, um, can you repeat, just, I hate to ask you to repeat, but, um, why don't you introduce yourself again, and talk a little bit about the plant and the comparison of the prices between, uh, the Pelagics and the scallops here in New Bedford.

ER: Uh, okay. Hi, my name is Eoin Rochford. I'm the plant manager of NORPEL, we're a pelagic fish freezing plant in New Bedford. And for those of you that don't know what pelagics are, herring and mackerel are pelagics. Now, they're the lower end. Obviously tuna are as well, mahi mahi, but they'd be the higher end of pelagics. So to give you an idea, like, the herring, you know, is worth probably, you know, eleven cents off the boat. I mean, big markets would pay anywhere from twenty to thirty cents a pound in Maine in the summer for it. But, like, that's the high end, I mean, we wouldn't even get that for the frozen fish, finished product. To give you an idea of the difference between the herring price and the mackerel, or the herring and, say, scallops, which would be the other end of the spectrum, scallops off the boat are commanding prices anywhere from twelve to nearly twenty dollars a pound if, you know, they're U8s or that, off the boats. And we basically are trying to get the boats to pay, and make, ourselves pay eleven cents a pound, so we're only dealing with pennies. There's nobody getting fat on the hog here. It's turning vast volumes of fish, where everybody makes, you know, half a cent or a quarter of a cent here and there. If you do enough thousands and millions of pounds, you'll eventually actually be able to make it pay. But it's a hard graft for very little return.

MHA: So when the boats come in here, you offload them and blast freeze them?

ER: No, what we do, blast freezing sounds like it's really, really fast, you know? It's all in the terminology. What we do is, we actually pump the fish off the boats, I know, that sounds harsh

and that you're going to damage the fish, but it's actually atmospheric pressure that's removing the fish from the boat. We're removing the atmospheric pressure from this tank with check valves on either side. So you fill the tank, once the tank is filled you empty the tank so it pushes them on up the line. Now the fish happen to be in suspension in water and that's why the fish don't actually get damaged. So we grade the fish, inspect them, put them into holding RSW [refrigerated seawater] tanks, and then we have conveyor belts that will take them into the factory. We have vertical plate freezers in the factory, and the fish literally get poured in there like a liquid, and the top few fish are fixed so that they're not sticking up like tails or that, because after they are frozen, those tails, if they're sticking up, they're going to be like razors and they'll cut through cartons or plastic bags or anything you try to put them into. So the block is, um, rough dimension is twenty-one inches by twenty-one inches by four inches. It's actually a metric dimension, which is a hundred millimeters by 520 millimeters, but that's another story. These vertical plates, it's interesting in the history of their development, were designed to be used on fishing boats because real estate on a fishing boat is premium. So every last square foot of the boat is used. So to get the most freezing in the smallest square footage, a vertical plate freezer is the way to do it. Now the pelagic boats in Europe, particularly in the Dutch, and there was a few Irish boats did it as well, we had these vertical plate freezers and Jackstone were the original builders of them. There are other companies that do it now. So it's direct contact plate freezing, which means, there's three ways of transferring heat: conduction, convection, and radiation. Conduction is actually the easiest way for freezing purposes, because, you know, for radiation you're talking, you know, high temperatures like the sun, kind of, you know, heats the earth by radiation. And convection then is like where you have the oven fan, you know, and you're basically cooking things in an oven. But a blast freezer would be an example of convection, you know, where they have a thing like a radiator working in reverse where it cools really, really cold, and you blow air up through it, and that air then is very, very cold and that travels through the product. But it takes anything up to twenty-four hours to freeze a batch of these blocks, whereas I'll freeze these blocks in plate freezers of three, four hours I'll cycle them. So after four hours I go through a defrost cycle, I jack them up so it's like toast coming out of a toaster. We then slide the blocks onto the belt or take them downstairs where they're packaged depending on the customer. Each customer has different requirements. So some of them want the blocks and they can form it, like one customer we had out in Australia, he wanted to fatten tuna in the pens. So what they do is they catch tuna in the wild and tuna, being a pelagic species, they can basically outrun any fish in the ocean because they're such fast swimmers. But in doing so they don't need to go to the gym to stay fit. They burn off all their natural body fat, which again gives them the flavor that they want for their ahi tuna, you know? And their sushi. So what they did years ago is they found a way of catching these fish out in the ocean in like a seine net, and it's kind of called like corralling? And they tow this seine net ashore where the fish are allowed to swim in it so they won't die. And then they keep them in a pen, right? So they don't expend energy. And it's very interesting, they actually have to teach them to eat dead fish. Because that would not be their natural way of doing things. And the way they do it, is they get a live fish and they cut the fins off and leave them out in the water till he's almost dead and these tuna wouldn't have eaten now for days or weeks, so they'd be fairly hungry. But like, they're not going to eat anything dead, you know, when they're used to have eaten live fish all their life. And they'd put it

into the pen and there's always one Judas tuna amongst them, and he'll go and he'll eat the fish, you know? And the rest of them, then like they get into a feeding frenzy so they start introducing dead fish one at a time and they'll all start snapping at these, and before you know it you've taught them how to eat dead fish. So they feed them these fish until their body fat accumulates which is easier when they're not going around like lunatics in the ocean like at forty knots, you know, burning off all this fat. And when they see that they've got the right level of fat by the color on the outside of their skin, the divers go in and basically they use a stun gun so they won't damage or harm the meat, like, and they remove them basically, you know, one at a time because they're such valuable creatures. But this guy, he needed product in a hurry. It was one January, I'll never forget it, and one of the guys landed mackerel here and they were very small mackerel, very limited market. And you never want to waste fish, you know? So we bought the fish and were kind of wondering, oh, we're going to get caught with these. And a few phone calls later anyway we sold the fish and shipped them all the way out to Australia and this guy he basically kept his fish good and healthy on these miniature mackerel.

[22:46] MHA: So you mentioned also that you sell pet food.

ER: Correct, yeah.

MHA: So how would they, you said it was a high-end, how did they get distinguished from the other...

ER: Well what happened years ago is, uh, we were approached by a company on the west coast to provide fish which are similar to sardines, like herring are often called sardines and actually the USDC, they allow you to use the name, right? These names are colloquially names so what we have here are *Clupea harengus*, that's the Latin, scientific name. So it's very, very specific, so what you get over off Europe is *Clupea harengus* as well. Now we get a sardine over there, but a sardine over there measures about four inches, fully grown. Now they look like a miniature herring, but they're actually a different genus completely. They're the same silvery color with scales, just the miniature looking version. On the west coast they were catching these things called sardines and I genuinely thought they were four inch fish, and when I questioned the person about the physical size of them, I discovered they were 220 to 250 grams with twenty percent fat content. Which led me to believe they were pilchards, which we actually get off the European coast and the Gulf Stream, or you get them down off the African coast. It's like a herring with spots on it, and the body is a bit different in shape. So they needed these fish, basically, for their fish blend and they basically bought these herring off us which is also sardines. So they introduced us to this company and then they came and they did an order, they started up down in Kentucky and we started producing a very high-end, ground fish product for them. They're very specific in what they want. Like, they want stuff like monkfish, red fish, whiting, flounder, mackerel, a little bit of herring, because the Omega 3 is very high in the herring and the mackerel. They're very conscientious about what they put into the blend, you know. So we've sourced all this product and they give us an order for it, and we basically grind the order for them, and they use it, so. We've been doing that this last year.

[25:14] MHA: So you, did you have to purchase grinders?

ER: Oh, God, yeah.

MHA: ...a particular kind of grinder?

ER: Oh yeah, state of the art stuff. I mean, and this stuff, we all had to research because it's, you know, it's fairly unique what they want and it's very, very specific. So we did quite a bit of R and D and, you know, it was a considerable investment, and yeah, it has been quite an ordeal. So.

MHA: I had heard years ago, I read the people who supplied herring for zoos, for example, but they were the whole fish, I guess, not...

ER: Yeah.

MHA: ...ground. They had to be really careful not to mix it up with certain river herring because of the spikes.

ER: Oh, the barbs, yeah.

MHA: Barbs.

ER: Yeah. Yes, like, that's the other thing that we've noticed the last few years here, these environmental groups have funded guys to sue NMFS [National Marine Fisheries Service], etcetera, over by-catch of river herring so SMAST [School for Marine Science and Technology], in conjunction with the Department of Fisheries in Massachusetts, have done a survey and what they do is they basically do a forensic examination of all the fish that are landed at the plants. And the reason they look at the plants is we use a conveyor belt to do a visual inspection so any, foreign fish that are there, you can actually visually see them.

[26:40] Whereas when you're pumping into a truck for bait, the pump is pumping at approximately, maybe a ton a minute, right? Well, it would be more like two-ton the first minute and nothing for the second minute. So it's actually very hard to see all the fish. Whereas they can see all the fish when they land at the plant and they usually have an inspector here inspecting all the fish, so if they see a higher concentration of, say, river herring coming in from a boat that fished this area, they will alert the fleet to tell them, okay, we're seeing a higher concentration here, you may need to avoid that area. So by the boats avoiding that area, they're getting less interaction. Because in the past, what we looked at is we looked at the interaction we were getting, and we found that, you know, you'll always get a small interaction but then you get a spike in an area. Now, as soon as you get that spike, if you can inform that fleet, avoid that area, you should be able to avoid a total catastrophe, and so far it has been working out fairly good for us, you know? Like they had the same thing when the scallopers were fishing, catching the yellowtail flounder. Because when sectors came into being, that upset the whole apple cart. It's not that scallopers never caught flounder in the past, of course they caught flounder in the past. But it was never documented because they were getting so much money for the scallops. The flounder were normally discarded. So as such, the way the government looked at it, oh, they never caught any flounder. So now they had no by-catch allocation. So that basically prevented them from catching their allocation of scallops, this by-catch. So they came up with a grid pattern and a method of avoiding catching these yellowtail. So if they found that there was

higher concentration in certain areas, they informed the rest of the fleet on a daily basis, guys, avoid this area, we've a very high concentration there. So they could work in another area, getting a lesser concentration of yellowtail that wouldn't close them down before they got to harvest or their number of days at sea fished, you know? Maximizing their return.

