



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview February 2, 2017

Bell, Jameson ~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

Bell, Jameson. Interview by Laura Orleans. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. February 2, 2017.

This oral history was produced in 2017 as part of the *Workers on the Waterfront Oral History Project* conducted by New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center with funding from an Archie Green Fellowship provided by the Library of Congress.

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Background

Name of person interviewed: Jameson Bell [JB]

Facts about this person:

Age 46
Sex Male
Occupation Marine Electronics Technician
Residence (Town where lives) Fall River, MA
Ethnic background (if known) Unknown

Interviewer: Laura Orleans [LO]

Transcriber: Laura Orleans [LO]

Interview location: New Bedford at the Fishing Heritage Center

Date of interview: February 2, 2017

Key Words

Chris Electronics, Sony, VHF radio, AIS, marine electronics, marine auto-pilots, marine electronics tools, replacing marine electronics

Abstract

Jameson “Jamie” Bell was born October 15, 1971 in Fort Lawton Beach, Florida and is currently employed as a Marine Electronics Technician at Chris Electronics in New Bedford, MA. In this interview, he discusses his past in the electronics field, his feelings about his job including his favorite and least favorite aspects of it. He shares how he interacts with fishermen, captains, customers and coworkers, and how his job is a good fit for his personality.

Index

[0:00] Introduction to Jameson “Jamie” Bell, his childhood growing up moving around frequently, how he started working at Chris Electronics in New Bedford, his previous job working for Sony testing video and video games.

[5:09] Jamie discusses how different people become involved with marine electronics, competition within the fishing community the lack of competition in the marine electronics community.

[10:14] Jamie shares his typical day at Chris Electronics, his favorite part of his job, and his lack of interest in going out on a boat. He shares the dangers of fishing, and his least favorite tasks and jobs in marine electronics work.

[15:00] How electronics jobs are assigned at Chris Electronics, tools used on the job, the frequency with which electronics need to be replaced on a boat, how new products and equipment are introduced. Jamie shares his sense of humor and how he interacts with new hires and pushes them to learn.

[19:50] Jamie explains why he things it is essential for new hires to have a desire to learn, past jobs that were particularly memorable, his attitude in dealing with customers and being honest with them.

[25:10] Jamie discusses jargon unique to marine electronics and marine superstitions, religion and political beliefs aboard a fishing boat and how that affects his interactions with the captains and crews.

[29:50] Jamie discusses the camaraderie between fishermen, nicknames he’s been given in the past and the nicknames for other shore side workers, and his advice for future generations.

[32:45] End of recording

[0:00]

Laura Orleans: Okay today is February 2nd, 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 better understand their important role in the fishing industry. The recording and transcript will become part of the permanent collection of the Library of Congress. I am Laura Orleans and today I am speaking with Jamie Bell, Jameson Bell.

Jameson Bell: Correct

LO: at Chris Electronics in New Bedford and it is about 3:45 or no, not that late, 3 o'clock, something like that.

JB: Quarter past three

LO: Okay. Your clock is a little funky up there.

JB: Yeah

LO: [laughs] must an electronics thing, I don't know!

JB: [laughs]

LO: So I will have you sign a formal release just giving us permission, but for the record do you give us permission to record you for this project?

JB: Yes

LO: Great. So, I'm going to ask, even though we just confirmed your name, I'm going to ask you to just introduce yourself

JB: Jameson Bell

LO: And what is your job in the fishing industry?

JB: Marine Electronics Technician

LO: When and where were you born?

JB: Fort Lawton Beach, Florida, 1971, October 15th

LO: Okay

JB: Thursday, 11 PM at night

LO: [laughs] and did you grow up in Florida?

JB: No

LO: Okay tell me a little bit about where you grew up.

JB: I grew up pretty much all over the country, before 9th grade I was in 19 different schools in uh, in about 47 different states.

LO: Military family?

JB: Uh, no actually. Big family drama thing.

LO: Oh okay.

JB: Father was on the run from the law, so...

LO: Yup, alright. That's a lot of change.

JB: Yeah.

LO: in one's life, makes you a flexible, adaptable person, if you can get through all that.

JB: Yeah. Once you see the pattern, it makes it so much easier. Each school you went to there was just a pattern of who were going to run into, the teachers you were going to have and once you figured that out, everything got kind of repetitive and redundant.

