



# NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: July 1, 2017

## **Bell, Jameson** ~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

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Jameson Bell interview, July 1, 2017

## Background

**Name of person interviewed:** Jameson Bell [JB]

### Facts about this person:

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

**Interviewer:** Laura Orleans [LO]

**Transcriber:** Tracy Gillen [TG]

**Interview location:** New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, New Bedford, MA

**Date of interview:** July 1, 2017

### Key Words

radar, chart plotter, FURUNO, external monitor, RAD, MVD (multifunction display), autopilot, SIMRAD, VHF, satellite phones, satellite TV, receivers, hailer, green screen, sounder, Boatracs, VMS system, SKYMATE, CLS Dorian, NMEA 2000 (National Marine Electronic Association), wave point, WINPLOT, tracks, chart plots, hangs, marks, dredge, satellite, magnetron, VHF, 476 VHF antenna, rudder feedback, relay transistor, rudder, scalloper, open array, SIM ready P70, jog levers, RAI (Rudder Angle Indicator), satellite compass, magnetic compass, MC Trac Vision CVH satellite TV, PCB, scallopers, lobsters, draggers, clammers, voltage, VDC

### Abstract

Jameson Bell works with marine electronics. He is paid hourly and is not part of a union. He explains the types of electronics in a wheelhouse, how navigational electronics have changed over the years, and how that has affected the fishing industry. He explains the costs of navigational equipment and the life expectancy of various marine equipment, such as the magnetron. He also discusses the different types of people he meets on the waterfront, including ship captains, fishermen, and other workers. He discusses the drug use on the waterfront. Near the end of the interview he gives his opinion on how incorporation of fishing vessels will affect the future of the waterfront and the income of the fishermen.

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[00:00] Intro; Describes the different electronics in a wheelhouse and some of the design flaws in marine electronics design, specifically touch screens.

[5:07] Discusses the changes in navigational electronics over the years, such as the integration of equipment into one system that allows the different components to communicate with each other. Explains that the technology has moved too quickly for many fishermen. Discusses tracks, marks, and hangs and that he has the tracks and marks of almost every boat in the harbor as a backup.

[10:04] Explains that most fisherman now rely on the electronic navigation system and cannot navigate with paper charts. Discusses Satellite technology and the illegality of scrambled VHF signals. Also discusses the overall costs of outfitting a wheelhouse and which pieces of equipment will likely need to be replaced.

[15:07] Explains the difference between a basic outfitted wheelhouse and a more deluxe package. Also, explains the importance of a Sat television system to fishermen and that the bill for something like an NFL channel subscription is taken out of the settlement.

[19:49] Discusses the type of people he interacts with on the waterfront. Talks about repairing equipment versus installing new.

[25:18] Discusses the effect of the fishing industry becoming more incorporated. Discusses his long-term view of the future of the fishing industry: more incorporation, changing from shares to salaries.

[29:30] Continues to discuss his long-term view of the future of the fishing industry, including the effects of changing from shares to salary, and drug use on the waterfront. Explains why he prefers to be paid hourly versus a salary. Also explains why he is not part of a union.

[35:27] End of audio.

[00:00]

Laura Orleans: Okay. Today is July 1st 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 Jameson Bell here at the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center and it is approximately eleven o'clock in the morning. And this is actually a continuation of a previous interview where the battery cut out and so we are just going to try to recoup that part that we missed. So you already signed a formal release but for the purposes of the recording, do you give us permission to record you for this project?

Jameson Bell: I suppose.

LO: How about a yes?

JB: Yes.

LO: Thank you. All right, as I remember it, where we, the section that was missing, I had asked you to take me on a tour of wheelhouse, sort of a virtual tour and tell me about the electronics I might find.