MHA: Great, good. So, where did you grow up?

[29:10] ER: I grew up in Ireland, uh, a town called Listowel in County Kerry, it's west Ireland. And I was always interested in engineering so I, you know, worked a little bit for a pharmaceutical company, I hated it. I then went and I decided I was going to make my fortune, and I developed this slave amplifier, but no idea how to sell it without explaining what I did, and if I told them how I did it, I had nothing to sell. So anyway, I had to face the reality of getting a job and I went, a friend of mine swung by and he asked me to go out with him that night, you know, to the pub, and I says, look, I'm broke, I says, I can't afford it. Oh, he says, don't worry about it, he says, I'll cover it. I says, what made you so wealthy? So he told me, you know, salmon fishing and, you know, what he made for the week, and I thought, oh my God. So, I says, I need to do some of that, for a joke. And he says, yeah, he says, no problem. He says, so he called me the following week, he says, look they need an engineer in this boat. And I says, what's an engineer do? And he says, well, he keeps the engines, the electrics and the refrigeration running. So he says, you know all that stuff anyway. I says, I do, but I've never seen it in a boat before. So I went down anyway, I met the guy, he says, were you ever fishing before, and I said no. And he says, what makes you think you can do the job? I says, well, you know, I'm good with engines, electrics, refrigeration. And the guy was desperate so he says, might as well try it anyway, you know? Because a person that knows something is better than what I have. So I went out and I went fishing with him. And the boat wouldn't start. The engine wouldn't start, and he says to me, what's wrong. And I said, the engine isn't turning fast enough. Which was correct, but, we checked the batteries. There was no water in the batteries and it was a big Caterpillar 398, so we put water into the batteries and there was a generator running so the batteries could charge. So after about twenty minutes we hit the start and the engine lit right up. But to be honest with you, I didn't notice it swinging any faster. I mean so it was only marginal-like, I couldn't believe it would start at such low revolutions, but it lit right up. He was really impressed, anyway. So that was the start of my fishing career. We were fishing herring primarily around the coast of Ireland, we'd follow it around Ireland seasonally. So, I was kind of sticking out like a sore thumb, the fact that I never fished before yet the boat I was on was five years old and a lot of the systems on the boat never worked from new, so I just thought, you know, this is what the engineer on the boat does, and I basically took them apart and put them back together correctly so all the stuff was working, so obviously in a very short space of time a headhunter came looking for me and I was sent to Norway to oversee the building of a factory boat for, the Irish fishing, right. It was the *Veronica*; that was back in '87. So I was over in Norway living there for about six months, from summer of '87 until December of '87. So the boat was built and they were just fitting it out with vertical plate freezers, similar to what we have here, actually the same model as what we have here, slightly smaller. And, you know, it was state of the art back then. They had computerized main engines, reverse gear, generators, shaft generators, all PLC control refrigeration, computerized trawl system. So it was actually very nice to get onto a boat where

you had the technicians fitting this stuff out. You'd get to question the technicians and learn the equipment very, very well from people who really knew it. And, I was on that boat then for a few years, and the owner acquired another boat from the Christiana Bank, *Genesis*. And I became Chief on that boat, and, again, it was the same type of fishing, a factory freezer boat. So. The boat went to auction then and the guy I was working for, I had an argument with and he thought he could buy the boat for 3.6 million and they wanted 4.2. I says, why don't you give them the 4.2, oh, he says, nobody has that kind of money. I says, a lot of people have. Maybe I don't, but a lot of people in this town have. So a guy from Norway, anyway, was paying attention at the auction and it went to 4.2 million and he paid and the bank closed on it, and the guy was distracted talking, because he could've paid a lot more, but he lost the boat anyway. So I fished in some smaller ground fish boats, in Ireland we call them, it's like, ground fish boats you call them here, we call them demersal over in Europe. We had some interesting escapades over there. Then there was no divorce in Ireland back in the day so when the shit hit the fan, I basically decided to naturalize in America where I could get divorced, so I came over here. And after I naturalized I was able to get divorced and make the same mistake again, but I was fishing in the meantime. And I was, you know, planning on going to Alaska but I saw that the amount of herring here was amazing, and I thought there was a huge opening for factories to start up here. And like that would have been in '94. And I couldn't believe that nobody really was harvesting it. So I went, I was asked in summer of '95 to go to Panama City to oversee the fitting out of a boat which was the *Cathleen Julie Treat*. It was the *Luke and Matthew*, it used to be a small freezer boat and they wanted to put RSW tanks into it, refrigerated seawater tanks, that would carry herring in a chilled capacity. So the idea was you'd pump the fish aboard and when you come to the dock you'd pump them out. So I mean, I was used to the European concept where the owner would approach the yard with, you know, detailed drawings. They'd get a price, there was a contract signed, and you stuck to the contract. Now there might be a few deviations but you knew anytime you deviated, you paid through the nose for it. So deviations were minimal for two reasons. One, they were very expensive. And secondly, they could add time onto the project because time is money, money is power, and power is everything, right? So you don't want to mess with the time element. So anyway, I, you know, I, I didn't feel comfortable about the whole project, but these guys talked me into, one of them was Gerry O'Neill, you know, Senior, that passed. And he took me up to Maine anyway and he introduced me to the owner, right, and anyway I had headed off to Panama City. So I get to Panama City and they said to me, I told them who I was, oh that's great. What will we do? I says, what do you mean, what'll you do? Do you not have a contract? And they showed me the contract, it was to put up a few transverse and longitudinal bulkheads. I says, but you don't do any pipe work here. You've no refrigeration plan. You've no hydraulic plan. So, anyway, he says, well, you're going to show us how to do that. I said, fair enough, but I says, does anybody know what this is going to cost? So I got on the phone and explained to the owner, I says, listen, I says, you think you're going to do this job for \$360,000; this job is going to cost a bit more, you know? So, I mean, it was going to run into millions, literally, and my thing was, like, I didn't want to start the project when they had no concept of where it was going to go with time and materials, which is basically what we were in, and the yard had filed one of those chapters, it wasn't bankruptcy, it's protection from bankruptcy, where they could still operate, right? So the whole thing had a bad feel for me but anyway, I went there and with a

pencil and paper in the boardroom I started drawing out my list of materials and giving them to the guys, and we started, you know, going. And I got the funny feeling that they didn't think I knew what I was doing or something, because we finished the job after about four months of really hard work and we came to commissioning the hydraulics and we hit one of the motors to start. And oil came down from the overheads so I just pulled down a few panels and I saw somebody cut the pipe and they never finished what they were doing. So I had pipe filler with me and I explained to him to take off all this, and I went to the bulkhead with a paint mark and I says, take these off and I started marking fittings. And the Vice President of the yard was there and he says, do you know what you're doing? I says, I hope so. Otherwise we have an awful mess on our hands. So anyway, Gerry pulled him away and he says, no, he knows what he's doing, leave him alone. So anyway, we got all this sorted, he took the whole lot out that I shown him, connected it up, hit the button, everything ran. But I thought he was going to get a day, a time and a half on Sunday, double-time, right? So we started at seven that morning, there were three separate hydraulic systems that were all commissioned to run by nine o'clock in the morning. So we had nothing to do for the rest of the day because everybody was assigned to work for the day. So then the Vice President of the yard wanted to recruit me to work in the yard. Like, through this project what kept us going, I mean, you need to be kind of Irish to understand this, all details are discussed in the bar over beer or, you know, mixed drinks. So we were making money hand over fist catching all these herring, so we had a boat that was state-of-the-art, and no place ashore that could handle this volume of product. But we were promised, oh yeah, we'll have all this market and whatnot. So we finished the boat anyway. I lifted the car onto the roof of the wheelhouse of the boat. The actual boat is over near the State Pier. That actual boat, I did. That was now the *Jean McArthur*. And she's the sister ship to that that I bought several months ago. But anyway, we came up here to New England to Gloucester with the boat, and it was actually Peter Mullen's docked next to the Coast Guard station, that was what, for Fred Bayley had. Now he had another boat there, which was the *Kathleen and Julie II*. It's now, I think it's the *Anthea*, is where the permit is now that Carlos Rafael owns. But they had market and there was limited how much more market you could get, so as share fishermen we literally couldn't make an income because we had nowhere to land the fish. But to prove the boat fished we went down to Thatchers, which is just outside Gloucester. We caught about 20, 25,000 pounds of fish, because there was a truck for 25,000 pounds of fish. I had the fish swimming around inside of the tank because they wouldn't, they weren't dead like, you know? When we caught them they were alive and we didn't tow them for too long. We pumped them aboard so they were alive in the boat, came ashore, they're swimming around the tank of cold water, they didn't get hypothermia or anything so they were still perfectly fresh. So we come to the dock, hook up to this de-watering box, and we start pumping the fish into the back of the truck. So the owner was there, the guy that was buying the fish, few guys standing on the side of the truck looking into the bed. And the fish are coming out of the boat and they're still alive and one of them turns to the other and he says, that RSW stuff is great stuff, the fish look like they're alive. The fish were alive, I mean. For some reason they thought like the fish should be dead, but I mean, it was like they were in a swimming pool, you know what I mean? The tank was that big for that volume of fish. So after that then there was no point in staying there so I was then going to go to Alaska.