LO: So how did you end up in New Bedford?

JB: Uh, I lived in Brockton, Mass for a while and met a person that lived in Fall River. So she ended up having an apartment to rent, so we moved from Brockton to Fall River and about three years later I got laid off and I found this job on the internet and I came down and applied having minimal experience. I had worked at Sony before and they took me on and that was ten years ago, pretty much on the job training and I just learned as I went along.

LO: That's excellent. So tell me a little about that on the job training. Who, who helped you learn and what was that like?

JB: Bob Dixon the, one of the original owners of Chris Electronics, he brought me on. We would go to jobs on boats together for anything ranging from VHF radios to computer work to single side band radios, radar, everything that entails my job and I just watched, asked questions and a lot of times they would just drop you in the frying pan, figure it out. Whether you knew it or now, just figure it out. Here's a book, good luck. So...

LO: And how'd, did you like that?

JB: Uh it was frus-, at the moment it would be extremely frustrating and aggravating, but then once you did figure it out, whether it took you one, two or three tries, and you realized you could do it and your confidence got built up and you realized that you could problem solve on your own, you actually started to find it more of a challenge and you started to look forward to it. You wanted to take on those jobs you knew nothing about. Bring it on.

LO: Interesting. So you said that you worked at Sony before this, or at some point

JB: Yes.

LO: Was it doing similar type of work?

JB: No, when I worked at Sony, I actually had a job that would make a lot of teenagers jealous, I was in charge of the Sony Play Station II Area so I essentially got paid to a well, a pretty darn good amount money to work nine hours a day and pretty much do nothing but play video games and watch movies. Wasn't that hard.

LO: [laughs] [cell phone dings] That does like it would be very appealing to a lot of people. So let's see, I'm curious, what do you think, first of all, what attracted you to this job, you found it on the internet.

JB: It was different. I had never heard of it before. Probably because I just never thought of it before. I'd never owned a boat, been around a lot of boats, but I had some experience in electronics and I figured it might be kind of cool to work on boats and do electronics. So...

[5:09]

LO: And what do you think Bob Dixon saw in you? That inspired him to actually offer you the job?

JB: Bob once said to me, somebody once said, they saw me sitting quietly and they said, they made a comment, something to the effect of "Look at Jamie just sitting there dumbfounded, staring into space." And Bob said, "No I can assure you Jamie's thinking. Jamie's always thinking. And the last thing you want to do is think Jamie's not thinking. That'll be your downfall." So I think he just liked the fact that I was always in search of more knowledge. He knew that, the way I looked at it, knowledge was power, obviously, so I wanted to be more powerful than anybody else. I liked the idea of being the most powerful person in the room.

LO: [laughs]

JB: So if there was knowledge out there I seek it out. If somebody tells me something, if they come to me and say, "Oh your girlfriend had this wrong with her, the doctor says that," I immediately have to go home and look up and learn everything about that. So...

LO: A lot of self-taught...

JB: Yes extreme amounts of self-teaching

LO: So is that typical in terms of people learning the trade in the marine electronics field?

JB: Uh...

LO: Do people typically come at it with a fair amount of, you know, book learning, or whatever, or trade school learning or ...

JB: Yeah. Most of us are either trade school or have some experience being around boats. We have a lot of guys that were in the Coast Guard and that were ET's in the Coast Guard, just about, let's see, three of the main people here, management and owner I guess, well owners, are former ET's in the Coast Guard, electronic technicians. And then we have some guys that just fell into it like I did and found that they liked it.

[Break in interview when batteries failed]

LO: I'm trying to remember where we were, but we'll just try to continue where we left off. You were talking a little bit about how things had changed over time.

JB: Right, how electronics had evolved and...

LO: And I think I was asking if guys are receptive to the new stuff.

JB: Oh yes, yes, yes. You got some guys that are receptive to it, some guys that are, some guys that aren't, they'll stick with the stuff they know. They don't want to change.

LO: Yeah.

JB: They want to stick with the programs they know, the software they know, the hardware they know, and they just, they're not interested in learning new stuff until their stuff breaks and then they're forced into learning the new stuff. But then you got other guys who are actually very much into learning the new stuff, so and like I said, then you got the other guys who just want to buy the new stuff to have the newest stuff. So...

