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Anthony, Paul ~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

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New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center 38 Bethel Street P.O. Box 2052 New Bedford, MA 02741-2052

Background

Name of person interviewed: Paul Anthony [PA]

Facts about this person:

Age52SexMaleOccupationGeneral Manager, Sea Fuels Marine, New Bedford, MAResidence (Town where lives)Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Laura Orleans [LO]	
Transcriber: Laura Silverman [LS]	
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Key Words

Sea Fuels Marine, fuel transportation, connections between fishing industry workers, Eastern Fisheries, ethnicities of fishing industry workers, dockside safety, fuel prices, fishing boat fuel consumption, how to fuel a fishing boat, fishermen's attitudes, impact of weather on fueling boats, fishing industry nicknames, fishing industry jargon, fuel through put agreements, process of paying for fuel.

Abstract

In this interview, Paul Anthony gives a rich description of the fuel delivery industry on the New Bedford waterfront. He discusses the process of fueling a fishing boat, how payment works, fluctuations in fuel pricing, and the relationships between dockworkers.

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[55:43] End of audio

[0:00]

LO: So, today is February...

PA: Seventh.

LO: Seventh in the year 2017, and this is an interview for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, funded by an Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress. As part of this project we are interviewing shore side workers in the New Bedford/Fairhaven fishing industry to record their stories, document their skills and knowledge, and better understand their important role in the fishing industry. The recording and transcript will become part of the permanent collection at the Library of Congress. I am Laura Orleans and today I am speaking with Paul Anthony here at the Fishing Heritage Center, and it is about quarter of three in the afternoon...

PA: Yeah, quarter of three, yeah.

LO: I will have you sign that formal document, but just for the record, do you give us permission to record you for this project?

PA: Absolutely, yeah.

LO: All right, so I know that I just said your name, but if you could introduce yourself for the purposes of...

PA: All right, I'm Paul Anthony, and I work at Sea Fuels Marine.

LO: Okay. And more specifically what is your job at Sea Fuels?

PA: Well, currently I'm the General Manager, so pretty much run the day to day operation for the facility. But it's a small fuel facility on the waterfront in New Bedford and we fuel most of the fishing fleet. Most of our clients are the fishing industry itself. We do have some private yachts and things that come in during the summertime, but our main business is just the fishing industry.

LO: So when and where were you born?

PA: Well, I was born here in New Bedford, and raised here in New Bedford. Moved for a short period of time to Cape Cod for work, unrelated to this business, and then I returned back here, probably, I spent about ten years down there on Cape Cod and then came back here, and took the job on the waterfront. That's when I became related with the fishing industry at that point.

LO: Okay. And then, when were you born? Year?

PA: Uh, in, January 30th, 1965.

LO: Oh, happy birthday.

PA: Yeah. It was just the other day.

LO: Just recently. So tell me a little bit about your childhood growing up.

PA: Well, I grew up here in New Bedford, in the south end of New Bedford, which is down right on the right on the waterfront, down in the beach area and the peninsula. So I've always been around the water. My father was not related to the fishing industry in any way, he was an electrician, but I spent a lot of time on the water, and I, just personal, recreational fishing was my thing, so when I was a little kid I spent all my time out on my small boats. You know, we lived right up the street from the beach, so I'd be in the water all the time fishing with my little rod and reel and my buddies, and that was, uh, we kind of grew up all summer just playing around there. But then I went to school here in New Bedford, went away for a little bit to learn a, a sign trade, did that a little while down on the Cape, and then I moved back to this area, worked in, for this specific company which was called the Co-op at the time, it was the Seafood Co-op back then, and that's where I got my experience, was working as a tanker man to fuel the boats, things like that, got my license to, fuel boats and run fuel barges. And then that, had a little period of time where it, where that company started to lay people off and being a new employee there I got another job working in the same industry but not fueling fishing fleets, but working for a large fuel company, Reinauer Transportation. So I used to travel to New York, and then I'd go up and down the coast fueling, you know, transporting fuel out of New York City and, and that location, New Jersey and the refineries, and then bringing it up and down the coast. And then returned back here when I started to raise a family, it was just more convenient to be home for my kids and, so, and I got a job offer here, down here at Sea Fuels, and have been here for a good twentytwo years. Yeah.

LO: Okay. So tell me with regard to, to after the sign company, we can talk about that in a minute, but what attracted you to the fuel business? How did you...

PA: You know, you know it was, it was just kind of funny, it was a friend of mine who was a fisherman, a few of my buddies that I went to school with growing up in New Bedford they took the opportunity to go work out on boats, and in a roundabout way, one of the captains that he worked for ended up as a, as a manager for the New Bedford Seafood Co-op, which the New Bedford Seafood Co-op actually, it sounds more like it was related to the seafood industry, but it was really a supporting business was the fuel part, uh, fuel industry, that fueled the fishing boats. So, uh, the guy that was actually the Operations Manager at the time was a captain of one of my, one of my friend's, and he took him on board to work, and with him at the Co-op, and, I was out of work at the time for a short period of time, so he, they had an opening and it was a really sought after job at that time. So it was difficult to get in, but because I knew somebody, kind of, I moved my way into that position. So I was real grateful because it's, it's been a pretty good career for me. Yeah.

LO: I have a sense from the limited knowledge that I have, or experience, exposure to the industry, that that's not so unusual. That a lot of, there are a lot of personal connections, family connections, or just knowing somebody is...

[5:07] PA: That's correct. Yeah, it, it does seem that way. The waterfront's kind of an odd, it's an odd animal, I guess, to kind of say, but yeah, it's strange that you get to meet a lot of people on the waterfront, and you find that they're related one way or another, whether it's friendships or actually blood relations, that these people, and it looks like a big town and a big waterfront, a lot of boats. But it's almost like a small, it's almost like a small fishing village. It's hard, that's the way I can describe it because you start to realize how many people are connected. Myself now, I have a lot of family members that are connected here to the waterfront, and so you know it's really strange. And people say, oh, that's so-and-so's brother, or that's so-and-so's uncle, and they knows this one, and, and though, though it looks like a big waterfront, not, not something simple you'd see like up in Maine or some of these small villages where you see small boats. Even though the boats are big, their fishing families are still pretty much the same. And you see a lot of people that are, and they may not be fishermen, but they work in related, you know, whether it's welding or, something to do with gear, or even fuel. And that's basically, yeah, that's kind of how you see a lot of people do end up working in different industries. I wouldn't say everybody, but, a good part of them, and it's a really strong industry. It's gone through it's times, ups and downs, but it's always been a big industry here in New Bedford, so I think it, it's employed so many people through the years. It's an opportunity, put it that way, it's, it's one of the bigger opportunities here in New Bedford, so by having that opportunity, it does employ a lot of people. And then you find that, you know, it brings on other people after that and you see generations of people that are down here, they continue to work, in one fashion or another.