[40:56] So I went down to Galilee, I knew a few guys down in Rhode Island and decided I could hang with them for a day or two, have a few beers, catch up on old times and another guy caught up with me there and, Peter Mullen, and he asked me to set up a pump for him, you know, on the dockside. So I set up the pump and he needed a guy then to go fishing and he asked me if I'd go out fishing with him and I was hesitant because it was only a transit job, you know, part-time job? So he guaranteed me work till Easter, if I went. And I said fair enough, I'd stay with him. So because if I didn't get work till Easter, I'd miss like a season in Alaska. So I stayed with him then. I set up the pump and after I set up the pump that you had to moonstone, oil abate spill, and none of the herring boats that would land into Point Judith could pump out there because of contamination in the water, so they all had to go up to Quonset Point, and Peter was the only one with a pump at this stage. So he had a big Klondike out of the moonstone, so you know we fished away anyway and then he decided it was time. He made so much money, it was time to modify the boat and put refrigeration into it, and, you know, modify the hydraulics. So he asked me if I'd do the job. I said, fair enough. And we literally broke the propeller off the boat up in Gloucester before the Fourth of July, so we had a tugboat tow us to Kelly's Shipyard, where we had a new shaft made. And we started modifying the boat next to Kelly's Shipyard, and that would've been '96. So I was kind of a dab hand at modifying boats here at this stage so I got the job done in three months, this time, using the crew of the boat, a fitter and welder from John Fitzgerald's, and we went fishing. And we had really good quality fish at the time because very few boats had RSW and he did very well with the boat and I decided then I had to go, went fishing for eels then, like that was where I was going to make my next fortune, hag fishing, right? So, there was plenty eels about, the problem was I couldn't freeze them aboard and I couldn't get out of my head I needed to freeze them so I could put the time in, so I was running seventeen miles offshore with a small boat and taking maybe 85, 90,000 pounds of eels on the deck ashore, which was, you know, pushing the envelope a little bit. So anyway, once the summer wore on what happens is the eels basically they go south and it wasn't viable for me to stay fishing, you know? The boat was too small. So I decided then I'd have to go to Alaska and see what all this was about, so I went to Alaska then and I fished up there for a year, pollock fishing. Interesting, but that year was the year that Clinton did or didn't have sex with Monica Lewinsky, I don't know because I missed the whole thing, and when I came down, it's funny you kind of get cut off from society when you're up there. I never really got the gist of it because it was all over. They were still talking about it but you were supposed to have known what did or didn't happen, but anyway, I caught a few of the outtakes but that was it, like I just figured Alaska wasn't where I wanted to be. I spent too long up there fishing, you're kind of cut off from humanity and, you know, I think, I've never been to jail but I imagine that's what jail would be like. It's not very nice. Because you have no social activity with people, you know? And being Irish, that's not where you want to be at, you know? So after that year, like, I kind of decided well, I wasn't going back to Alaska. Then, I came back here and I fished on the *Starlight* for about six months, one of O'Hara's boats, and I think I went from the *Starlight*, I think I might have gone eel fishing again. Yeah. After that then I went with Gerry's boats, he wanted to modify these scallopers that he had bought from NOAA. NOAA had confiscated scallopers down in Fall River and he had bought three of them, the *Atlantic*, the *Mohawk*, and *Gatherer*. The idea was to modify two of them into RSW tank boats and set up a plant over at the main terminal, here. So,

again, I was sent down south like, this time to Alabama, Bayou La Batre, Forrest Gump country to modify these boats. And that was an interesting experience. It took six months to get the two of them finished. We brought them back up here, so they were electric hydraulic with RSW, and they were dual purpose in that they could go scalloping or mid watering. And there was actually an article written in the National Fisherman about that, the following September. [46:19]

That would have been in 2000, I think. The September or October issue. And we brought the boats back up, but the center holding the tank, the center tank was made a little bit bigger so that the guys could still go scalloping and hold the scallops there. Now because we knew nothing about scalloping, we had two scallop skippers and we had to basically get all our information from them and take what they taught us as gospel. Mid watering, that was second nature to us. We could make the mid watering work, but it had to be around their parameters. We could not deviate from their parameters because we didn't want to mess up what they were doing. We knew that scalloping was coming good and, you know, that would be like the bread and butter. The other thing could be the gravy train. So that was fine. This was all based on herring fishing-like and scalloping. So we modified the boats and the boats fished very successfully.

[47:18] They went back scalloping, scalloped very successfully. It was, it rolled around to 2001 and like after September 11, 2001 I know that the market for herring was really, really bad and they weren't encouraging us to go fishing for herring. So I remember coming down through the canal after early January 2002 and we were told that we weren't to bring in herring, we were to look for mackerel. Well, we started catching mackerel just off Block Island, and we had a dock up in Portsmouth that we used to go up to and we'd offload in tanker trucks, they'd truck them down to Gloucester. And, like this was like a 9-5 job. We'd go out in the morning, early morning, we'd load up the boats and we'd be back in that evening, the two boats, and it was literally just like going to the well for water. So the guys then, Gerry decided the boats weren't big enough, that they had to be made bigger. Or the powers that be decided that. So they were going to put a forty-foot mid body section into them, and widen the boats. But that meant that the scallop permit would become void, so they had to take the scallop permit off the boat and sell it. So that's what happened, and then the boats were made bigger which are now the *Endeavor* and *Challenger*. So those boats now carry almost 500-ton of fish each. You know, they'd be state-of-the-art boats over here at that stage, like they went back down south again for a modification job and I decided no, I wasn't doing another modification, so I went actually fishing up in Rockland, Maine that summer on a boat called the *Retriever*. And we modified the boat because the boat couldn't actually shoot the net. She was used to towing from the *Starlight* and after it, you know, a summer working up there, we had the boat where could actually catch its own fish. So.

[49:20] MHA: Was that one of O'Hara's?

ER: O'Hara's, yeah, they were working with O'Hara's. This was before the O'Hara's acquired the *Sunlight*, we were working with the *Starlight*, which is Alfred Osgood's boat, right? But O'Hara's I think bought into that. So what happened then was they, the fish like come down here October, November, and we were in here landing fish and this plant was actually under construction and I did visit it when it was under construction, and I was amazed that they were building it more like the European boats that I fished on. And, I was thinking, like, why is there a European influence?

And I was talking to the engineer that was putting the plant together and he had no European background at all and I was kind of confused. I mean, without ever doing it, they got the thing nearly a hundred percent perfect, you know? Okay, I did modify it after I got in here, but the real expensive part they got almost a hundred percent perfect. So, they, one of the owners then, from the west coast, he heard about me and he came down the dock looking for me and he asked me if he could talk to me. And he actually took me into this office here and interviewed me and he, you know, asked would I apply for a job. And I said, no, I says, you know, I have a good enough time fishing where I can make a good living and have enough time off, you know? No pressure, no hassle. But he managed to talk me into the job anyway as plant engineer like, so. I started here then as engineer, literally January of 2003, and after a few months he made me plant manager and basically we've been here since. Now, you know, we've made some modifications to the plant, and obviously, you know, the business we started with has changed dramatically over the years. It's not like when they started here, the focus was on herring. Then the mackerel showed up, really big numbers in 2004, 2005. But what happened was in 2005 all these other plants started opening up. Now no boats were added to the fishery, so the pie is only so big. So everybody just got a thinner slice of the pie. Now the people that, you know, just go into it, they weren't getting a big enough slice of the pie to sustain them. You know, we were on sustenance levels like where, okay, we were sustained but like I said, nobody was getting fat on the hog. And then from regulations like, literally, in 2006 onwards, like the pie has been sliced extremely thin altogether. I mean, I'm not sure how long this industry is going to survive for numerous reasons. One of them is overregulating. I mean, the fishing industry here, it's a joke. It's the most overregulated industry in the United States after the airline industry. Now they talk about the fishing industry being dangerous, well I can see why the airline industry would be so dangerous without the regulations, but I don't know what the regulations did to make the fishing industry safer. I mean, the *Northern Edge* was a result of regulations as far as I'm concerned. That thing sunk off Georges, you know? So, I mean, it's been counterproductive as far as I'm concerned.

MHA: So, let's see. You're, it's great talking to you, I almost feel like I don't even have to ask you any questions because you have a whole fascinating history. And I know some of the questions I was going to ask were about your skills, and your knowledge, but you've told me a bit about that with your...

ER: Well, it's mechanical...

MHA: ...engineering...