LO: Which is not a-typical of guys anywhere in anything, right?

JB: Yeah. I've found it rather saddening actually, but. I was like darn it, kind of hoping you guys were all like the old Marlboro Men or something, just sit around smoking cigarettes and cursing and didn't worry about petty little things, but it turns out, I guess people down here can be as petty as anywhere else.

LO: Is it a pretty competitive community?

JB: As far as the fishing goes? Yes. The captains are extremely competitive. The owners are extreme are extremely competitive. They all want to do better than the other guy. Everything's a secret. So, or at least it tries to be.

LO: Sure. Although I would imagine with all this technology in a way, everybody knows your business.

JB: Yeah, now with, that they have automatic identification systems, called AIS, and every boat's required to have it. Now everybody's watching everybody. So I mean I can bring you up in the computer, and I can track your boat, and I can see where you're fishing. And I can just go out there and lay ground after you did, plant a new track. So, but then there are some guys, they're finding out, a lot of these guys they'll find work-arounds and the paths to get around and do what they need to do and you got your winners and your losers. They're all going to come back and they're going to talk smack about one another and who's doing what wrong and so on and so forth. And they try and tell me and I just tell them. I don't care. Sorry. I'm more concerned about worm holes and dark matter than I am about whether or not you caught more scallops then so and so.

LO: [laughs] And what about here at the shop? Is it...

JB: Are we competitive in here?

LO: Yeah.

JB: Oh, no no. were pretty much here at the shop we're just [phone rings] a group of psychopaths that somehow assembled in this time and space in the universe to go out there and fix marine electronics. We give each other a hard time, but there's really no competition, but we're more out to help each other than anything. Because nobody wants to be here all day. At the end of the day everybody just wants to go home and sit on the couch, eat a cheeseburger and hang out with the family.

LO: [laughs]

JB: So if I can help the other guy get out of here as fast as I can, so be it.

[10:14]

LO: So is there such a thing as a typical day?

JB: A typical day? Depending upon the season, yes. You can never predict any given day. You'll want to, but you can't. It'll just, we call them fires. A fire popped up here, a fire popped up there. This guy's having problems with his computer, this guy's having problems with his VHF radio, this guy's having problems with this. And you can be all over the place. Another day you come in here and you'll just hang around in the shop trying to find stuff to do. But you can never predict any given day.

LO: What days do you like the best?

JB: Uh, summertime, early morning jobs on top of a mast.

LO: Oh you like to climb.

JB: Oh yes, yes. I've been climbing since I learned how to walk. So I go up and down that mast as often as I possibly can. I love it up there. First thing in the morning watching the sunrise come up over the harbor. Light up a cigarette, fix a radar, that's my office. You guys, you can have your office buildings and your ties and your water coolers. I'll take that any day. I don't even care if it is the dead of winter. I'll go up there if it's ten degrees below zero. It's just me, nice quite harbor.

LO: Have you had a desire to go out to sea?

JB: Oh hell no. No, no, no no. The ocean terrifies the hell out of me. I won't go out on a boat to save my life. Nope. Those guys can go all day long. I've been asked. But uh. I've been asked by sailboaters to be, to do the navigation and electronics. I've been asked by fishermen jokingly to go out. I've had a couple of guys just flat out offer to take me fishing. But no, no. I saw *Jaws*! [laughs] I'm not going out there. Horrible. So, I salute those guys though. It's crazy. I mean they're out there working 18, 20 hour days. It's shocking. For hours on end in horrible weather with waves coming up over the side. The temperature of the water right now is 38.5 degrees. That's cold. So, and you get a 12-foot wave coming up over the bow and you're up there doing lines or trying to do something, ain't no clothes going to save you from that. You can wear all the slicks you want. You're soaked. So.

LO: So what do you like, um, what's your favorite part of the job.

JB: Favorite part of the job? Uh, personality wise, I'm unrestrained, personally. I pretty much get to be who I am. A lot of people are off put by it, but a lot of people love it. The job itself, what task do I love to do the best? I love doing radars. I've become very adept at radars. And I'm pretty good with the computers too. So, I can bang my way around a computer. Because most of these guys are computer illiterate, I go on that boat and look like a rock star. The free seafood isn't bad either. I get seafood thrown at me like crazy. I refuse to pay for it now. But yeah, I love doing radars, chart plotters. If I can go on your boat, like right now we just finished an auto pilot job and the guy as soon as we got off the boat through the lines and went out. That's because of me. Those guys are going to work, they're going to go out there and make a living because of what I did.