LO: So, you mentioned that you've got family in the industry. I happen to know a little bit, but, for the sake of the recording, tell me a little...

PA: Yeah, well my brother, he helps run one of the larger fishing companies here in the city for his father-in-law. Eastern Fisheries is a pretty big, pretty big fishing company here so he's involved in that, and helping run that fishing industry there. We actually do very limited business with him. The company I work for, they actually have their own division where they fuel their own boats. But we fuel the other boats, but we're, you know, because we're on the waterfront we know each, and all that. I got a nephew that also does a lot of diving and things like that here on the waterfront, and of course his children, most of, his two sons are involved in the fishing, so I got two nephews that also work in the fishing industry, you know, for Eastern also, you know, just small connections like that, and then of course a lot of friends and things like that that I've known through the years, just growing up going to school, and they still, you know, in the area they work in different industries here, whether they're fishing or whether they work in the, some of the boat yards, or some of the fish houses and things like that. So yeah, it's a, even in law enforcement, I got one of my best friends, one of my good friends works here in the law enforcement, so on both sides I have people that I know, you know, I, that's funny because I always think about him when I see him go by, because I know not always looked in favor of his, his job that he does, and yet, we, we still remain friends, we see each other, work amongst each other, yeah.

LO: So is that law enforcement specifically on the waterfront?

PA: Uh, yeah, he works for the fisheries division, for the marine fisheries division. He's, but he grew up here in the south end with me, one of the guys I was talking about hanging around as a

kid playing and fishing and stuff like that. But he went to college and got a degree in marine science, and then worked his way into the working law enforcement with the marine fisheries, so you know, I see him on the waterfront all the time so it's, it's funny, you, you get to see a lot of different people.

LO: So, the waterfront is very diverse ethnically, too. I've been really interested in that, and I'm curious, what's your ethnic background?

PA: Well, yeah, a lot of Portuguese, that's was main, there's quite a few Polish fishermen here in the city, and of course Norwegian is a big, big part of this waterfront, you know. Myself, I, I got a little Portuguese in me and French, but really it has nothing, no connection, I would say, with the waterfront, or my ethnicity never really been a factor, and either way I don't speak Portuguese, but, you know, because I've known so many of the people that work in it, you know, you just, that's about it.

LO: So you said you worked at Sea Fuels about twenty-two years...

PA: Yeah, yes, for Sea Fuels. And I worked, prior to that, probably four or five years with, when it was the New Bedford Seafood Co-op, and the stint in between that was, you know, the stint in between I was working for Reinauer Transportation.

LO: So actually ...

PA: ...Out of New York.

LO: ...let's back up to the Seafood Co-op...

PA: Yeah.

LO: ...because I am curious, a little bit more, about that. Was it strictly just fuel, the Seafood Coop? Or was it several...

[9:57] PA: Yeah the New, when I came on, for the New Bedford Seafood Co-op, at that point, was pretty much a fuel and, you know, fish supplies for the fishing boats and things like that. They sold some gear, not an awful gear because there was a lot of different businesses that do that, so it was mostly like the petroleum products, you know, oils, greases, things that got to do that, equipment they use in the engine rooms, you know, grease guns, things like that. It was a lot of things like that, bilge cleaners, all that was in a warehouse, so that was a big, that was a very big part of the business, still is, big part of the business. But the fuel, they had four different barges that would go out and fuel the fuel barge, fuel the fishing fleet, excuse me. They'd fuel the fishing fleet so there was four barges and we used to leave at 4:30 in the morning, was the, it was usually the time when the boats actually left the dock, so you got there just, you know, just after four, got your boat warmed up and all four barges would go out. At the time, that was the only, there was only one other company that was actually in the harbor, that did the same type of work that we did. And it was one barge with two individuals on it. So, really, most of the fleet, and the

fleet was a lot bigger back then. So, the four barges, we had pretty full schedule to keep things going just to keep everything fueled.

LO: So give me a sense of, of time, are we talking '80s?

PA: Yeah. That, when I came on, yeah, it was definitely back in, well, let me see. '80, it must have been around '89, '88, '89 was when I came down. And came to work for the Co-op, yeah. '89, '90, somewhere in that area. It's, I'm foggy, trying to remember what time it was, must've been around '90, and then I came to work, like I said, I worked for the Co-op at that point, and we put in, like I said, there was four barges, so there was quite a few individuals that worked there, and at the time it was a union shop, it was, the Local 59 was the, it was the local union that we worked under. And Local 59 used to take care of a lot of different things here on the waterfront too, they weren't, you know, just not, just the fueling, but there was other, other company, other divisions.

LO: And so that was also after the, the strike, the big strike...

PA: Yeah.

LO: ...in 19...

PA: I, yes, exactly. I started shortly after the strike, supposedly they got a, I heard a lot of those stories and things, but at that point I was already, that had gone on, by already. They had, you know, they'd been, done some changes, even at, even at the Co-op where some of the individuals were let go, and that's what left some open spaces, because of different things that took place during that time, and so when I came up here, I didn't have, I wasn't licensed or anything, but they took me on to work as an employee and then I got my license through the Co-op, they actually helped me attain my license through the Coast Guard, and um, that's how I started the career in fuel, uh, working with, as a tank man, working on the fuel barge.

LO: So tell me a little bit about that, that on-the-job training?