[53:20] ER: ...engineering I did like in, when I was in the factory boats in Ireland, at the time there was no regulations over these boats, and the Board of Trade in Ireland would be the licensing body over them. And when we brought this factory fishing boat to Ireland, it was 300 foot long, 6,000 horsepower, all computerized, they had a hissy fit to think a bunch of fishermen were engineering on it. But there was no regulations at the time that required anybody have a license or that. So anyway, we all had to go and, you know, get our licenses. But there was absolutely no curriculum to study. And anyway, I was put forward, like, you know, the, the sacrificial lamb. And like they didn't expect, well, first of all they made an assumption that I was just a fisherman. In fact I knew the least about fishing, all engineering was my background. And

I'll never forget it because I was up in front of the Board of Trade and they gave me the Merchant Marine engineering exam, right? But normally if you're doing those exams you can pick questions and you have a choice. There's six questions there, you have to answer four of them. No. They made me answer all six to find out what area was I weakest on. And then there was going to be an oral afterwards, right, the following day. So I knew, let's put it this way, it wasn't my first rodeo. So anyway, you know, I had no problem with the electrics, the refrigeration, the mechanical, the engines, any of that. But steam was not something I ever worked with. I mean, I know the theory of it because mechanical engineers you would always know the theory. But the actual practical application, they asked me what was the safety ring in the exam. And I hadn't a clue. I knew it was something on the boiler. And for the life of me I read the book one time quickly like, ten, fifteen minutes, you know? Which isn't really what you considered, you know, studying. Anyway, I gave some waffle answer on the paper where you couldn't decipher whether I knew or I didn't know. But that night a friend of mine was a marine engineer, I called him up I says, what are you doing, you know, do you want to go out for a beer? Sure, he says, went out. I says, tell me, what's the safety ring in the boiler? Oh, he says, that's what the insurance guy puts on the boiler. Each year he'll stamp it, and, you know, seal the safety ring on the relief valve. So if the boiler fails over the course of the year, he'll go back and the first thing he'll check is, did anybody tamper with the relief valve. So if the safety ring is broken he knows the insurance company isn't going to cover it. Oh, very good, I says. We're drinking away, following morning, anyway, I'm mean to do the oral, right, and he asked me one or two easy questions and then he goes right for the jugular. What's the safety ring, he goes? So I says, do you want the long answer or the short answer? So he says, oh the short one will do. I says, oh, it's what the insurance company puts on the relief valve on the boiler. Well the guy nearly fell off the seat, so he did. So at that stage, like, that I was only messing with him, and then he started asking me about the systems on the boat and, you know, I was explaining to him the systems that were there and the safeties and he was blown away. Because he wasn't even up to that technology with the Merchant Marine industry, you know. Because we were literally were the cutting edge of the technology in the marine industry, far ahead of the Merchant Marine. And he was more interested than anything else, in finding out that stage. And like he, you know, at that, he kind of copped on, at that stage, that we had to be very knowledgeable to be able to keep these things running. That you couldn't just go onto a boat pressing buttons and hope that it would work. So, they kind of backed off then. But it was funny, my license actually was just the one before James Bond. Mine was 006.

[57:05] MHA: Good. So, what advice would you give somebody starting out today?

ER: Well, it's interesting, because there's no young blood coming into the industry anymore. I find it scary. Like I'm, you know, mid 50s, so the youngest person I know is in his mid-30s, right? And there's none of his generation are there. He's on his own. And then you go back and, you see, people are being steered away from the fishing industry. And the fishing industry on this coast is actually very, very unusual. Like over in Europe, it's family businesses. And the family actually go out in the boat and they fish. And this is their home and they look after those boats and they put the best platform they can afford on to them. So, you know, five or six years time when the technology has moved on, they'll sell that boat for roughly what they invested in it, and

they will invest x amount more dollars in a new boat with the most recent and cutting edge technology. Almost the same accord in Alaska, but not quite, but like let's look at this town. Like what has happened here is, there has been an awful lot of consolidation, right? Where regulations were brought in so draconian that people with one boat operations couldn't survive. So people that took the risk and bought two and three boats were able to generate enough capital that they could actually buy everybody else out, because the other people couldn't exist. Back like twenty something years ago, when they started with days at sea, they kept reducing the number of days at sea, and for the life of me, I don't understand it. Because I never seen as much fish in the ocean anywhere as there is out here. Because these boats, they're almost like the wheelbarrow of, you know, mechanization, right? There's no sophistication or anything to them. But they didn't have to be sophisticated because there was so much fish out there. All they had to do was dunk the net and they catch some. Over in Europe they were using twin rigging and triple rigging and quadruple rigging and beam trawling, and doing everything under the sun to make the boats more efficient. Here, they didn't have to do any of that because they were catching so much fish anyway. You know, and yet the regulations basically drove most of them out. And, you know, it came to the point, I was thinking, well, whoever survives is going to have a really good living. And once, I know someone thought that, they threw that rule book out and they brought in sectors. And you see, people will have a business plan, see where it's going, and consolidation seemed to be the answer. But I know guys that bought extra days at sea so that they would be able to have a living. They mortgaged their boat, that was probably paid off their house, and because that rule book throw, got thrown out the door, it wasn't in the same sector that they were going to be in, so the investment they made was void overnight with the stroke of a pen. They never got re-compensated. I'm not sure if they're even in business. I'd be surprised if they're still in business. So there's an awful lot of hatred among ground fishermen towards bigger boats because they think the bigger boats are catching and making all the money. They have to adhere to even stricter regulations. And the boats are more expensive. That doesn't mean they make more money, it means it's actually harder for them to pay. It's just a complete scramble. So the environmental groups kind of basically blame the big boats for all the problems, and the smaller boats, and they have the whole industry disjointed, not understanding what one another does. But because of my history, I have a fairly good understanding of different fisheries because I actually crossed over and having traveled from three thousand miles away to this coast and traveled to Alaska, I'm always curious about fisheries and different fisheries, how they're pursued and, you know, what successes and failures. And I've taken those lessons with me along the way because there's no perfect fishery. And there's no perfect engineering design. Every one, you know, has its plusses and minuses, and like if you can marry them together in a good way, you have yourself a very sustainable business practice. But it's very hard to know, on this coast, where the sustainability is. It's not that the fish won't be there, it's that the regulations won't allow you fish. So I'd like to say I'd encourage, you know, people with a lot of gray matter to get into it because it is very challenging running the electronic equipment, you know, it's a very expensive video game, if you like, to go out and be able to commercially fish.

[1:02:30]Which is very different from sports fishing. Like the difference being, in commercial fishing you spend x amount of dollars to get two, three, or four x dollars, not half x dollars. Because that's called bankruptcy. Sports fishing is where you go out and you spend three

hundred x dollars to come back with maybe one x dollar, right? And a big hangover. Which is fine, but when you see the way the way the New England Management Council is managing, they fail to understand the difference in the two of them. So commercial fishing, you cannot overfish a species without it having huge repercussions on yourself before you'll ever do any damage to the fish. So, like, the expenses on the boat these days can be thirty, forty percent of the stock, okay? So if you damage, like that will leave you with say fifty to sixty percent of, you know, the product to be divided up between the boat and the crew. So if you damage the fish stock by twenty percent, you're taking twenty percent off the gross figure. So the expenses now, instead of being forty percent, because you can't fill the boat, you've damaged them, right? So your expenses now are going up to sixty percent. So the boats take with the crew is down to forty. So you've taken probably thirty-five or forty percent of the income away from the crew. They can't survive on that, because they were never making that much anyway. So that is not sustainable. Where sports fishing, if you put enough boats out in the water, they can go out for negative returns, it doesn't matter, and do harm to stock, theoretically. I personally don't think they can, but I'm just saying theoretically they can, because they're not looking at it with a view to make money doing it.

MHA: Right.

ER: You know? So...

MHA: So when you came, I think that there were still a lot of family boats.

ER: There were, yeah. There were a lot of family boats then. And it just, it amazed me, the attitude people had towards you as a commercial fisherman here. Like I remember going into France back in, probably the early '90s, '91. We went into Roscoff, it's on the northwest coast of Brittany, okay? We were landing fish in there. And the fish were going to Lorient, to a cannery. And it's funny actually, we sold fish to the same cannery from this plant. But when we were there, the locals would talk to us, you know, and say, oh, you're, "de pêche," you know, fisherman. And I says, yeah. And my French used to be a little better back then, and, is this your boat? Yeah, and they'd want to see the boat. So we'd show them the boat and that. And we went up to town then like, in the middle of the day in France, they always have a banquet there, just as great. Takes two hours to eat lunch, and like wine had, the only thing you can do afterwards is sleep, I don't know how they go back to work. But anyway, we were going to be leaving so we decided we were going to have one of these lunches, right? So the guys saw us up there, and they bought us drinks and they treated us like foreign ambassadors and delighted that we came to their town. If you're up here in New Bedford and somebody is bothering you, I mean, okay, in Ireland you might tell somebody to fuck off. All here you have to do is tell them that you're a commercial fisherman and it has a better effect, they'll go quicker, you know? And like, to me it's strange because myself and the peer group I hang out with, we have the tremendous respect for fishermen and we view them as, you know, really hard workers. You're guaranteed, if you know a person that's been fishing for twenty years, that's the person you'd want to have working for you because you know he's a hard worker. Because that's the only thing fishing will guarantee you, is hard work. It doesn't always guarantee you, you know, financial returns. Guarantees you hard work. And whenever you can get those, and I mean, I've hired guys based

on the fact that they were fishermen, I mean, not, no, the junkie type, I'm talking people that actually made a living and, you know are solvent. Have a car, you know, wife, a family, a girlfriend, whatever. But you know they're not living from paycheck to paycheck. These guys will budget just because they have a big trip doesn't mean they go out on the town and party like, you know, until it's all gone. These guys know, okay, so it was good today, it may not be good again for six months or a year. This money's going to have to last, and, you know, they can live like that. And that's, you know, the kind of fishing I was brought up with in Europe, like. So you have a good trip, yeah that's great, now you better look after this, not blow it all today, you know, because who knows what tomorrow's going to bring. I mean, a lot of the Norwegians in this town have the same attitude, you know? Um, the old-time fishermen.