JB: When you walk into the wheelhouse you immediately are going to see monitors. Usually nineteen-inch flat screens. You're going to see several of those, each one of those is going to be for radars, chart plotters, chart plotters powered by computers, typically PCs sometimes a laptop. The radar might be FURUNO based and we use an external monitor. It could be SIMRAD and that what they call an MFD, it's multifunction display where you can see either a radar image, a chart image, a sounding image or maybe all three at once, depending on the splash page you want. You can configure certain devices to display information as you need it. You'll find an autopilot, typically a SIMRAD as well. Then you'll find two VHF's, one single side band, and if not a single side band radio then you'll find a sat telephone system. Sometimes you'll find a sat TV system with a couple of receivers, one usually down in the galley. A hailer, so they can yell at the guys on deck and hear what the guys on deck are saying about them. Sat radio.

LO: I didn't realize a hailer was two-way.

JB: Yes, hailers are two-way so the speakers don't, the captain can hear what they're saying. It keeps the crew from talking shit about the captain. Hailers, sat radio, so they can listen to radio. Sometimes it is usually one for the wheelhouse and a separate one for the deck. Let's see. Couple of radars, usually as stand-alone radar; typically a green screen. A lot of the guys like to stick to those, they're kind of old fashioned I suspect, so they're just used to it. Plus green is, the human eye can detect more shades of green than any other color. So I can show you different shades of red, yellow and so on and so forth but your eyes will detect more shades of green than

any other color. So, that's why they use green when it comes to radars, sounders, whenever you saw them in the movies. Autopilot, computers, lap top, radar, chart plotters....

**LO:** Boatracs.

**JB:** Boatracs, yeah, you'll have your VMS system. Vessel monitoring, sometimes they'll use Boatracs, sometimes they'll use SKYMATE or CLS Dorian. They're switching them more to tablets now, which the customers aren't liking. That's just another example of technology not understanding its demographic. So, let's roll this out and to anybody that's fifty to sixty and above, this shit's wizardry. So you hand them a tablet and I don't know what the hell to do with this.

**LO:** So how has that configuration of stuff changed in the years that you've been involved in the industry?

**JB:** It's changed in that it almost seems like it's trying to mirror consumer electronics. Because there's a lot of it that's touch screen, which is ironic because you're out on the ocean and it's elements. It's just funny that these manufacturers still continue to manufacture a product that's completely susceptible to water as if they don't understand water is molecular. These are guys that sit around and study photons for a living but they've yet to grasp the idea that H<sub>2</sub>O is molecular and you've got to tighten your electronics out. So, yeah, it's fancy, it's touch screen, you can integrate the networks. I think that's one of the biggest things as far as the electronics goes. You can practically integrate everything in your wheelhouse now. You can integrate, they have a talking language called NMEA 2000 that they use.

[5:07]

**LO:** NEMA?

**JB:** NMEA 2000.

**LO:** What does that stand for?

**JB:** It's actually National Marine Electronic Association and it's not actually, it doesn't sound like it's spelled because it's N-M-E-A so you would think it would be "MEA" in NMEA but they call it "NEMA" and they came up with this way to have electronics to speak to one another and they wanted it to be compliant across all different platforms and all different manufacturers and they call it NMEA 2000 and a lot of manufactures are complying to it or have complied to it. And you just build a backbone for data to talk to different devices. So your VHF can talk to your radar. Your sat stereo can work through your radar. Your autopilot can talk to your radar, your chart plotter. Your chart plotter can talk to your autopilot. You can put the wave point on your chart plotter and have it pop up on you autopilot, so.

**LO:** So, and are there, there must be electronics involved in maneuvering the gear. Is that done from the wheelhouse as well?

JB: The gear, that's not really electronic, the gear is usually done with hydraulics.

LO: Right, okay.

So. Because it's so heavy. Some of them are electronic controlled but that's not actually what we do.

LO: Okay. Right. Thanks for that clarification.

JB: No problem.

LO: Okay, so how conversant are most of the fishermen with all of this newfangled technology?