PA: Yeah well, like I said, I had a lot of experience in the water, on the water from being, you know, younger, we always had pleasure boats and things like that, and a friend of mine, think he should be, you know. There's safety factors, you got to be paying attention all the time, but have a tendency to let your guard down, and if you do, you know, you're working along, amongst the same things that the fishermen are working on when they're out at sea, a vessel might not be operating at the time you're doing it, but there's operations going on where they might be taking out fish, there's heavy baskets swinging things, you got to pay attention so that nobody gets, you know, again, you know. And people do look out for you. And there's times when we've fueled the boats when they're sitting idle at the dock where the boat has come in from fishing, and during the evening, when you weren't, we weren't on duty, and when we get out there in the morning we just jump aboard, and we fuel it, you know, and get the fuel done before, maybe, the settlement house opens at eight o'clock, we'll have the fuel aboard and it's, the oils and anything that it needs, and so that they can settle the boat, and sometimes those hours in the morning, usually at dark, so you got to be a little bit more careful. I, we've had incidents where

guys slip and fall because of ice or anything else, and then the, you know, like I said, sometimes they fall in the water. It not common, pretty much everyone's pretty conscious of that, but it does happen, it does happen, so yeah, there's a certain safety element to it, you know, personal safety, but. Um, not as dangerous as being out at sea, but.

LO: So take me on a, kind of a typical, or is, is there a typical day? Like what time does the day start?

[14:24] PA: Well, you know, it's changed so much now, because of the way that, before, the boats would come in, they would be, you know, and any given day you might have twelve, fifteen or twenty vessels in, on, on a day, and taking out fish, and, what they do, the auction was something that was - you probably had another interviews and things - but the auction was something that was going on at the time. And when they got their assignment of where to take their fish, the boats, after they came in, they would find out where they going to, and they'd all rush the fish houses, and you'd kind of stay clear of them with the barge and let them kind of settle into the fish houses. They got to be taking their fish out and we'd come along side, and you'd just continue there, you'd go from boat to boat to boat, and you'd try to get them. Now, it's not so much that way. Individual houses buy certain trips from certain boats, so we know to look for them and where they're going to be. You know, if we have a certain boat that's due in, we know where that boat takes out, so we kind of look in that area in that direction, and we get to them. So it's a little more, time-wise it's a little more relaxed than what it was before. Of course, makes it safer, too. Yeah, I think before when you used to feel rushed and under pressure to do a lot of boats in a day you would have a tendency to maybe, you know, you're trying to rush along with the job and your possibility of having an incident or an accident. So now it's a little bit, so you get out there, there's a little more, and you have more time to be a little more safer at your job. And, the boats, of course, changed so much from years ago; the older boats were very difficult to fuel. There wasn't a lot of thought into the process of how they would fuel, and as the fishing fleet had to travel further out and fish in different waters and different timelines, instead of being out for six or eight days they were going out for twelve and fourteen days, they had to carry more fuel so they would put the fuel tanks aboard the boat that weren't normally where they would be, or maybe not the safest way to have them installed in the boat, so it made your job a little trickier. But today, pretty much with the modern boats and the new boats, the fleet's been through a big change. They're a lot easier to fuel, I'd have to say, most all the modern boats and the newer boats, the systems are a lot easier, the location of the fuel tanks, things like that, makes our job a lot easier. So we leave the dock, we come alongside, typically it takes about an hour and a half to two hours per vessel to fuel, roughly, depending on the size and amount of fuel that they're going to take, and of course the amount of fuel depends on how many days at sea they've been. Obviously the longer they've been or the tougher part of the, the water they were fishing in, they might burn a little more fuel, a little less fuel, so, you know, of course that would be a factor of how much time you'd spend aboard a vessel. And once you were done, you would, if we, all our products are ticketed, so we have meters and tickets aboard the barge, we fill them out and you're basically left with a fuel ticket that tells you how much, the amount that you took. And the vessel gets a copy which we normally leave somewhere in the vessel. If there's somebody aboard the vessel at the time we leave it with them, if not we just leave it somewhere in the galley. And then the fuel slips get called in to the office and we have a girl in the office that makes sure that the settlement houses get that amount of fuel at that day's price, and gets

billed, so that they can get that settlement in so the boats can settle up and the guys can get their money. And we'll move on to the next boat and just basically go about our day. Some days you may have a lot, you know, five, six boats, and other days you may only have three or two boats. And there's typical days that we may not have any boats in, so you know, it gives you a chance to catch up on things in your vessel.

LO: So, I, I understand that the fuel amount might change...

PA: Yes.

LO: ...you know, according to the size of the vessel and all those factors...

PA: The type of fish.

LO: ... is there a, is there an average, or?

PA: An aver-, yeah, you know, I, a lot of people ask me that, because it does, kind of, you know they say, "Well, how, you know, how much fuel do they take?" So something like a scallop boat that as a full license with two drags, anywhere from, typically you can say anywhere between a full trip which would be ten, twelve days, might be anywhere between 7 and 12,000 gallons of fuel for that trip. And a dragger, which usually doesn't spend as much time out and the fishing may not be as, the boat might not have to work as hard as it does dragging across the bottom with the big steel drags that they use to do scallop with, so they'll burn anywhere between 3 and 6,000 or 8,000 gallons. So that's about an average between a scalloper and a dragger. So if you look out in your day and you see you have three scallopers in and a dragger, you can kind of calculate roughly how much fuel you're going to be using on that day. You have an idea. And by looking, if you keep a good enough log, you know when the boat left the dock, so you know about what time he's back in, and you can kind of figure after awhile about how much ga-, how many gallons a day they burn. So while they're out at sea if they typically take 700 gallons a day and they're out ten days, you figure 7,000 gallons. So you kind of have an idea, so once you get to know your customer you kind of figure that out.

LO: How much does the price change, day to day?

[19:20] PA: Well, that's always a big thing, now it is. Years ago it never was, but nowadays it's a, um, my job, basically in the, first thing in the morning, by 6:00 I have all my prices. And what I have to do is, every day the prices change, because it's bought and sold on the Commodities Market in New York, so the price gets set at 6:00 in the evening, so that next, the following morning is the price, we're setting the price of the fuel at the 6:00, market price in New York, at the Exchange, the New York Stock Exchange, and then we have to take that and factor in, of course, our transportation and our, you know, profit, things like that. And then we work out the price every day. So it fluctuates quite a bit. But it basically the owners and those people, they can figure about how much it is going to be a trip if they pay attention to the Stock Market, which a lot of them do, and they see that the fuel, you know, fuel might have rose three or four cents overnight, so they know there's going to be a three or four cent increase in the fuel price. Or even if there's a four or five cent drop and you, the market swings, it's the stock market, so some days

you might go a week where it dropped, you might go a week where it went up. So it, there can be pretty good swings in the fuel price. So yeah, and where you're taking that much fuel, that's one of your biggest expenses to settle the boat, so yeah.