MHA: Right. About the plant itself, how many workers do you have?

ER: Because of this pet food operation, I'd have probably about twenty full-time workers, then when we start freezing fish, go up to probably about seventy.

MHA: And are the twenty, are they sort of permanent employees?

ER: Well they would be permanent, yeah, they'd all have at least forty hours a week and then like all bets are off when we're freezing fish, because when the fish start running they'll normally stay running, so you could be in production for, you know, seven, eight days. So, I mean a lot of people don't know this but there's 164 hours in the week. So they'll have eighty-two hours minimum on the clock. So it's time and a half after forty. I had a guy approach me years ago and he said there was a mistake in his check. I says, well just what's the problem? Are you missing a day? No, he complained it was too much money in it. And he showed me the check, and I says, no, they are the hours you worked, I says. He says, are you sure? I says, I'm positive. But, uh, you know, like a lot of them are immigrants from Central America, El Salvador and Guatemala and like myself, an immigrant, we never bothered us about working overtime, or that, like, it's the appreciation of glad to have a job. And the ability to do it, you know? Whereas like I've had that with Americans, but only the guys that really cut their teeth in fishing, you know? The rest of them, like if they'd worked any length of time in industry, they have to have the weekends off. They only want to work like Monday to Friday, nine to five, or eight to four, something like that. Which is fine in a perfect world, but my gig here is when I offer somebody a job, it's okay, I'll guarantee you forty hours a week, full time. But you have to be available when all the overtime comes. Where we can actually boogie and get it done. Oh, yeah, that's no problem. And next thing it happens in this case, oh my God, this is too much. So, you know, I kind of find it frustrating at times. I mean, what I thought was ironic in this election when Trump was talking about making America great again, and he was going to put up a wall between America and Mexico. And I'm thinking, like, well who's going to do all the minimum wage jobs, because that's all immigrants like myself and the guy coming in from Mexico, because I don't think the Irish are going to come in anymore, you know? So if you stop the Americans like, or, you stop the Mexicans coming in and El Salvadorians, Guatemalans, whoever else, the country's going to grind to a standstill. I mean, people say to me, I was out for lunch a few years ago, you know, colleagues of mine, American guys that have businesses and who own fishing boats here. And one of them pointed out, oh, you know, it's wrong having all these immigrants in there in the fish

business. And I says to him, what are you talking about? I says, I'm an immigrant. I don't mean you. I says, that's exactly what you said, an immigrant. I says, I am an immigrant. I says, nobody else will do the job. That's the only reason that we're employed. If they thought an American would do it, they'd have them do it years ago. I wouldn't have got a start here, you know? I says, they don't want to do it. I mean, if they want to do it, as far as I'm concerned, I'd let them have my job. Welcome to it, like. They don't want to do it. I mean, that's what it comes down to.

[1:11:10] MHA: So when you hire people here, do you have to go through one of the temporary agencies?

ER: Well I, we hire directly but we do get from temp agencies because we just can't get people to come in, you know? Like, we have this thing that you do this electronic data search now when you search an I9 form, right? You have to punch in the name. And it'll come back good or no good. And if the person comes back no good we can't hire them. The law was very funny a few years back, in that if a person came in here and filled out an application form and you discovered that the Social Security number didn't match the sex, because that was the only check, you couldn't actually fire them because you could be brought up on charges, like you had, that was discrimination. And you kind of had to go through it and, I never understood the reasoning behind it. Like, whenever we employ anybody, the tax was always deducted at source. Like we never got cash here, you know? I mean I've had people come in here and asking us for a job and asking for cash. And I says, listen, maybe you didn't hear the news, but Johnny Cash died years ago. And I says, so did Bob Hope, so there's no hope of getting any cash here, you know? And they don't seem to get the picture, like. I mean, when Kerry was running for President, and he explained how fifty-one percent of the people don't pay taxes, and that basically lost him his election bid. All he was doing was telling the truth, you know? So, like, again...

MHA: Like, like Trump?

ER: Yeah. Well Trump I don't think was telling the truth. All he wanted to do was get elected and what he did...

MHA: No but I mean he didn't pay taxes, is what I meant.

ER: Oh, yeah, but I mean like, like one law for the wealthy, like I said, and you know, if you're wealthy enough you can get away without paying it because you have a tax attorney and all that good stuff. But, I mean, when you're struggling to pay your taxes you can't afford a tax attorney so you have to make sure you pay them. So. Do you need some light there?

MHA: Maybe now... since we're down to the... thank you.

ER: We're in energy conservation mode here.

MHA: I love the sunset was gorgeous. Was this plant ever unionized?

ER: No, it wasn't, no. No, I don't understand too much about unions except when I go home every evening, I'm driving down 18, and there's a Ryder truck repair place on the right. And they're union and they've been on strike since long before Christmas and probably before Thanksgiving. And they have some of the fanciest trailers I've ever seen, and RVs and, you

know, they turn up there in groups. And then there's police cars stationed there, I mean, are they going to fight amongst one another while they're picketing or what's going to... I don't know and I really, I mean I know why unions started, right, over a hundred years ago. And I'm really confused as to the benefit of a union. I got myself into a pile of trouble several years ago where I had temporary staff here, and I had a guy walk out, go to service, you know. And he was supposed to be working. Now I got a call to the plant like and I come in because there was supposed to be an ammonia leak here, there wasn't. He was the guy who would be person in charge. So he knows how to deal with these situations, if you have a fire, ammonia leak, that. So, it was about a quarter to ten he showed up and I asked him what the hell was he doing. And he said, oh, he had to go to church. And I says, well, you never, you know, excused yourself. It appeared that he was still on the clock like. And, you know, okay, I'm not the most church-going person, but it would like me going to the bar and having a few beers while I was supposed to be working, you know? I mean, that's just not on. So, I deducted a few hours from his time. And the following week anyway, between the jigs and reels he walked out and then I was accused of firing him. Well, if you walk out, how can I fire you? You're gone, you know? But, he had the temporary workers then go out on strike, right? And I'm saying, well, you need to go back and get reassigned somewhere else. So I then told, no, they're not temporary workers when they're on assignment use. So basically that's the same as a union. So I basically was fined a lot of money for telling them to go for reassignment, which they said is firing them. But they never worked for me, they worked for the agency and they wanted to go out and strike while I was paying them. But if you come here and you take this assignment, you can't go out and strike. Well you can do, you can do it, but the law in this country says that I have to put up with that bullshit and I have to pay you. But being Irish I wasn't going to put up with it, but anyway, they kind of extorted copious amounts of dollars out of me.

[1:16:39] MHA: So who, the agency?

ER: No, no, the government, the State of Massachusetts.

MHA: Oh.

ER: Because they considered it concerted work effort, like in other words, the same as a union, right? So, anyway, I, you know, I had to pay them and I was, it's a bitter pill to swallow. So ironically enough then I was called to jury duty. The State of Massachusetts was bringing a case against this guy for I can't remember what. The judge asked me anyway, would I be an impartial jurist against the State of Massachusetts. I said, let me see, no, Your Honor. Well they brought me up for Fair Labor practices earlier this year and charged me this... Yeah, I think I could be a fair... You're dismissed. Fair enough. So, I don't understand union, that's what I'm saying. Because like to me, it's a big cloak and dagger bullshit, you know. And it's all political. Like if you don't want to work, fair enough, don't work. But how do you hold a person that's good enough to make the investment enough for you the opportunity to work and tell them, I'm not going to work for you unless you give me this. Well, you don't have to work for me, period. You know what I mean, you can bring the horse to water, you can't make him drink. So, to me, it's a joke, like. I just do not understand this.

MHA: On the ammonia leak stuff, what, um, do you have different safety devices that get triggered?

ER: We do, yeah, yeah. There's different alarms. There's sensors all over the factory and if the particles go over a certain number of parts per million that puts off a siren. But before the siren goes off we basically, the ammonia smells so bad, three parts per million you will smell it. Like if ever you sniffed a Windex bottle, that's about three to six parts per million, right? That's just giving you an idea how pungent it is. So normally you would have the heating and cooling going on in the factory and there are expansion joints. So when you go from defrost to freeze, often you get a pop and you just get a small drip. Right, well the smell is horrific and the guys are basically trained, at that stage you put the plate freezer to standby, evacuate the area, call the engineer on duty, he'll evaluate the situation. Check it out, maybe he just needs to tweak the bolts. If it's safe to go back, everybody goes back in. If it gets bad enough, yes, it'll put off the alarms and the fire department, the whole nine yards come, right, give us a real dog and pony show and the EPA will arrive. Jesus there will be copious dollars extorted then.

MHA: Yeah. I was just curious because one other project I was on, I was talking to one of the safety instructors about the conditions in the holds where sometimes people get overcome by just old fish.

[1:19:35] ER: No, what it is, it's oh, it's actually a gas that's given off by squid in particular and squid, rotten squid ink. I can't think of the name of the gas now, it's very, very bad. It's not very common because the, what happens in the hold of the boat, if they don't wash out the hold very well and something's stagnant there, over the space of a week and the hotter days in the summer, the hold can fill up with this gas. And when you go in, it basically attacks your nervous system and you will be paralyzed and you'll die from heart attack, really, in a very short space of time. There was a friend of mine, actually, he was on the *Katrina Lee*, he was skippering it, and a young kid, seventeen years of age, died. He went into the hold to get him out and he was overcome by the gas. Now the guys got him out, because there was enough ventilation at that stage. But he had about three heart attacks and they airlifted him to the hospital over it. There was another guy on the *Crystal Sea*. He went into the hold and he was supposed to have been overcome by the gas and he fell and he hit his head. Now, you know, he was badly hurt but whether to the gas or hitting his head, it's hard to know. I can't think of the name of the gas now. It actually occurs naturally. It's basically organic material that's breaking down.