JB: Not very. Not very. It's another example of technology that's moving too fast, it, a lot of these guys, I went a boat last week down in Sandwich. There was an older couple, she was a retired chef, he's been fishing since they discovered wood floats. He didn't know what to do with half the stuff in his wheel house. He didn't know the capabilities of it, he just knew certain functions. That's all they really seemed to care about, just certain functions. Can I still do this? How do I still do that? This is how I do that? Okay, that's it. Did you know it can do this, this, this this? Don't care. I don't care. Just put me on Channel eighteen. Let me call this boat. Well, it does this, all this. Don't care.

LO: So what are those primary functions that the fishermen...

JB: The primary functions, they just want to be able to, if their using, there is a software program called WINPLOT and although there are better software programs on the market they want to stick to WINPLOT because they're just used to using it. It's been around since 1998 or something like that. And they just, they love it, they are used to using it.

LO: And that's used basically for navigation.

JB: Yes, it's navigation software, chart plotting. And they can put tracks and hangs and totes on it. Tracks are if you drop your dredge out there, as the chart plots following you, you can have it draw a line, exactly where you're dropping the dredge. So if you do a tow and it's good tow, you have that marked on the chart. If you can set that as a wave point and you can just go back out there next year and do it again and hopefully find more of the same. And they also have hangs. Hangs are very important. People don't understand what those are lot of time. One of my fellow technicians never knew what it meant. He never knew what it was. He asked me once, what's a hang? Well, you're pulling the dredge along it gets hung up on something. You don't know what the hell it is you're getting hung up on but you want to know it's there so next time you come back... That's a hang. It allows them to steer around them. It could be a rock; it could be anything like that.

LO: So, I would guess that fishermen don't share the former, the, you know they don't want to share their spots.

JB: Oh no. That's a big thing down here in the water. Don't be sharing tracks and marks. It...

LO: What about the hangs though?

JB: Marks and hangs are pretty much the same.

LO: Oh really.

JB: Yeah.

LO: So, they, they don't mind if the other guy gets hung up on the...

JB: They do and they don't. It depends on how, most guys will share their hangs, they don't care. But their tracks you don't share.

LO: No.

JB: At all. That's, it actually took me a long time to be trusted, I'm probably one of the, as tracks goes. If you're a person that values tracks, I'm probably one of your favorite people in the harbor. Because what I do when I go on your boat, whether you ask me to or not, I know sounds evasive but I'll copy all your tracks and marks and put it in a folder in a flash drive I have. I have the tracks and marks of just about every boat in this harbor.

LO: That's really valuable information.

JB: It's extremely valuable information. I just take it.

LO: And what do you do with it?

JB: I just hold onto it because I know one day their computer is going to crash and they are going to come crying to me and say I lost all my tracks and marks! And I'll say, no you didn't. I got them right here. You saved them? Yes. When did you do that? Doesn't matter; I have them. So, and they praise me a hero.

LO: Yep.

JB: So, I've saved more than one person with that. They get upset because they don't sit at a computer. They don't have the information anyway. But they didn't know what.

[10:04]

LO: And how much sense to you have, you know, old timers certainly did things a different way before all the technology. Do they still, are they still able to navigate if the electronics go down, are they still marking on paper charts at all?

JB: No. No. they've gone full bore retard on that. They got lazy along with everybody else. There's some guys who will tell you they can do it but I'm willing to bet ten to one you put them even out there even on the clearest night. Say what constellation is that? I have no idea! I'm trying to call the Coast Guard. So. They'll just be bobbing around out there in the water.

LO: So, how has the communication technology changed the years that you've been involved?

JB: Satellite. It's all gone satellite. Primarily.

LO: When did that come in?

JB: Well, referring to what we're doing, satellites probably came primarily into play over the past ten years, I would say. They were around before that, but they were never really that reliable. Now they have sat phone systems that you can reliably pick up the phone and call your wife and wonder why the hell Junior failed trigonometry, so. Give you something else to worry about while you're out there on the water. But, yeah, a lot of these, they're like, most that use VHF among each other and they want to use scrambled channels. They want to do stuff that's illegal now.