LO: Do guys plan their arrival accordingly? I mean, they don't wait to come in because the fuel prices...

PA: No, no, that would take, that doesn't factor in. They're just doing their job.

LO: It is what it is.

PA: They're doing their job and yeah, that's basically what it is. You know and if they hit it three or four cents more or less one day or another, it is what it is. That's usually not a big, big factor. Three or four cents, I know it's, with a large amount of fuel, 10,000 gallons of fuel, three cents, it's a difference divided amongst everybody. But it's, historically, through time though, over the last few years, when we, when I first started in the industry, the price of fuel for many years probably way back, was anywhere between, you know, you'd pay sixty-five to eighty-five cents a gallon, and that was, that was per gallon of fuel. And today, typically, it doesn't fall below two dollars and it's typically up as high as two dollars and fifty cents. The swing goes between there. So that's, you know, it's changed a lot.

LO: A couple years ago...

PA: Yeah.

LO: ... it was worse.

PA: Yes, it was, when you have, have any big changes, like if you have a, an ongoing conflict somewhere, like a war or something, it, the price can go crazy, or you have something like an embargo going on and, you know, depending, politically, it really screws things up politically too. And it can go both ways though, sometimes it can really drop or it can really rise. But those swings, you know, they're, thankfully, usually far and few between. But, yeah, they can be, they can be hard on the industry. And depending on how well the industry's doing. If the industry's going well - one of the typical things that I always laugh about is years ago when, when the boats weren't doing so well and fishing, they weren't getting as much price for their product and it was, they were always ask, every time, what's the price of fuel? You know, the guys aboard the boat, because they knew that impacted their check quite a bit, because it's the largest expense on their settlement sheet will be the fuel. So then they'll say how much is fuel? And what's the fuel? And then, you know, they get, they bitch about it, oh, it's crazy, it's so expensive. But when fishing's doing really well and they're getting paid very well and the amount of the product they're getting is coming in real well, they have a tendency to not to even ask that question, you know? And they kind of relax and they just, they don't even say anything. They come, you come aboard, they're just happy to be done with their trip, they know they're going to making a lot of money, there's, you know, the price of the product is pretty high, and you may not even get asked how much the fuel is. So, it all depends on what, you know, there's both sides of the coin, you know, how well the market's doing and how much the product is, you know?

LO: Is there much change seasonally, in terms of the volume of business you do, and...

PA: Yeah, well, yeah, typical, well because the boats, they get more fishing days, they get - their days are kind of centered around, for scallop boats, it's like, uh, in the March season. That's when the biggest part of the fleet really starts working, is after March. So they get their days back, what they call their days, they get so many days that they can fish. And they all start to go out then through the summertime it's usually much busier. We have a lot of boats there from the southern parts here on the coast, they come up and fish up in the northern parts, and so they're in and out of the port too, so the volume increases quite a bit between March and towards the end of the fall into like October, you know, and that's, usually that's between March and October is the biggest volume of fuel that we use. Even, you know, of course the pleasure yachts too, that we do a lot of pleasure yachts. They come into our dock also, we're open for that type of business. As I say, primarily it's the fishing fleet, but we do, of course that's in the summertime only, up here in the northeast, no, nobody's out there in their pretty boats this time of year.

LO: How about tools? We talked about clothing a little bit, are there tools that you bring with you on jobs, or that are on...

PA: Not too much, I mean, basically, you can almost do your job with a, you know, a pipe wrench, a screwdriver, you know, there's not a lot of. The equipment's pretty much the same, just about, I mean you do have some boats a little more trickier than others and places you have to get your hoses into, and places that a little more difficult to get around some equipment they may have aboard the boat, so you have to move things and all. But no, really the tools-wise, there really isn't anything specific. Good set of eyes and a good set of ears also so you know when you're, you can hear your product splashing in the tank and know where you're going. And just paying attention to, usually the safety, things that are aboard the boat, like your sight glasses and sounding tubes, things like that, and make sure that you know that you're doing, it's going in the right place, not ending up in the water.

[25:11] LO: And is it sort of similar to fueling up your car in terms of like, how do you know when you've, when it's done?

PA: Well basically, yeah, no, not at all. It's nothing even close to filling up a vehicle where you have what they call back flow nozzle that shuts off automatically. So when your tank is full, it comes up and it snaps off. That doesn't happen in this, not in this industry. You rely on sight glasses, which is basically a tube where you watch the fuel actually rise in the glass and you can see the level of it. A lot of boats, typically, they want to balance the boat so it floats the way they, each captain's usually pretty particular. When a new captain takes a boat, after he gets familiar with how the boat rides in the water and the way he likes to fish, they may personally mark the tanks at the sight glasses where they want the fuel, "don't go any higher than here," or "leave these tanks." The forward tanks they want a little bit more so that the boat comes down a little bit in the head, she'll go deeper in the water and a little higher in the stern, or vice versa. They might prefer the boat to have a deeper draft in the stern, so they want more fuel in the stern, a little less in the forward part of the boat, so it's all personal taste, and so you go aboard the boat and you pretty much go for where the levels of fuel that each particular captain or engineer might

want his boat to be set at to give him his optimum ride for the boat while they're fishing. He'll make the job a lot easier on everybody aboard the vessel when they're working, so, but that's basically it. I mean you, and so, you're not really, it's not like when you're filling a car where you fill it until it's done; you fill it specifically to the boat. So wherever the boat needs to have it, some guys want it filled right up out of sight, in other words they want the, the fuel to actually go to the top of the sight glasses where you don't see it anymore, which means that the boat, the tanks are very, very full. And so, but you just get used to those, again, those are the things that you get used to your customers and how they want it and what they want. And they try to, every time you fuel the boat, you want to bring it back to that point because then you know that's exactly what they burned on that trip, and that's exactly what they're going to get charged for, the guys aboard the deck know exactly what they're going to get charged for so. And barring anything, unless there's an incident where a boat has maybe a breakdown or something and they're going to have to go on a railway, they don't want to put all that weight on, all that fuel causes a lot of weight in the boat, so they'll estimate the fuel, so then they'll figure, like I said, 700 gallons a day, ten days, 7,000 gallons, they estimate a 7,000 gallon fill and we can make a bill up for that and then when they get back in the water we can make sure they get their 7,000 gallons worth of fuel or, as opposed to how much money they paid, they're getting the fuel, and that way there they, they can get the boat out of the water safely without having all that weight aboard. So something like that may change our job a little bit, but.