LO: Good feeling.

JB: Yeah. They get to make rent, mortgage payments, all this stuff's going to get paid. The world don't stop moving just cause you can't go fishing. So...and if my doing what I do gets you out the door, makes you better able to do your job and tourists come up here and pay thirty dollars for a frickin' lobster. [laughs]

LO: So it sounds to me like you prefer to be out on the boats than probably here in the shop

JB: Oh definitely. Always, everybody. If you're in this job you want to be on a boat, you don't want to be in the shop.

LO: Is there something you don't like so much in this job?

JB: I don't like working on auto pilots. I hate them. They're just I can't wrap my mind around them. I don't know what it is. I mean, you can, the owner sit down and talk anything from Frederick Nietzsche to holograms to binary code. Fine. I'll do that all day long, but an auto pilot for some reason, I can't wrap my head around that thing. I hate them. So whenever they say, "Jamie someone's got an auto pilot problem" I'm like "Ugh, no!"

LO: And how does the work get like sort of doled out at the shop, is it...

[15:00]

JB: Most of us pretty much have our own customers. I've been in this for ten years so I got a lot of guys who just call me. They won't even call the shop. They'll just call me and then I go to my boss and say, "I'm going to go take care of this." We pretty much manage ourselves.

LO: You work pretty much alone or in pairs?

JB: I've been working, we got a new guy and I've been training him for about the past year or so. And considering it's slow, whenever I'm on a job that I know he's not familiar with, I take him with me just to see what's going on. But primarily, a lot of times, yeah we work alone. Unless it's a two-man job.

LO: So when you set out from here, do you have like a bag of tools?

JB: Yup, got the bag of tools. We all pretty much carry what we'll need on any given job. You got your tools, you got your screw drivers, your wrenches, your adjustable wrenches, your Allen wrenches, all kinds of, I can list tools all day long. Crimper connectors, wires, cables, adapters, stuff like that. And you got to it. So that way, if you have a base minimum of tools and equipment that you would need when you go to a boat so you can pretty much solve any of the mandatory immediate problems. If it turns out to be something bigger, customer needs a part, "Your radar's got a bad magnatron, that's why you're not picking up targets." "Do you have one?" "Yeah I keep them in my front pocket all the time! No I don't have a magnatron on me, I have to go back to the shop. Or I might have to order one."

LO: So that bag of tools, are those your personal tools?

JB: Yes, our personal tools

LO: Not supplied by here?

JB: Well no, the boss is pretty good. If we need a certain tool, he'll just say "put it on the card" Because me personally, I don't do a whole lot of, I wouldn't need the tools I have here at home. So I kind of refuse. I mean the way I look at it, if he ever decides to fire me, or I quit, I'll just hand him the bag and go. I have no interest in keeping those. I'm not going to be running around my house with a multi meter or something.

LO: So let's see...How much do these products, I mean let's not talk about the auto pilot, but the rest of them, do they change a lot, year to year? You started to talk about...

JB: Yeah. The radars will change, the styles, the capabilities are pretty much baseline. They're going to do what they want to do. Any boat captain will tell you he really just wants a radar to transmit and pick up targets, not transmit targets, but pick up targets.

LO: And typically how often will a captain re-outfit with new...

JB: Oh jeez, I'd say at least on an average, ten years for any given product.

LO: There must be a lot of change over a ten-year period I would think.

JB: Yeah. It doesn't usually all happen at once. But it'll happen slowly over a period of time.

LO: So how do you keep up with what's current and learn how all that stuff works?

JB: We get newsletters from the manufacturers or they'll hold classes or one of us will just be reading about it and we'll go up and tell each other. We have Monday morning meeting, mandatory. And that's a good start where we go over jobs that are going on, what has to be done, what boats need what, to exchange ideas, offer suggestions, give advice, give each other a hard time, and then we find out who needs help, who doesn't need help, and so on and so forth. So if a new product comes up they can say, "hey the new RD33 from Furuno just came around, it doesn't do this, but it does do this and it doesn't do that." We're like, "Alright, we know." So...