LO: Why is that?

JB: You can't, according to the FCC, you can no longer sell a VHF radio with a scrambler. And what it does it scrambles your signal so I can talk to you and you can talk to me but nobody else can hear what we're talking about. So.

LO: And is that primarily going back to the idea of not sharing your marks?

JB: No, the reason why the FCC doesn't want people to use scramblers in VHF radios is because it's for drug runners' use.

LO: Oh, but I'm asking why do the fishermen use it.

JB: Uh, same thing. Not, no, not the same thing, not the same as drugs but as in, where are you, what are you doing, how's your catch going, you know, what kind of issues you're having. Shit they don't want anybody to talk about.

LO: Right, so my understanding is back before all of that they were kind of talking in code. There were certain things they would say or not say.

JB: Yeah.

LO: Or they would just flat out lie.

JB: Yeah, pretty much.

LO: About the fish.



JB: Exactly. So.

LO: And I think we had talked about this earlier but I don't know if it made it into the other transcript, can you talk about the cost for each of these items, you know, to outfit a wheelhouse.

JB: To outfit a wheelhouse? Say a ninety-foot scalloper?

LO: Sure.

JB: With all the trimmings? Or basic necessities?

LO: Give me both.

JB: Basic necessities, you're not trying to go too crazy, you probably get away with it for about 50K; 40, 50K.

LO: Installed or is that just?

JB: Yeah, that's installed. So, you want all the trimmings? You're looking at anywhere from one hundred and ten to a hundred and fifty thousand.

LO: Wow. How long do those things generally last?

JB: Depending upon the quality of the install, make sure it was all done correctly and redundancies were put in place, you could probably get ten, twelve years out of it.

LO: Although I would guess the technology is changing rapidly.

JB: The technology is going to change. There are parts that are going to fail on certain things. Like the magnetron and the radar. That can only tranvert for so many hours. Usually you say between three to five thousand hours. So, in that ten-year time you're going to have to replace that magnetron at some point or another because they run those things continuously. So, from the minute they set out, leave the harbor, that radar is on and it's on for the next fourteen days, ten, fourteen days, nonstop.

LO: So with a lot of the equipment you can replace parts you don't have to replace the entire thing.

JB: Yeah. They'll have VHF issues, so stuff will break. I mean you're going to get bad weather. I had what they call 476 VHF antenna, it's one of the tallest antennas there is, it's like twenty-three feet long. The thing is a monster, it's like four inches in diameter. It's huge and the guy snapped it because the post it was mounted to snapped so it was the iron that failed, not the part. And he snapped it and luckily it didn't fall on anybody while they were out there but I had to replace that and that was not fun. That was not a good time. So yeah, that was just a part of a system, just one piece of a VHF system. But, radars and magnetrons, the autopilot, your rudder

feedback is going to fail because it's just a linkage between a relay transistor and the rudder. So, all that vibration. Boats vibrate a lot.

[15:07]

LO: So, you just referenced, just the basics versus the bells and whistles?

JB: Okay, what's the difference? Basics, say you got a ninety foot scalloper you're going to go out there with two radars. One's going to be an open array, one's going to be a dome. You're looking to do short range and long range. Then you're going to get an auto pilot so you'll probably go with something like Sim ready, P70, which will cost you about, I don't know, seven thousand dollars with the install, assuming you get a good welder and he can put up mounts and brackets good enough. Wire waves aren't too difficult. Well, let's hope your wire waves aren't too difficult, we don't have to take too much of your ceiling down. You'll get a laptop, a PC, two VHF radios, a sat phone system. You got your auto pilot, your hailer. Maybe a couple of extra monitors to do a external images on some things, couple of jog levers, couple of RAIs. RAIs are Rudder Angle Indicators. That tells them where the rudder is. Couple of GPSs, probably a sat compass, maybe a magnetic compass as a back up. So that's going to be your basic. If you're going to go crazy, you want all the bells and whistles, you can have all of that. Then you're going to have a satellite TV system, then you're going to have a sat radio system along with your Sat phone system. Everything's going to talk to one another, it's all going to be integrated and you'll be able to check everything from anywhere on the boat. So, we can even go so far as to get you a tablet and you'll be able to control your chart plotter, your radar, check out your GPS signal, look at cameras mounted at different parts of the boat. Cameras, that's becoming more and more poplar.