LO: How many tanks does a boat typically have? Is that standard, or?

PA: Oh, you know, most boats, it varies. I've been on boats that've had six and eight tanks and, some of the new, modern boats that, most of the newer boats that we do, the larger scallop vessels, they have typically six tanks. They may have two tanks forward on either side, port and starboard side, forward, what they'll call forward tanks or bow tanks. And then you get what they call saddle tanks, or mid tanks, which are usually right almost dead center of the boat where the engine is. And you have a port and starboard tank there. And then most of them have tanks in the stern also, and you'll have a port and starboard stern tank. So, they'll be, typically, maybe six is most boats have. Smaller boats may only have four or even just two. Even the small, some of the smaller draggers just got two saddle tanks, forward in the engine room and they just, you know, fill those tanks there.

LO: And each tank is filled independently?

PA: Individually, yup. So if you got, they would be filled, we have two hoses aboard the barge, and so we would put a hose on the port side and one on the starboard side, or one forward, one aft, depending on how you, how the individ-, you know, how you like to fill the boat. Because we pretty much make that decision on how, when we're putting fuel on, how we want to fuel it. We might want to fill it something forward and something aft first, maybe both forwards first, maybe both aft first, and it, that's something we get used to, just to keep our job safe when we know, you know, where it is. But as long as the individual, the captains get what they need, they're happy.

LO: So what do you enjoy most about this work? You've been doing it a long time.

[29:35] PA: I don't know, I guess it's, I guess it's the people more than anything. I mean, it's like any job, you know, you try to, you see so many people come and go and they're just - yeah, I guess I'd say it's just, it's an atmosphere. It's hard for me to describe. I just, you know, been doing it for so long it's not glamorous business, at all, and it's not something like, you know some people say you're a fisherman, they picture you in the movies offshore and this and that, and the wind blowing and the spray in your face. This kind of work is nothing like that, you know, I mean, you're just about doing your work every day, jumping aboard. But I think it's maybe the early hours and you know, I like getting down on the waterfront really early when the sun's coming up and I, you know, it's hard to describe, but I guess I have to say just, and, and it's interesting all the time; it changes. It's not like working in a factory constantly stitching something or, or making something over and over repetitively, even though it's somewhat of a repetitive business, it's always different, you know. These different stories of the trips the people coming in, what they're doing. And, and seeing the boats, the boats change a lot. Lot of times there's - it just fascinates me - the gear and stuff that they use. And even the scientific end of it, really, always astonishes me. There's a lot of scientific stuff going on now, you know, surveys and, and I ask a lot of questions. People probably want me to shut up, but I like to ask anyways. You have those who want to talk to me and others, I'll listen because I, I think it's fascinating. It's an evolving business all the time and so even though our business doesn't change a heck of a lot, theirs does and it's fascinating. Because we do see it, we see it every single day you're down there, you're exposed to it, you know? How many, you know, how many bags of a product did they bring in this trip, you know, where are they fishing right now, where's the best part they're fishing? You can see the product how it changes, and then the pricing. And then you also see on the scientific end of it, you know, where they're finding, you know, different areas that they, you're fishing and they're getting more product in this area, or less in that area, and they put more pressure in this area, they want to close down that area. And you hear, you hear both sides of those stories. I think it's kind of - and not being directly involved with that end of it - the actual, the product itself, we're just kind of supporting that end of it. It's like I said, that part that fascinates me. I feel like I, it's not boring to me, so, you know.

LO: And you're kind of at the first line of, how do you say it, but you hear those stories first.

PA: Yeah. When they hit the dock it's usually out...

LO: You're there.

PA: ...we're meeting them when, lot of times, before they even, you know, they've maybe not even talked to their wives yet or their, you know, their family yet. They've hit the dock and a lot of times it all depends. They could be in a good mood; they could be in a bad mood. You never know what type, or you know, you kind of steer clear or you can get engaged in conversation, depending on. Most of the time they're pretty happy. They're home. It's been a long trip and they're home. So yeah, you get aboard the boat and you kind of see them, and if they've had a good trip, you know, they're going to be pretty excited, the fact that they're going to, you know, so. And then they don't bother me so much about how much fuel is.

LO: Can you think of a time that you had a particularly challenging job or situation?

PA: You know, I think the only time that it, the only time that it gets frustrating, actually is when you get weather conditions. Obviously, it's the weather conditions, you know? The heat of the summer, I don't like a lot of heat. I don't even mind the cool, I can dress warm for it, but when you get in very windy conditions for days there, it can, it actually, I personally being the General Manager, I'll call the barge off on certain days depending on the conditions in the harbor. Even though we're in the harbor, we're not outside, but it doesn't matter because the equipment can get banged up pretty good. And when you still get a good breeze against the side of a boat and it makes it dangerous. It just makes it dangerous to moor the boat to the vessel. It makes it dangerous to, you're on board, you're working and the wind's blowing and, so in those conditions when you get really high, high winds or days when you get an awful lot of snow and things like that, it's difficult. It slows your day down. You got to be more careful, you're doing a lot of shoveling just to get at the equipment aboard the barge, also aboard the fishing boats. So, you know, those days, I wouldn't say dangerous in any way, but there's days when it's a little more difficult than others. Cold weather, always ice is a problem. But, if you dress warm for it, you know, different people look at it different ways. I don't mind the winter, but I have a, one of my guys that works for me comes from Texas, and let me tell you, when temperature drops he's never happy.

LO: So you kind of alluded to the uniqueness of the waterfront and the community there. What are the qualities that you think are really valued in workers, on the waterfront? In your job, but also just in general?