MHA: So it probably wouldn't...

ER: Sulphur hydroxide [probably, hydrogen sulphide].

MHA: ...happen here because you have enough ventilation.

ER: Well yeah, you see, you don't leave any of the stuff, like the place is washed down entirely and the ventilation is the other thing. Like I have holding tanks and when the holding tank is full there's no air in the tank. And by emptying the tank then you're bringing in a fresh charge of air and you're washing the tanks so you don't leave that dead matter like putrefy there, so the tanks

have to be kept completely clean, otherwise the bacteria goes way up in it and you basically couldn't process the fish without it being a horrific smell after...

MHA: Right.

ER: ...because that's the first of the critical control points, when you're taking the fish in a sensory perceptions. So you're smelling the gill plate to see if you can detect any odors or the fish is going off.

MHA: Yeah. And I assume you have temperature probes around...

ER: Oh there's temperature probes yeah, that's the other thing you do at that stage. So, it's considered the first critical control point, you know, HACCP plan, you know.

MHA: Right. So, do you have any women working here?

ER: We do, yeah.

MHA: Oh, I saw somebody that...

ER: Well, Elizabeth. No, yeah, well, a lot of the work we have here is kind of fairly heavy manual work, but whenever we go into production, like there, women are more dexterous hand movements, so they're often better at picking fish and stuff like that. And obviously you don't put them into positions where they have to lift heavy blocks, right. So there's actually one girl downstairs and like she's a great worker altogether, but like she's a little bit different in that, you know, she wears like jewelry on her face and you know piercings and tattoo up the side of her neck like, but she's a great worker like. And we had an inspector here from, you know, the government, and he just was, you know, ex-military and he just doesn't like anything off the norm. And I don't care what a person looks like if they're a good worker, and you know, you know, hygienic, basically, not, you know, coming in to the place dirty. I don't care if they're wearing a mohawk or a mullet, do you know what I mean? Like that's their personal preference. But, Jesus, he was over that girl. Oh, that jewelry cost a lot of money, like, you know, I mean, you know, you shouldn't be wearing that. Jesus, you can't say that to people, I mean. And like she's probably one of the best workers I have, you know.

MHA: So, are you mentoring anyone coming up?

ER: I'm always trying to mentor people coming up. But you can't mentor attitude.

MHA: Yeah.

ER: I'm always looking for people with the right attitude. There's a guy started with us a year ago, Brandon Mitchell, you probably met him. The guy, he loves fishing and he just has a great attitude. You know, he's not into the engineering aspect, but if you could get someone like that that would be engineering inclined it would be great. The guys I had in the past were great, but they were all older than me and they all retired. I mean, what am I supposed to do, take them off of retirement? I mean, you know, these guys worked hard all their life, all in the fishing industry. And one of them, he got neuropathy of the hands and feet so he just doesn't feel the tips of his

fingers and like the guy was great with his hands, and he just finds it really frustrating, you know. If he can't see it he can't do it. Whereas a lot of the engineering is, you know, done by feel.

[1:25:01] MHA: Right.

ER: The other guy, then he got cancer. Now he got it early but, you know, he got chemo so, you know, some days he's all right and some days he feels very tired and, you know, he was quite a bit older than me so he just kind of felt, you know, that he had worked long enough and hard enough and called it good. But trying to get young fellows coming up, I mean, I've guys and I'll be kind of tutoring them and trying to drive them and motivate them and, I don't know. There's one, there's one good lad I have, you know. And I think that, growing up, I don't know, I must've missed out on something because I never saw drugs or anything. But the amount of people that have problems with drugs and that, I mean, okay, we had alcohol. But even alcohol, we'd go out and we'd have a good drink every now and again, but we never drank to get drunk. That was the funny thing in Ireland. Like, you know, I'm not saying we never did, but it was always to be sociable. Like, you know, you'd see the guys going to the bars there and they'd have to have a shot and a beer, like, why are you shooting it? I mean, if it's good quality whiskey, you sip it and enjoy it. You don't go dunking it where you can't hardly taste it like. And, you know, I never understood that. And, like, that's what I find, a lot of them have problems where they're not showing up because of, you know, alcohol problems or whatever other problems they have, you know, unreliable, so. I'm, you know, disappointed, to say the least. I mean, I'm always looking.

MHA: Have you ever talked to any of the vocational schools or even the high schools that are, that have some, I don't know how many high schools around here have engineering, but it would seem like some of the vocational schools should have...

ER: Yeah. Yeah, I'd like to try and see people that have worked in some level of industry. I actually came across a guy recently, an apprentice to some other occupation. And I was awful, think that, how can I steal him or get him away, you know? Because, like, you know, you can spot talent a mile away, even though he was very young and he was probably only out of high school a year or two. He had the right attitude. And he was very interested in learning. Whereas you see a lot of people, yeah, they think like you can dub them with the information, you know? And they don't take direction very well. Like the thing I see about ex-fishermen, is they're all self-starters because you're always self-employed in the fishing boat. And even though the skipper might give you direction, he doesn't tell you every last thing to do. It's assumed you know. And, you know, you will do it because the crew will tell you to do it because you all, somebody has to do it, it's not going to do it itself. So a fisherman, you give him direction and he'll take it and run with it and keep doing it. Whereas you have guys nowadays and you ask them to do something they'll do it and then they'll sit and do nothing. Yet they know the projects and the extent of what needs to be done. But you have to do them, and like, the next day they can't find something, they don't do it at all. And you go, I thought I told you to do this. Oh yeah, I did. And, well, what's wrong with this? I didn't see those. They're at his feet. I'm kind of going, you can't fix stupid, like. You really can't. You know, I find it really frustrating. It's funny, my wife like she's a nurse and we often have this discussion like, I mean, the enjoyment you get out of a job is from liking what you do and that motivates you to do a better job. If you don't like

what you do, you're going to do a real shitty job and you're going to be miserable doing it, so why do it at all? Go away and find something else you like. Or don't torment the people that are there, you know, that's my attitude. So, I mean, you know, I kind of get on well with immigrants even though I can't speak to most of them because I don't speak any Spanish and most of them speak Spanish. But, like, the Guatemalans here, they love working with fish, and they have a great attitude towards it, personality-wise, you know? We have a lot of El Salvadorians here too, but I like the Guatemalans particularly, they're like all Mayan descent, you know? And very low-profile. But they always appear to be happy, whether they are or they aren't, you know? And, you know, they never complain about anything, you know?

MHA: I heard someone say that some of the immigrants, the Mayans, I don't know...

ER: Yeah, Guatemalans...

MHA: ...whether they're the Guatemalans or El Salvadorians, when they go into town they get hassled sometimes.

ER: Well...

MHA: Do you know anything about that?

[1:30:12] ER: Yeah, well, they're, you do have a lot of gangs around New Bedford at night, I am aware of that. But, I mean, for that reason I never bothered with New Bedford at night. I stay well clear of it, you know? You know, I've traveled extensively in Europe like and in America, and, you know, I've always avoided, like, I remember in Alaska I was on a fishing boat and somebody asked me what the jails were like in this country. I said, I have no idea. I've never seen a jail in this country. He says, well, okay, so what are they like over in Ireland? I says, well I've never seen a jail there either. Well, what are they like in Europe? I says, well, I haven't seen a jail there either. I was the only one on the boat that hadn't been inside of a slammer. And I'm kind of going like what's wrong with this world. I mean, they thought I hadn't lived or stuff, you know. The fact that I hadn't seen it. But I mean, I've never seen the point of looking for trouble. I've always avoided it, I mean, you know, when you go to bigger cities you avoid the seedy areas where you stand out and be an easy target of someone who wants to mug you or that. The same with the city here, I mean, I knew these Guatemalans I had before, a lot of them would just cycle to work and that, and this guy actually, he was very good engineering-wise, you know? He didn't speak much English but the words he spoke had perfect elocution to lead you to believe he had a better understanding of the language. And I asked him one day how much fish was left in the tank and he told me it was four o'clock. Because you never ask a question where there's a yes/no answer, you always have to phrase it so you understand by the answer they give you whether or not they understood you. And the gang around me started pissing themselves laughing, I mean, I thought it was kind of humorous myself. But the guy, anyway, I taught him how to cut with the oxyacetylene torch and how to weld and he took classes down at Voc school and became better at welding. So then he asked me if he could weld. Now he worked at the fish, but I know, if we weren't processing fish I didn't used to have him working at the conveyor belts and stuff, and he loved doing that.

And he became quite good, like, with the mig welder, like, he was going home one night and a car pulled up and they mugged him for the money he had on him, you know? Now he didn't have a lot on him but the guy, he wasn't, like he was very, very big for a Guatemalan, I mean, you know, it, he would've been, you know, probably, I'd say about 5'6" to 5'8," somewhere in that region, I mean, you know, which is very big for a lot of those guys. But I don't know whether he told me they were Guatemalan or El Salvadorian, I mean this is about ten years ago. But yes, it does happen unfortunately. But again, like, I'm not, like my brother, he goes out to Kenya quite a bit, you know, and my mother like was watching the news over in Ireland and she saw how this bus was hijacked and these Somalians like they took the people out and they shot all the non-Muslims. And my mother told my brother like, you know, you should be careful going to Kenya, did you see what happened? These people on the bus, oh, he says, that would never happen to me. Why, why is that, my mother says. Oh, he says, I never take the bus. So, the moral of the story is never walk or ride a bicycle around New Bedford, you know. So if you're driving a car make sure it's a big enough car that you can ram them or something, you know? But, no, I mean, at night it can be dodgy enough like in places, you know?