LO: So you mentioned a couple of times giving guys a hard time, is there, if there's a new guy that comes in, is there like stuff you do to just...

JB: Oh yeah that's pretty much me.

LO: Yeah

JB: Oh yeah that's pretty much me.

LO: Yeah

JB: I'm the jerk

LO: Okay.

JB: So, I give them a nickname, I'll call them Bambi or something like that.

LO: Yup. Does it stick usually?

JB: No, nobody else will do it but me, which I don't care. As long as I'm laughing, I don't really care who else is laughing.

LO: And how do you come up with these nicknames?

JB: I'm pretty imaginative, pretty creative.

LO: Is it something they do that kind of...

JB: I, I'll do it to, I want them to prove me wrong. I want them to come back at me, to lash out at me, to work harder in spite of me, to become better than me, essentially. So I give them a hard time and I demasculate them and humiliate them. Plus, if they just got general issues, they'll come to me. I find it funny. They'll still come to me and ask for advice and say, "hey what do you think about this, what do you think about that?" concerning their own personal lives and I'll give them advice and whatever and at the same time humiliate them and mock their beliefs, tear them down as a person and then build them back up again.

LO: [laughs]

JB: Kind of a sadist. I don't know what to tell you.

LO: What, if you've got a new guy coming in, what makes somebody kind of a valued part of the team? How do you know when somebody sort of comes in and looks for a job...

[19:50]

JB: Desire to learn. You've got to want to learn. If you don't want to learn, get out. I don't have time for you. If you've got a, you've got to have a thirst for knowledge that is unquenchable, especially in this field. Because you are always learning. Nobody will ever say they are the best in this field. There will never be a best in this field. There are guys that are extremely good, but they'll never be a "best". Because everything's always changing. The minute a guy stands on top of the mountain and says, "I'm the best in this field and I know everything about all the products!" Then some rep comes around and says "Yeah well we have this new product and you don't know shit about it." So...it can't happen. But yeah, if you've got a desire to learn, you want to put the effort in to learn the job, you'll do great. And if you don't, there's the door.

LO: Any jobs that stand out in your mind over the years. You know, something that was like, you were really proud of or...

JB: Oh jeez.

LO: Or something that was

JB: Oh.

LO really disappointing perhaps

JB: [coughing] Excuse me. Um, there have been a few. There was one job where the boss, I said "Do you need any help?" And he said, "I think I've got it." And I said, I'll stop by anyway. So I went to the boat. And he couldn't get video out of the radar, and he couldn't figure out why. Well immediately for some reason, my mind just decided to go to the exact, my mind just knew what the issue was. And I went up to the radar and I saw it and I confirmed that I was right. But before I fixed it went back down to him and I said, "If I solve your problem, can I go home early?" And he said, "Yeah, but that'll never happen because you know he's got thirty years' experience and I was just in the field for two years." And I said, "All right, turn the radar off." And I went up and I connected the wire and I connected the other wire and I went back down and I said, "Turn it on!" He turned it on, I patted him on the back and I said, "See you Monday!"

LO: [laughs]

JB: And as I was walking out the door I just heard him scream, "You son of a bitch!" As far as bad job goes, me and, I'm sorry, Rick the guy you were just talking to and I, snowstorm, small boat, right out of here behind the uh, Waterfront Grille, that dock, I can't remember what it's called, maybe Leonard's, late at night, probably about eight o'clock at night, snowing to beat the band, incredibly cold, and we had to go out and do a radar alignment which isn't that bad, but we couldn't see anything. So we had to hope that the buoy that we saw on the radar was the actual buoy that was in front of us. That's how you had to line up the radar. You put an object on the bow of the boat as you're going out there, like a buoy or a lighthouse or something and you line the radar up with that object and that's how you know the radar's aligned. So we're out there in the frickin' snowstorm, nine o'clock at night, can't see a damn thing. On this boat that I was sure was going to tip over. All I could think about was Gilligan's Island and the three-hour tour. That did not pan out well for them. So but we made it back. We got the job done and made it back.

LO: So you were actually, you'd left the dock.

JB: Oh yeah, yeah I'll go out on the boat as far as like going out to the lighthouse or going out in the harbor. That doesn't faze me. I can swim that. You take me as far as these guys go, no.