LO: Sorry, when you mention the sat TVs, is, are they usually up in the wheelhouse, as well as...

JB: Yeah, they'll, we've done them, I did one on one boat, I couldn't believe they gave me this job to do alone and I actually did it. I did one on one boat where they had me put what they call an M7 Track Vision CVH sat TV dome on this guy's boat, it's a fishing boat, Eastern Rigger and I put a TV in his bunk. I put a TV. in every bunk. So there was, and the galley. So there was six bunks, one, two, three, four, five, sorry five bunks with TVs one in the galley. Yeah, so six TVs Six different receivers, so, lot of running of lines. That was a nightmare.

LO: It's interesting. It seems when I talk to the guys that they're fishing so hard that I can't imagine what they have time to...

JB: Twenty-two hours out. You're steaming for twenty-two hours.

LO: Oh, that's true. Right.

JB: You get bored. And of the big things is, is say a system is installed and it comes to about thirteen, fourteen thousand dollars. People say Jesus, that's a lot for a sat TV system. These guys, they're missing play-off games, they're missing opening season games. They're missing

baseball games, hockey, you got fans of all different kinds out there. And it's New England, it's sports fans. People are, we don't screw around. [Laughter]. So, Pats have five Superbowls. I mean, you're not going to, these guys, they want to watch the game. So, lot of times, they'll buy it, the captain will buy it or the owner will buy it and then the crew will just pay him back over a period of time.

LO: Oh, really?

JB: Yeah. So. Or they'll pay for the monthly bill to have the NFL channel.

LO: So, that just get taken out of the settlement.

JB: Yeah.

LO: With everything else. That's interesting. I had never heard about that.

JB: Oh yeah. It happens all the time, so. Which is ironic, they better take something out. They need to set up something more for these guys. These guys go through money like unbelievable. I know a kid down on the dock. He blew seventeen thousand dollars in a week and a half. He came home from a trip, they handed him a check for seventeen thousand dollars. He went back to his father and then for twelve days, he said I'm broke. How do you blow seventeen grand in twelve days when you live at home?

LO: I don't even want to think.

JB: Right? Jeez, hand me a check for seventeen grand.

LO: All right, so I think we've kind of covered the part that was missing from the previous interview. Anything else, I should ask you or?

JB: That you might want to know about? Concerning my job down on the waterfront?

[19:49]

JB: Well, what we do. I told you what we do. I've told you what you're going to find on the boat. The only other thing I can tell you about would be the people that you'd run into.

LO: Sure, you can tell me about that.

JB: Well, boat captains are a very peculiar bunch, typically right wing, either right wing or middle of the road, one or the other. Once you learn who they are and what they stand for it's very easy to... I guess, it's almost a form of manipulation because you get to understand a person. Once you ask certain questions you can pretty much figure out what they're all about. So that way, you just do what I call stroking the puppy. So, he's all upset his electronics don't work. He's up there, his little tail is wagging, he's in a pissy little mood. So you just got to know what they like and what they don't like and adhere to that. So you just go up there and play on their

ego. These guys are very big on pride. So you play on their pride and their ego and you calm them down and you fix their problem. And you wish them a good trip and you get off their boat. And it's just funny because a lot of what they stand for I just do not understand. And a lot of times I'll give them a ration of shit or I'll throw some philosophy their way, you know. We got one guy who's always angry. I'm always telling him, what are you so angry about, calm down. So, the other guys that are, like to travel. I got other guys that are extreme pro-Trump and right wing. He cracked me up. I got another guy who's always trying to get me to go to church. All the time. Few of the homeless guys, most of them pretty harmless, couple of junkies, lot of people just looking for work.