MHA: Well, Eoin, I always enjoy talking to you, always, you're just a wealth of information. Is there anything that you can think of that I haven't asked of you that I should have? Especially anything that you would like the museum to display about your, your business?

[1:34:07] ER: Yeah, well, you see, unfortunately when museums like go up, it's like the whaling museum in New Bedford, it was the end of the whaling era. And the fishing museum going up, to me, is like you know, the nail in the coffin, like. It's the end of a fishing era. And one thing about New Bedford, right, that I loved and I love the history of New Bedford and, you know I've read a lot of books on whaling, the whaling industry, and how New Bedford was one of the wealthiest cities in the United States, like, in the 1850s due to whaling. Well, when whaling basically, like, ran out of steam as a result of mineral oil being discovered and paraffin being a cheaper alternative, right? New Bedford should've died off, but the one staple they had was fishing, right? And fishing kept it going, right? And then you had the textile industries that formed a massive boom here, including Warren Buffett getting his start here, right? And, like, that took them up to the '50s into the '60s before, you know, that started being farmed abroad whether it was Mexico or Asia, it doesn't matter. But you still had the fishing industry that kept the place going. It wasn't the be all and end all, but most people don't understand, it was sustainable. And it sustained a community for such a long period of time. Now, the mills have gone. I don't know any other industry that's left here, and these environmentalist groups are killing the fishing industry. Because, you see, the amount of businesses that live in this town off the fishing industry like service industries, like hydraulic shops, engine shops, you know, fuel suppliers, oil suppliers, parts, whatever, net mending. Those people need a certain amount of business to stay in business, because their overhead is so much. But when you consolidate and make it so small, right? The fish houses aren't getting enough fish to stay cutting so they go, all those jobs get cut, and before you know it all the service industries get cut. Now you have no service industries left to maintain the boats, and before you know it, it can't be done anymore. It's like the whaling, you see, the end of it, I thought, was very interesting. When the *Wanderer* left here and she shipwrecked out in the Elizabeth Islands, it showed you the quality of the

incompetence of the crew, that they couldn't even take it out of Buzzard's Bay, right? And, you know, you're almost getting to that level in the fishing industry. Because when I was fishing, every one of us on the boat, on that factory boat, could fish that boat. Every one of us understood how it was fishing. If we went up the wheelhouse to make a phone call, you stood the risk of having to fish that boat for the rest of the bloody day, and you knew that. Now, you needed really to want to make the phone call, because this was duty that you'd wind up doing. So when you go to Alaska, you had to be, you know, a person in favor with the skipper like, an engineer or a first mate to be allowed into the wheelhouse. And they have all this demarcation bullshit there. Again, they don't allow the crew to, the knowledge or the training, right? Whereas like, you know, this boat that myself and a friend of mine bought, our attitude is to try and get guys trained and see if they like it. And if they like it, they'll run with it. And you can have another generation coming on that can actually go and see what it's like to match their wits against Mother Nature and try and make a living out of it. I mean, we're the last of the hunters in this world, right? That we're still, literally, hunting for a living. And what's remarkable is we're able to make a living doing it. We're not harming the environment, we're not harming anybody. But a lot of people don't see it as such. They see us like that we're raping the ocean.

[1:38:44]We've always fished sustainably, otherwise we wouldn't be in business. But we're going to be put out of business anyway due to overregulation. Like the number of boats, like this, that have left mid water fishing since '06. We've lost about fifty percent of the mid water fleet. I mean, Peter left that boat go to Alaska, year and a half ago, to one of the owners of this plant because he just couldn't see himself making it and again, it was too much hard work and he was getting up towards retirement age and the pressure was too much. So if you look at the quotas and the amount that were left in the ocean last year, in the herring fishery, it was scary. There was nearly forty percent of the quota left in the water. And that's a result of not having the boats to fish it. And when you don't have the boats to fish it, you can't go out in bad weather. And then you can't go out fish early in the summer because of the haddock by-catch. It gets too late in the summer then, you can't go out because of bad weather, so the quotas going to go unharvested. Down here it was bad weather last year, the boats just couldn't get out to get fishing. So again, the quota went unharvested. So, whether the boats are going to be able to survive or not going forward, it's going to be very hard to know. But the industry has changed dramatically this last ten years, frighteningly. I mean, I'm not sure what the intent of the regulation is. I'm sure there's some well-meaning people in the New England Management Council but I know there's a lot that aren't well-meaning. But I know, like, in Ireland, years ago they thought, you know, the plastic bags you get in grocery stores to take your groceries home with you, they felt that those were creating a huge environmental impact on the landfills. So they decided they'd put a twenty-cent tax on each one of them. The day and hour that tax came in, people stopped using any bags and they'd take the goods from the counter and dump them back into the trolley with no bags, take the trolley out to the car and throw them into their trunk. So the intent of the law was to generate a revenue stream to deal with this stuff. The actual, what happened, was people stopped using them overnight. Now, you know, these regulations, some of them were brought in by well-meaning people. Others, love seeing another regulation coming in because it's going to have a hazard on the fishing, right? If you bring in enough regulations, none of them say you can't fish, but it's like, say, okay, for safety purposes, we're not going to let people over 65 go out on cold

winter's days in case they catch cold or pneumonia and that would kill them. Okay, it sounds nice, fair enough. So we're not going to let them go out after dark because there's a danger they might get mugged. All right. Now, we're not going to let them go out because of whatever. You'll get enough regulations in there that they're going to die at home from starvation because they couldn't get out. But not one of them were intended to harm the person. And it's the same thing with all these regulations coming on fishing. Like, because there's an overabundance of haddock there, it's not going to harm the haddock, and actual fact, if we got a bigger by-catch of haddock, it would help cull some of the overabundance, which would help the fish stocks. Now, there was some lecture from SMAST and he was showing us how commercial fishing coming into an area, its impact actually increased the biomass of the fish in the area initially. Now, you can fish beyond a certain level which, you know, it wouldn't be sustainable. But we've no way approached that level at all. But yet they're unyielding, oh no, you can't catch any haddock. Yet the overabundance and they're never grown to harvestable size for the ground fish sector because there's too many of them there. And like they're just catching and releasing them, and that's all they can do because they're too small to bring ashore, you know? For marketable quality. Whereas if they were caught and, you know, culled out, it's like, you know, if you set carrots in your backyard and like the seeds, they all grow too close together. Well, if you don't cull them, you won't get those carrots to grow to any level because they'll all just basically congeal. And it's the same thing with this overabundance of the herring and the haddock out in George's. So like, there's no reasoning with the New England Management Council. I mean, they can't give you a reasonable answer as to why they won't allow you to cull it, which I find scary.

MHA: I think it's pressure from the groups that worry about localized depletion.

ER: But localized depletion, they don't have roots where they're in one area. I mean, I've heard these catchphrases used, and I've heard people in industry reiterating the catchphrases, which drives me demented. Because it was like, you know, Goebbels, he was Hitler's propagandist during the Second World War, and what he said, if you say it is so enough times, people will not even ask for proof, they will accept it as fact. So people are talking about local depletion and it just gets the hair standing on the back of my head. There's no such thing as local depletion. If that were the case, they'd have to go out and cull all these seals, because all the seals, the only thing they do is eat fish and the reason there's no fish inshore is because of all these seals. There's no boats working inshore. These seals are working inshore the whole time. So you need to go out and come with a plan how you're going to cull the seals, because they still allow people to fish sharks and, I mean, the great white shark is the only natural predator they have, and they allow them to fish for those things, commercially, which I think is wrong, because if you had enough of those there, you know, the beaches I think would be a lot cleaner in the area. And so would the seal population.

MHA: By the way, Eoin, you're making the analogy between the whaling museum coming in and, and the fishing museum. Is it, that's one of the reasons that this was, the Heritage Center is not really called a museum, it's called a Heritage Center because they didn't want to become a museum of what used to be. They want to be a community center for the fishing industry that exists.

ER: Yeah, I mean it's a novel idea, but I mean, it'll morph into that, the way things are going, unless something dramatic changes. And what I've seen, like this twenty years, twenty whatever, two, three, two, yeah, twenty-two, going on twenty-three years here, I mean, the way I remember, up in Portland twenty-three years ago, there was actually, you know, a fisheries up there. There was a fish house. Now it's all these condos right on the water. The same with Boston, it's all driven out of there. Gloucester, I mean, you know, other than having the name as having a fishing port, there really isn't any fishing boats left there, you know? And like New Bedford is the last bastion. And, you know, you have these tourists like coming thinking, oh, like, you know, the town of New Bedford, it's really nice downtown, you know? And I think the tourists would really like to see fishing boats, thinking it's quaint, but they're driven out of extinction, you know? It's sad, really, to see how it's going. And there doesn't seem to be any way of stopping the environmentalists because there's so many millions and millions of dollars being thrown at it. Like, what I can't understand is why they keep at it. I mean, they can just put them out of business overnight because the amount of money that's being spent at it, they should be made held accountable to who's giving them the money. I mean, the biggest thing I see now, like, with the way the government is, with the Obama administration making these massive land grabs out in the ocean. I mean, to me it's a joke like. Having these marine sanctuaries like, because you're going to put these windmills now in an area of production fishing, and windmills on the water, they never worked in Europe. People are being sold a false bill of goods. I mean, I heard more stories about the success rate of Bremerhaven and Bremen, because of all these windmills out in the German bight.