LO: So who's driving the boat when you're doing that kind of thing?

JB: Captain. I ain't driving your boat either. We won't drive your boat. That's liability. That's too much of an insurance risk. Something goes wrong, next thing you know we own a boat, we don't want a boat. So...

LO: Good. So what haven't I asked you? I'm sure there's tons of stuff, but...

JB: Uh. You've asked me about the products, you've asked me about how long I've been here and how long I've been doing it. Any given day is, you come in, you do your paperwork, you ask the boss if he got any calls. If he doesn't have any calls then you pursue your own calls because you want to put out his fires first. Then I like to generate a lot of my own work so I'll just go out and look at boats and go up to somebody and say, "hey, you need a new VHF antenna, I don't really care if you put it on or not, not my boat, but here's my business card." That's pretty much always been my approach. It turns out I'm supposed to be pretty good in sales according to my boss. Which is ironic because usually I just tell the customers, "Buy it or don't buy it. I don't give a shit. I'm going to go home and drink a whiskey regardless. I'm just telling you, you need it. You don't buy it, this thing's going to fail. And you're going to be sitting there like a dumbass. So, I don't give a shit what you do." Doesn't faze me any. And then they turn around and if they like my honesty, so they'll usually call the shop and say, "I want to buy that thing." But, and then I have some customers they'll just put me off, they don't want to spend the money. Some guys won't spend the money regardless. And I try never to force people. But I'll go and do my own jobs. And then he'll call me up, maybe he'll get a fire that needs put out, my boss will call me. But other than that, then you end up staying late, you stay late, you don't, you don't. You get forty hours in regardless.

[25:10]

LO: We talked for a minute with Rick about, sort of the names in the industry, you know, stuff you come up with for different situations or different tools or different products. Can you think of anything?

JB: You find a lot of wires that are really messed up I call it "The Octopuses Garden," that's a Beatles song. Let's see, "Medusa's hair" "Wire Fire" that's when something's dangerous as far as the wire goes.

LO: And amongst the different workers, you all know what you're talking about...

JB: Oh yeah you know what you're talking about. Goofy names. If we always picture the name of a boat, we'll call it "Boaty McBoat Face". Jargon, we get, if we get mad at a customer, you got to wait until the customer walks away and you'll say "pig" because you can't say pig on a boat. Especially a lobster boat.

LO: Do they still hold to that?

JB: Some guys do.

LO: Yeah.

JB: There are some guys that are still pretty hardcore. But ironically enough, I was working on a boat across the way in Fairhaven and I got off one boat to get on another boat and there was a pig on the deck of the boat. I don't know if I still have the picture. I just switched phones. I don't know what pictures got lost and what pictures made it. But yeah the guy had a big old pig on the boat. Had to move the thing out of my way so I could get on the boat.

LO: Yup

JB: But uh, yeah some guys don't like pigs. Some guys you can't bring a woman on the boat. But that rule gets changed a lot. Lots of guys have their wives clean the boat. They try not to be too insulting of women as far as captains and crews go. Trying to think of jargon, any other jargon...none that I can think of

LO: What about other superstitions?

JB: Other superstitions? Women, pigs... Dogs are supposed to be good luck.

LO: Oh I didn't know that.

JB: Yup. I've heard that. A guy down in Hyannis told me that. I don't know if it's true or not, but he says dogs are supposed to be good luck. He had two dogs on his boat. I've met a couple of people that had cats on the boat. I don't really know about too many superstitions. A lot of these guys are extremely religious. So they've got the prayers and the crosses and the blessings and all this other stuff. They'll participate in the Blessing of the Fleet. They do that once a year and some pontiff or somebody comes down and throws water at them, or I don't know what they do. I'm a nihilist. So...

LO: And is that mostly in the Portuguese side of things, or...