LO: All on the boats? Or just down on the docks?

JB: Just down on the docks.

LO: Yeah.

JB: So, but. Yeah. So it's a pretty eclectic group down there. You think you come down here and it's going to be all manly men. You know, you picture the fishing industry and you see the movies and the TV and they romanticize the hell out of it. So you figure there's guys out there like throw punching squids and just catching fish with their bare hands and slamming revolving doors and shit like that. You get on the boats and it's all US magazines. It's like, you guys, seriously! What is wrong with you? You got twenty-two hours to do nothing while you're steaming out and you're reading US magazine? Jesus. Why don't you just start huffing paint or something. You're going to do the same thing.

LO: You like these guys?

JB: I like these guys but they make me sad.

LO: Hmm. Why is that?

JB: They usually have a very narrow mentality.

LO: Hmmm.

JB: Very, I'm a fisherman. It's what I do. I fish. This is how it is. Grrrr. It's like. There's just so much... Whenever they have a belief or a thought they stick to it like it's become a mantra. They can't sway from it. It's almost like it's terrifying to sway from it. It's just like, the same way their fishing and how they fish and their electronics. They like everything a certain way. They are very particular and anal like that. So to try and introduce a new idea to them or a new concept to them or a new way of thinking, just baffles their mind. What really blows them away is when electronics fail. This thing's only three years old, how did it die? Because it was made by a three fingered Chinese man for fifty cents a day, who is not even in his own country for God's sakes and hasn't seen his family for ten years. He's not happy with you. He doesn't give a shit about you. He's not sitting there going, I'm going to make this so good so Trump will import me and I'll have a job and I'll get on TV and I'll be able to kiss Pamela Anderson. That's not his

thinking. He's thinking that my God, when can I eat again, you know? So electronics fail, whether it be in your car, consumer, TV, whatever you buy. It's mass produced and it doesn't even have anything to do with the country, you could build it in Canada, South America, California, doesn't matter.

LO: So what, how much of your work is repair versus install.

JB: Yeah, I tend to go off on a tangent there, don't I.

LO: That's all right.

JB: Repair versus install. Well, so much of it's become a throw away and somebody's has so much money. Repair is slowly going the way of the dodo. Big level repairs, like something that broke, yeah. But if you've got a VHF radio that's having a PCB problem, you're not going to bother with it.

LO: And are you mostly servicing scallopers I'm thinking?

JB: Personally, me?

LO: Yeah.

JB: Yeah, I do scallopers, lobsters, draggers, clammers. So, but scallopers more than anything else only because there's more scallopers in the harbor.

LO: And they've more money to spend.

JB: Yeah, they have more money to spend.

LO: Yeah, because I think the draggers were looking to repair stuff before they replace it if they can.

JB: Yeah, typically draggers want to repair. Also, if they're doing pretty well they don't mind too much. The Megan Marie, and the, its sister ship there, whose name I can't remember right now. They're not too bad about spending the money. They like to keep the boats going. Because them boats are always going. So, but, yeah, typically you got to go scallopers, draggers, lobsters. Depending if the lobster boat's owned by a fleet. You have to think, so may of these boats are becoming corporate, incorporated into other corporations already. The individuals are dying out.

[25:18]

LO: And how do you think that's affecting the community?

JB: It's going to, eventually it's going to change it dramatically. Because I mean, right now you've got three major players here in New Bedford as far as fishing goes. Actually four major players, and they got the largest fleets and their able to?

LO: Eastern?

JB: Huh?

LO: That would be Eastern?

JB: Eastern, Fleet, Rafael, and I think his name is Isaakson? No, not Isaakson. Ellers, Ellerston?

LO: Oh, Eilertsen.