[34:16] PA: Yeah, well, the hours are always something that a lot of people, uh, are fasci-, I don't know where that changed for me. Because when I worked in the sign industry or any of the other places that I worked, most people have like, okay, you know, set hours. You get in a certain time you leave at a certain time. And overtime's always a nice thing to have. This industry, the time is the time. We do have set times, the guys come in, they get paid. And they get paid overtime also. But overtime's not only a good thing, but it's a required thing in our industry, just because it's like a never-ending day. It goes from day to night, so, we may have a boat that needs to be fueled because he has to get back out. In the morning he'll call and say, all right, we've been in since 5:00 in the morning working and now it's like three in the afternoon, we're winding down, getting ready to, you know, we're here for almost twelve hours a day at our location. Not all guys, we share: some guys get a little overtime some guys get a little less. So, well, you know, share the overtime each day. And then but we'll get somebody who calls and says they, I really got to get back out. And it's like, you can't, you don't have the, you don't have the luxury to say, well, I'm off duty at five. Sounds like, no, you know, the guys have to understand when they come to work for me, you know, at 5:00 the boat's going to hit the dock and he needs to be back out before midnight; regulation-wise, whatever the reason being, he needs to go. I need you to stay here and you can't say no. I need you to be here. And I need you to be able to do the boat at, you know, six, seven in the, o'clock, at night, you know, and get it done and so they can get back out. You know they're under constraints so we're kind of under a constraint to get our job done. So those things sometimes can be, you know - so yeah, that's a uniqueness of the job I have to say, you know, and, and seeing that kind of thing. It's something that you have to kind of get used to and not a lot of people are used to something like that. Yeah, some are starting new they kind of get like, well. This is a requirement. You need to realize that the timing-wise, weekends, not always your weekend. It may be your weekend off, it's fine, but now all of sudden I got

something we got to do I got to call you in, you got to come. We have ships that come in and we do some ships here in the harbor that take fruit and things like that. We also fuel them. And they're under really rough time constraints. Just this weekend we had to do a freighter that needed to be leaving at 0600 on Monday morning. So he didn't hit the dock till Friday afternoon, and late, and they have a lot of things they have to do before they can bunk-, what they call bunkering the ship, or put fuel aboard the ship. And in order to do that we have to set up a time, it has a lot of paperwork that has to go in for these ships. So it fell within the weekend, so the guys realized, well, you know what, I need everybody on, not just one guy to help work on the dock, I need to have everybody, the whole crew, so everybody can get their job, we can get it done. So, and it, you know, we really don't have that option to say, well I really don't want to work today. No, you kind of, we're a small crew here. You're going to be in, that's the way it is.

LO: How many work at Sea Fuels?

PA: Well, doing the operations now, we have, one dock man, we got two bargemen, and then myself, I float, I do everything and anything that needs to be done there. So typically the workers that are doing all the, you know, the work itself is four of us. And then the boss is also there for, you know, he's always there to back up the, if he needs to be there on the dock to keep things running there so that we can get out on the barge and do things that we need to get done. So yeah, there are four that are primarily working all the time, that are on duty to just make sure things get finished and get done and then, like I said, the boss is always there too to back us up when we, we need to have, uh...

LO: That is a small crew.

PA: Yeah.

LO: How many boats do you service?

PA: Oh, boy, I don't know, probably ...

LO: Fishing boats.

PA: Yeah, fishing boats, I'd have to, you know, I'd have to say that it's in, I haven't gone through the list recently but it's got to be close to 200. 200 boats. So, yeah. At any given time, depending on what time or season, some might be up here more in the summertime, about 200 boats.

LO: Oh, you mentioned bunkering. So, I'm fascinated by the language of the waterfront.

PA: Yeah.

LO: It seems like there's some special terms and jargon pretty much in every aspect of the waterfront. Are there words that you can think of that you guys use that you all know what you mean but, but I might not know?

PA: Well, you know, it's funny, because guys will say, you know, put fuel aboard the boat. Yeah, a lot of people that aren't from the industry say, well, you know, they have to get gas. Because they think of cars and things like that, it's not called gas. It's kind of, you know when someone's kind of green at their job, they'll say we have to gas that boat, we have to put gas, you know, they'll go the gasoline, or gas. No, that's not the right term. It just sounds, doesn't fit. It's fuel. They're going to put fuel aboard the boat or, you know. Bunkering is a term they use mostly in ships, you know. But if you were to go sit for your tanker man license, your PIC, they consider it bunkering when you're doing vessels, any vessels, so as you're even a fishing boat in terminology as the Coast Guard sees it, it's bunkering fishing boats. It's just what they use. We don't, we just say fueling the vessels. You know, it's vessel fueling operations, is just the way we look at it in the smaller industry. But if you worked down on the big industry on the ships, it's always bunkering. If you come and you say, do you need fuel, they kind of look at it the same way that I do when someone says gas. They gas boat, if you go aboard a ship and say we're going to put fuel aboard, they're like, okay. You mean you're going to give us bunkers? You know, that's the way that they, it's just kind of a term that we don't use it all the time down there, but most, most of the people in the industry will understand what bunkering means. Yeah. Things like that. Other than that, you work, you know, when you, like the car, you pull your - I have a tendency to say, when I'm driving, and it drives my wife nuts, and I'll say, she'll be pulling up to something and I'll say, watch your bow. Because I don't want her to bump into something with the front end of the car, and she'll say, it's the front end of the car and I'm like the bow. I say, when you back up, make sure you clear your stern before you - and it's just, it kind of gets ingrained, you know? And sometimes I'll say that about the car, you know, the starboard side or the right, instead of saying the right say, it'll be, over here on your starboard side. Over by the right, you know. It just, you kind of, you know, other than that, I mean, it's kind of silly things that you kind of. But, oh, a line, a lot of people consider they say give me a rope, you know, a rope. Well yeah it is a rope that you're working with, that may be the actual, but it's a line. It's, it's always called a line, you never say, you know, tie the rope off, you know, you tie a line. Things like that, that you may, you don't hear anywhere else, that you might say, you know, oh, how many ropes do you put out your boat? You know, how many lines do you put out. It's kind of like, you know, it's just the terminology, maybe stuff like that. But. There's nothing really that would be too baffling to people, you know, you can kind of understand what you mean.

[40:51] LO: What about nicknames?

PA: Oh, nicknames, well everybody has nicknames and, and, yeah, I mean, it's just, people, I think most of the people on the waterfront, there's individuals that I've called names for years, and figuring that was actually their name, and then find out later that their name has absolutely nothing to do with what that name was, so, yeah, that's kind of funny. The names are, or even things on the, you know, you mean like working with equipment and things like that...

LO: Yeah, yeah.

PA: ...you know, push boats and, you know, the wheel is, you know, people think of the wheel and the wheel is, anyway if you say, "oh, jeez, you got to be careful you're going to get that in your wheel," you know, that means your propeller. Things like that, you know, people don't, you know, that kind of terms, or the things like that; it's hard to say off the top of my head. But

there's, there's quite a few terms that, nicknames for things, you say, well, "you back up, I got something stuck to my prop or my propeller." Everyone would understand that. But the terminology most people use, you know, you going to get that in your wheel so be careful, you know what I mean? You kind of know right away what they, what that means when someone says something like that. So yeah, there's certain things you might, don't hear typically in a typical, any other industry that

LO: And does Paul Anthony have a nickname?