JB: Yeah, Portuguese are big into that. A lot of the, even the Norwegians will do it still. So...they'll do that they'll, there was one that I knew that did Blessings before he launched, every single time, him and his crew would gather around and do this little prayer thing which, might as well throw pixie dust at the boat for all I care. It's not going to do anything. To each his own. Yeah most of them pretty, I would say, I'd have to say the predominant number of fishermen or fishing boat captains at least, maybe it happens when you become a captain, but most of them, if you want to stereotype or put a label on it, most of them are, you'd call them "red staters". They're the right wing, GOP conservative. So you know what you're getting into. And ironically enough, a lot of the guys on deck are blue, so until they get up to be a captain then they immediately turn red. So, and once you get that, once I'm able to figure out, I hate to do that, but once I'm able to figure out which side of the aisle a person stands on, it's pretty easy to read who they are and how they work and how they think. So you know what, how to dig into them.

LO Is there much camaraderie on the waterfront?

JB For the most part yes, there's a general brotherhood. You've got a lot of guys that, you've got some guys, you've got your petty little battles, it's like any other school yard. You got you petty little battles over something stupid. And you've got a lot of guys who've know each other for years. I think for the most part, if you were ever to have a union battle between IBEW and fishermen, the fishermen would probably all band together and there would be a big bizarre battle between electricians and fishermen for some reason nobody would understand. But yes, I think they would all stick together and come together if they had to.

LO: A lot of nicknames on the waterfront, besides Bambi, you know, whatever you call people...

[29:50]

JB: Yeah, for a long time I was called Dexter, after the TV character. I never actually watched the show, but a lot of the guys call me Dexter. I give my own nicknames to guys. There are other guys we call, we got three-finger Joe, obviously because he's only got three fingers. There was Smiles, who was a shore engineer that worked on the Nobska and the Mareu, he got called Smiles because he never smiled. Let's see. Everybody pretty much knows Zan. A lot of guys couldn't figure out, one guy started giving me a hard time and said, "Why does he call himself Zan? What kind of a stupid nickname is that?" I'm like, "It's actually kind of makes sense." "How do you figure?" "Well his name's Alexander so it's not that hard to put the numbers together like that..."

LO: Is he on the Mariette?

JB: Yes. You know him?

LO: I know his dad really well. I know him a little bit. Good guys.

JB: And other nicknames, well you got Blinky who only has one eye. He used to work on clam boats. Now he works on scallop boats. He's a Fall River guy. And then other than that, I don't know anybody else's nickname. Other than the nicknames I give people. They never stick, they're just what I call them. I spent the last two days being called Dave.

LO: [laughs] Because of your boss?

JB: Yeah they thought I was Dave. And finally, this afternoon I let them off the hook. Not for nothing, but my name's actually Jamie, just in case you every want to yell out my name when the building's fire or something...I'll know who you're talking to. But, yeah...

LO: So it sounds like you like what you do, mostly.

JB: Yeah, for the most part. I can't complain. I get paid a decent wage. I work hard enough to suit my needs. Um, know a lot of cool people, get free seafood, learn some cool stuff, go for boat rides every now and then, and get to be myself, so...a lot of other jobs you have to put on a facade when you go into the workplace. You have to be professional and courteous and we don't really play by those rules here. [laughs] so, it's kind of like the M.A.S.H. unit of marine electronics around here.

LO: [laughs]

JB: Luckily we don't have a guy wearing a dress. Matter of fact I think Nate might wear a dress if I ask him to. So.

LO: All good stuff. So um, if there's anything else you want to share for the record.

JB: Uh, well this is going to the Library of Congress right? It's going to be in the archives?

LO: It's going to be in the archives.

JB: So uh, jeez I really don't know what to say to the future. Don't go into this job.

LO: [laughs]

JB: Go ahead and find something else. This job's too obscure. You spend all your time not telling people what you do for a living. When you go to parties and you meet family and all these other people and they say "What do you do?" And you just make up stuff because your job's too hard to understand. You know they'd never get it in the first place. I mean you might as well tell them that you work for NASA. They're not going to know what you do. So I usually tell people I'm a brain surgeon or a cowboy or something. I just make up something. But yeah, go ahead and become a coder. Learn as much as you can about computers. Because that's where it's going to lie once the machines take over and Skynet becomes active. But don't bother with marine electronics, kids. Don't do that. To the rest of the future, we are so sorry about the economy and please don't judge us over this whole Trump thing.

LO: [laughs]

JB: That's really all I got.

LO: Well thank you. I really appreciate it and I hope, I'll let you know if there was a problem with the beginning of the recording

JB: Yeah, yeah. And if need be we can re-do it. I mean if you listen to

[32:45] End of Recording