[1:47:49]I was there, we were landing fish there, there was nothing wrong with that community before the windmills showed up. And most of the guys in Europe that spearheaded this, they're doing jail time because they were getting grants from governments, and they were saying they were putting up three windmills and they were in fact only putting up one. Because the cost of putting them up and maintaining them in the ocean is so high it makes no economic sense whatsoever. And what I can't understand is, like when you go out here into the Gulf Stream on a flat, calm day, it is a flat, calm day. But when you get a hurricane coming up from the Caribbean, we don't see it ashore very often, but you'll see it out there in the ocean. And those things are going to be just blowing away. And they will snap the masts and you will have all this wreckage around this place that are going to be navigational hazards, and they're not going to have the money to take them back in. I mean, I see the electricity we use here at the plant, I mean, it's very complex, I mean, we're paying about thirty-five cents a unit by the time all is said and done. But the breakdown in the bill for the actual kilowatt, market price at the moment is about two and a half cents, right? Now you ask, how does that go to thirty-five cents, I can explain it to you. We have to pay about a thousand dollars a month for the honor of being a customer, okay? Then I have to pay a demand charge, based on my twenty minutes peak usage in the month at ten dollars a kilowatt unit, puts you around about say \$16,000. So I'm at 17,000 now before we did anything, right? Then I pay so much for the transmission charge in here. Then the other part of the bill would be my energy bill, so I pay two and a half cents a unit, great value for money, right? Then I have the ISO of New England, so they look at your bill over the last year, they look at the peak usage there, and they fine you about \$10 per kilowatt you had on the board on that two-hour period of the peak usage there. Now this is perfectly legitimate, trust me. I looked into

it. Then, this now is where it gets sore. I have to pay two point five cents for this renewable bullshit that they're putting out on the ocean. So I have to pay the same to put a windmill out there for what I'm paying for electricity. And I have to do that every single month. I do the same on the NStar bill, which is Eversource now. This renewable energy, where they are basically fining us as customers for this supposed green energy. There's nothing green about it. The only thing that's green about it is the cost of it in green dollars. I mean, it's like, you know, I can't, it's just pure politics. And, you know, you have all these politicians, and they're believing their own bullshit and rhetoric. Unfortunately, nobody is listening to reason. So, I mean, you take fishermen away, and you've taken away the voice of reason. Because one thing you can't do is you can't bullshit the fish into the boat, you know what I mean? That's the end of it, like. You actually have to know what you're doing to actually be able to bring the fish ashore and to be able to bring the crew home safely. These guys, they can talk the talk, but none of them can walk the walk. And none of this stuff is going to pan out.

[1:51:14] MHA: What about, Copenhagen has quite a few.

ER: They have a shitload of them in Ireland and they're falling down like, you know, flies at the end of the summer. The wind is just shearing the masts and blowing them over. I mean, it's twenty years in Ireland, the place is littered with them. You can't stand anywhere in Ireland and you'll see windmills around the place, you know? And this ashore, not out in the ocean. They wouldn't attempt to put them in the ocean, they know better. And they're falling apart ashore. I mean, there's a guy there, a part of the Southcoast Energy User Group which is the Fall River Municipality, the New Bedford municipality and industry around New Bedford, right? So Phillips have a light plant over in Fall River, it's called something else, something Lightolier, now. And they were bought out by Constellation, right? But they have a big windmill. So if you're driving north on 24 in Fall River you'll see a big windmill on the side of the road. Well, that's his pet project. After one of the meetings I was asking, we were discussing which way should we look, should we look at solar or should we look at windmills and, I says, no solar will actually pay using the tax credits. The wind is for the birds, I said, that's total bullshit. Oh he says, I got a windmill, I say, are you saying that doesn't work? I says, I'll tell you now, if you bought it at the right money, you probably can make it pay, if you got your loan structured the right way. But if you didn't and you have to keep sitting on that thing, because you're going to have technicians up every month fixing it, I says so how many times, how long have you had the windmill up? Oh, he says, I've had it up a year and a half. Now I'm generating so many dollars a week in revenue. I says, so how many times have you had to have that thing fixed? Well, he says, maybe every two months, I have to fly two technicians out from Texas. I says, what does that cost you? About ten grand for the week to get it back online. But I have to bring it back online. I says, fair enough. I says, now, when the bearings collapse on that thing, because they will collapse, I says, either this year or next year, all right? I says, how much is it going to cost you to fix them? Oh, he says, this is a reputable company. I says, I don't care how reputable it is. The engineering is at the limit of the technology. And they are not proven. And trust me, I know mechanical engineering. Those things will fail. So, it was about four weeks ago I was, we had the meeting in his boardroom, and I was looking at the windmill, I says, look, I says, why is your windmill not turning? And he said, oh the bearings failed in the main gearbox. Hmm. Interesting,

I says, Jesus, I never would've guessed that would've happened. I says, so when are they going to fix it? Well, he says, it's supposed to be under warranty. I says, God bless you. I says, they'll pay for the warranty, but you're probably going to have to pay for the rigging and the crane services that are going to cost you probably about a half million. He says, how would you know that? I says, I'm a good guesser. So, yeah, he says, we're debating as to what to do. I says, don't buy a windmill, that's what to do. Now I says, when you put those things out in the ocean and you're trying to fix them in the ocean, you've exponentially increased the cost of maintenance and repair. So, if they can't keep them going ashore in a reasonably nice environment, how can you possibly keep them running out in the ocean in that hazardous environment with salt air? Hurricanes coming up the coast? But, I mean, if I, you know, when housing prices collapsed here in this country I actually was selling my house at the time. And I knew it was broken at that stage because I could get a mortgage to buy another house with nothing down. I didn't want to do that because I had equity in my home, but trying to sell the house, because the way the housing market was going, I had to sell it to transfer the capital, right? So long story short the worst home I was in, second mistake of my life, I couldn't sell the house and I wound up having to carry two mortgages for awhile until I sold the other one which I did. But I was looking at the time, how could I benefit from a housing collapse and I didn't know how to do it. And I saw a show on TV, The Big Short, right, about these guys doing it. And, you know, I was thinking the same thing with this wind energy. I mean, I'd love to bet against it, I just don't know where I can bet against it. Because I know it's going to be a total disaster, and, you know, like unless as industry we're going to be fined even more on our electric bill to fund it. But I mean, at what point do you have to stop paying for something that doesn't work?

[1:55:54] MHA: That's been my feeling the whole time about wind, especially out in the ocean. In this climate and the rough seas, I, I don't see how it's going to work. But they have the five windmills off Block Island now, so we'll see what happens with them, and hope that they leave them out long enough before they do the full build out of 200.

ER: Yeah. I have every confidence that they're going to fall apart. I mean, a year's a short space of time. I remember I had to go up to Canada about a year ago. We flew up to Saint John's, New Brunswick and flew over Dig, Digby, and Nova Scotia. So again, there's a shitload of windmills over in Digby, and it was funny, because I was point out, like, there was a wind farm, there was about fifty windmills in it, and there was twenty-five not turning. Slightly less than twenty-five that weren't turning, it was like, it was almost fifty percent. It wasn't quite. And look, the thing is, if they were functioning, they would've been turning, because there was wind that day. So, I mean, when you see these windmills that aren't turning, either the software has crashed in them and they've gone into safe mode where they shut down because the software has to be able to feather the propellers so they can't over speed and that...

MHA: Right.

ER: ...because the tips of the propeller are running around at the speed of sound, you know? But they don't have the technology down pat where there's any reliability built into it. And I don't see them getting it, because they keep going for bigger and bigger saying, you know, well the bigger it is, the quicker the payback. Well, they've exceeded their, it's like when they built the Titanic,

they were at the limit of the engineering. And we saw what happened there. And, you know, until such time as the world caught up and figured out, I mean, when they were building suspension bridges here everything was going great, and then they figured out they could build them lighter and lighter until you get to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and we know what happened there. Well, you know, back to the drawing board. Well, you can't make that mistake again. But, you see, we're making all these mistakes with the windmills. Now, but like, why don't you make them all ashore where you can fix them? Or figure out if it's financially viable to even go ahead? No. But, I mean, I'll tell you, somebody has a great line of bullshit to get the government to go along with this and take all our money from us. And, I mean, like, it's extortion. But it's legal extortion because it's the government.

MHA: So you going to put sun...

ER: Well, I looked at that, but, like, you need to have a tax appetite for that to pay. If you don't make enough money, you don't have a tax appetite.

MHA: Oh.

ER: So now it's no longer a viable proposition. And we've been marginal on that, and, you know, some years, yes there's a little bit of gravy on the plate, and the next year there's nothing on the plate. And the next year there's a little bit, and I've looked at doing it on this roof here, the south facing panel, and I looked at, I could put about a hundred and thirty kilowatt panels on there, you know? I looked at it and the payback, but you need the tax appetite, so. That was kind of shot down. I mean, all I do is say, just do what I'm told. I'm, you know, the manager, but I have to answer to the greater powers, the guys that own it, and they have to answer to the bank.

MHA: Right.

ER: And the bank has to answer to the shareholders and who knows what the shareholders are answering to. But I'm sure that they're answering to their wives or something. Who knows.

MHA: Well again, thank you so much.