PA: Oh, myself...

LO: Maybe we'll share.

PA: You know, yeah. No, no, not necessarily, no. I mean years ago there was a big bunch of guys who used to work at the Co-op and everyone had really kind of silly, goofy names, you know. They were really nothing other than that was, you know. And they didn't really stick, they wasn't like, you know, stuff that their nicknames that carried on. But, um, no, myself, no. Other, you know, and then teasing one another, that was about it.

LO: And tell me about the te-, is there like, um, I don't know, if you get a new guy who's just starting out do you guys play tricks on them?

PA: Uh...

LO: Or any of that stuff that goes on?

PA: Yeah, you know, I think it's typical that a lot of, lot of industries do that, you know. Guys that'll, you know, you tell a guy to go down in the fo'c'sle to get something and, you know, he may be unfamiliar with where the fo'c'sle is, and then they might tell him well, you know, you get, it's down in the stern of the boat and that's actually the lazarette, and then so he'll say, I can't find it in the fo'c'sle, and the guy'll go down there again and and he'll go, and I still can't find that. Were you looking in the right spot? Yeah, I been in the fo'c'sle. Somebody'll look and go, it's not in the lazarette, why is he down there, it's because he has no clue. He just, you tell him, so maybe little, little tricks like that, you know, you might say things like that. Because they don't know the difference from, you know, the, the boat's fo'c'sle to the boat's lazarette, to the, you know, things that, they catch on quick though. Once they learn that, you know, you're not going to get away with that, but.

LO: That's part of how they learn, probably.

PA: Oh yeah, yeah.

LO: Right?

PA: A lot of it is true. After they've told you a few times, you kind of figure that out. Yeah.

LO: Trying to think if there's anything we didn't cover. Anything you don't like about your job? I mean, you mentioned the weather...

PA: Yeah. The weather. You know because of the position I'm in now the pricing's always something that I kind of look, like the guys that are fishing are just ordinary guys, they make decent money but you try to save them, and you try to get, and so when the, when the price fluctuates wildly, especially, you know, increases, it's tough. It bothers me because I don't, you know, I don't want to see anyone pay too much. Our margins are our margins; we make what we make. We're not, and, but you got to realize that when you go and you say, okay, last week you were paying a dollar eighty a gallon for fuel and this week is two dollars and eighty cents, it's almost a dollar, right, and it has nothing to do with us. And it looks like, you know, and they get angry and you, and it's like, it's not necessarily us. This is the price of fuel, we're just working on our margins, it's just that it went up. And stuff like that, it kind of gets frustrating when you try to maximize the amount of money that you can make by, you know, watching the swings in the market and making sure you have enough supply on hand. Even in the warehouse, because I do all the inventories for the warehouse, so oils and greases and different products like that. And those products are constantly, so I'm watching that stuff all the time. It's one of the things that I say I don't enjoy the most, but it's very important. Because if you don't pay attention to that, you know, it's not fair to your consumer, and then the consumers, you're going to lose them anyways, because they don't look at it and say, you know, Jesus, how come this has been so high, I know it can be cheaper. So you got to constantly watch that in my position. But not necessarily the working end of it, but because of my position a lot of it's got to do with the pricing and my inventories. That's eighty percent of my work, is inventory work. Always making sure there's enough supply. So, you know, the pricing can, yeah, probably about the most annoying thing for me, that have to keep my eyes open on it, you know. And nowadays it's a daily, it can be a daily thing, the market can swing in a matter of hours. I've had the market go up on us and our actual fuel price as we're taking in the product here at the facility in our storage tanks, it may rise six or eight, ten cents in a day, as the day goes on. So then the price'll go up as, you know, the price'll go up, I'll get a price change at, at nine in the morning and another price change at two in the afternoon and I'll get another price change at three. And it's like, you know, you get three different price changes and you've got to stay on top of that, because it's very easy to lose your, your margin if that doesn't happen.

[46:04] LO: So there are several fuel supplies, right?

PA: Yeah, doing the fuel barge part of it, yeah. And, but, our facility it's called a through put, so one of a large oil supply company that's up here in the northeast, Global Petroleum, has a through put agreement with our terminal, which means they take, they put their fuel into our terminal and we actually provide our competition with fuel at my facility. So all the other fuel companies that we're in competition with, we facilitate the larger oil company, Global Petroleum, to get their product aboard their vessels. So it is, it's unique. Because people say, aren't you Sea Fuels? And I say, and that's Warrior Fuels and this is Pier Oil, but we're all buying the fuel from one company, but my facility where I actually work is the facility that actually has the through put agreement with the fuel supplier, so.

LO: How much does the price change between, say, you and Warrior and Pier?

PA: You know, I can't say, obviously, how they price their products and the way that they, what their margins are and what they, how they take care of their customers. I can't really, I wouldn't even know, and it wouldn't be fair for me to even, I wouldn't base my business, I know with my business...

LO: But you guys...

PA: ...what they are.

LO: ...can all set your price?

PA: But you pretty much, well, because of the fact that we're all buying the same product and we're buying volumes about the same, all this factors into the deal that you're making with the fuel supplier, Global Petroleum happens to be, are going to be pretty much the same. So we're all pretty much working on the same, you know, ballpark, within a certain, maybe a few cents here and there, but we're all pretty much, almost right in the same levels. Look, the, most of the waterfront's getting a pretty good service no matter who they go to as far as pricing goes. And then it's just a preference, who you'd rather have fuel your boat, you know, you like this fuel company better than that fuel company, or they feel that these guys fuel your boat a little bit better than these guys fuel your boat. Why, who knows. It's, it's really, there's such a small difference between either, any, or all of us, that it really wouldn't matter. It's kind of your customer's your customer. And you do whatever you do to keep them happy and obviously that's going to keep them satisfied, they're going to, as long as, it's kind of like if they don't have to think about it and it gets done, they're happy, you know. And that's the most important thing is servicing the customer without having to, I'm not going to say bother them, but basically, basically, yeah, they know that we know what they need, so we take care of it, and they just go pick up their checks, you know, they know that their, you know, and so it's a collaborative effort between the guys on the barge, guys inside the warehouse, the guys working the dock, the girls in the office making sure the bills are getting done, and put out at the proper time, and that, you know, everybody is gotten, so it's kind of seamless. They don't have to think about it, you know? It's a big purchase. Because, you know, if you think about it, 7, 8,000 gallons of fuel at two dollars and fifty cents a gallon, that's a very big, it's a huge purchase, it's a lot of money, it's a lot of, monetary exchange, but it's seamless. It works very easily and it's, you know, as long as everybody's doing their job, so. All four companies pretty much have that same style of doing business. Just the way it's done, you know, so.

LO: And do you get paid by the settlement house? Do they...

[49:34] PA: Yes. The settlement house usually settles up the boat, and then they will cut a check from the corporation that owns the boat, and then typically if we fuel a boat today, the check'll be ready, usually, tomorrow. So it's like, you know, there's not a lot of wait time. Whereas we're purchasing the fuel and they're taking, you know, the company that we buy fuel from, as we purchase it, we don't have, we only have a very short time to pay them. They need their money, they don't give us long terms: it's just the way it is, because it's an awful lot of money that goes out when you're taking 10, 20, 30,000 gallons of fuel. So our customers understand that. They

settle the boat up; we can pick up the check the next day. And, you know, so, it moves, it's a unique business. I've had a guy that does books for us years ago, and he came down and he said, he's an accountant that worked for the company. He said, "I've never seen a business like this." It's so much volume of cash that gets moved between, you know, the purchase and sale of this stuff, and yet it works very freely. No one's really hanging out in the line for very long. Everything pretty much, it moves. It is; it is unique. You don't realize it, but a lot of people don't think of, you know, they think of purchasing something, they have thirty days, you have something of that large, or you get some type of a terms to pay your bill. It just gets paid, you know what I mean. And everybody kind of, it's just the way that always worked, you know.

LO: We should probably establish, I'm realizing, you've been talking about fuel, it's diesel that we're talking about...

PA: That's correct.

LO: ...yes?

PA: Oh yeah, yeah. Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah. Diesel, diesel fuel.

LO: Only because, just for...

PA: Oh, that's true too, yeah.

LO: Whoever might be listening

PA: Yeah, no, it's, it's diesel fuel. And then of course a lot of lubricants, you know. We sell an awful lot of lubricants, the boats use a lot of lubricants, big engines, they require a lot of. A typical oil change in a car you're talking four or five quarts of oil. And a boat you can go, 130 to 260 gallons of oil in an oil change. And the high-end oils that they use can, just an oil change alone, if you, can cost quite a few thousand dollars, just the actual product itself to change the oil in the engine.

LO: And do you guys do the oil changes?

PA: Yeah, the oil's, yeah, we assist that, get that done for the boat too, when they're ready to do their oil changes. Because it's such a large quantity they need to remove that and we take the waste oil back, so we take their waste oil back, we fill the bases of the engine with the oil directly with a, you know, a large volume pump so that we can pump drums of oil aboard, at a, you know, quicker rate and stuff like that, so...

LO: And how long, frequently, do they get the oil changed?

PA: Well, you know, that, depends on the oil. Some of the oils today, they can go a lot longer intervals. So they can get a lot more hours on them, but, and because of the, they only fish so many days of the year, some of the boats we're only doing two, maybe three oil changes a year, on them. Some of them only two oil changes a year. And it's an expensive cost to do so if you

don't need to, some people just have their oil tested and if the oil is in good condition, the company that backs their oil, like Mobil has a program and Mobil products and things like that. They test and they'll tell you that you're, whether your oil's still in really good condition, you don't need to change it. So that way you're not spending an extra 3, 4, 5,000 dollars to change the oil in the engine if you don't have to, you know? So. And that's been a - but then again, used to buy the, the oil for, you know, few dollars a gallon. Now it's like, eleven, fifteen dollars a gallon, so depending on, on the type of oil you buy, so, you know. That's helpful to the fishing boats, you know.

LO: So, um, is there anything I haven't covered that you would like to talk about? I feel like we kind of...

PA: I know it's, you know, oh, it's, I guess it can be interesting, but I really, don't realize how boring it is or how interesting is it until you start talking about it, you know, but, um. No, I think you pretty much...

LO: I learned a lot.

PA: ...pretty much hit everything on it, yeah, I mean. If you're down on the docks early, you know the fuel companies are there. That's one thing you can always tell. And you get a lot of the old-timers that used to fish, and they no longer fish. Maybe they still own boats but they don't go out to sea. And you'll find it funny, they'll have a tendency to get up and be taking a ride around the waterfront. They always know they can get a hot cup of coffee at the fuel company, because we're there. We're always there early in the morning. The fuel companies always open early in the morning on the waterfront, so it's funny. You get to see the first guys coming down and coming around the waterfront, you know. The only guys that might be a little bit earlier than us is some of the lumpers that're going to help lump out the fish boats, because they usually get there at the same time that the boats are hitting the dock too, but, other than that, you know, it's a, so. Hey, if you're down there.

LO: What time does the waterfront come to life in the morning, typically?

PA: Well, usually, nowadays, years ago it was a little bit earlier, but today, I would say, usually by, you know, 5:30, 6:00, people are about doing their things, it's not just, you know, they're showing up for work and getting ready. They're not just, you know, milling about, they're actually coming down and getting ready, so you know, this way here, you hit the ground running by, and you're actually underway and doing things by 6, 6:30 you want to make sure you're operation's in full swing. Because the settlement houses and things like that need to get a lot of this paperwork and everything I was talking about, they need to get this stuff done. It takes them time, I'm sure, because they have to settle on everything on the boat, the ice and the fuel, as well as the grub and any other expenses that they have. Plus they have to get from the fish houses and what they have to tally. It takes them time. So the sooner they get the fuel bill in the better it is. So we try to get our stuff into them before, by noon time, as close as possible, so they can at least finish up and settle their boats out before they close for the end of their day, and make sure that the guys get paid. So, you know, we're down there early. And anybody that's up early, you can always stop by and have a cup of coffee.

LO: All right, well thank you so much.

PA: All right.

LO: I really appreciate it. Sorry about all the interruptions.

PA: No, that's fine, that's fine. No, I hope you get what you're looking for. I wasn't sure if this was exactly what you were looking for, but.

LO: Absolutely.

PA: If this gives you some information, some insight.

[55:43] End of recording