JB: Eilertsen.

LO: Yep.

JB: Thank you. Them. So, those guys just, they've got it down pat. They got a system in place, they're building corporations, they're buying restaurants, they're buying fisheries, they're buying boats, they're getting permits and pretty soon, I mean it's capitalism. It's a monopoly. It's there to be had. These other guys just can't compete with that anymore. So.

LO: Yeah. Do you think it will impact the shoreside businesses?

JB: Oh yeah.

LO: In what way?

JB: In what way? I think it's going to impact the shoreside businesses because it's going to be asked to be... There's going to be contracts made. More contracts made. In other words, we're probably going to have customers that are going to say I want you to work for me specifically. Or you respond to me first.

LO: Exclusively? Wow.

JB: Yes.

LO: Yeah.

JB: That wouldn't be unusual to happen. Because a lot of these guys they just become so big and so powerful they're like well I'll just absorb you too.

LO: Do any of these large players have their own electronics people on staff?

JB: Yes.

LO: Yeah.

JB: Yep. They'll employ their own electronics, their own electricians. But typically their electronics people they don't go to schools. It's not their... They still work for this big company but one day they could be doing electronics but all of sudden they'll get pulled off the job to go help wrap hydraulic hoses. So you know, it's like, yeah, I'm the electronics guy but I'm not really the electronics guy, so. Yeah, he's staff but he can usually only take the problem so far. And then you'll get to the boat and he'll in his own weasely, whiney little voice way explain to you what he tried to do and how he tried to fix it. So. Which is just irritating. It's like when you know all about something and you have to explain it to somebody else, you know what I mean? It's just doesn't always work out. It's easier to tell people you kill goats or something. I'm a goat hunter. So.

LO: So, what's your long, long view? Ten years from now?

JB: Of the industry?

LO: Yeah.

JB: Of the fishing industry or the electronics industry?

LO: Well, I was thinking of the fishing industry.

JB: The fishing industry?

LO: And marine electronics, particularly.

JB: The fishing industry is going to become more incorporated. You're going to have bigger monopolies, they'll start stacking permits on top of boats, meaning boats are going to be going out more often; more likely year-round. There will be more opportunity for workers but they'll probably slowly be put on salaries instead of being on shares. Right now they get shares. Eventually, they'll say, well, you know I can run the boat this long and I need somebody to do this so from now on you just get three hundred dollars a day, whether you pick up twenty-seven thousand pounds or eleven thousand pounds. Doesn't matter. So, they'll probably start doing shit like that and arranged like that, the electronics side will become a lot busier because our equipment will start seeing more action. I mean we're talking about magnetrons being changed out every three to five thousand hours, well now if the boat's running year round, that's a magnetron every couple years. Right now it's a magnetron every three to five years. So, we'll see a lot more wear and tear; they'll be spending a lot more money. So.

LO: And how do you think that move from shares to salaries is going to change things?

[29:30]

JB: It's going to be funny because a lot of times, right now, like I said, you got kids that go out there and they'll be handed a check for seventeen thousand dollars and they'll blow it in two weeks. But now if you put them on salary, surprise, you got to save. You want that seventeen thousand dollars again, you're going to have to save for it. So that's going to change where

you're going to have the guys that want the quick fix, the drug addicts, who want to get on a boat, make a couple of trips, pay off a couple of debts, get out of hock and meanwhile get high the entire time. Then you're going to have the more logical ones who actually want a steady job, pays year round, maybe with some type of health insurance, who knows? Maybe he's got a young family. Those are the ones that will capitalize on things like that. Because it'll still be good paying. I mean, you're not going to go out there for a buck fifty a day but I don't know how they'll work it out, I don't know if they'll still work, you've got guys out there that work eighteen, twenty hour days. So, but I mean now if you're only making three hundred and you don't have to work as hard because the boat can go year round, maybe you only work an eight hour day and the rest of the time you're just cruising around in a boat. Who knows. But, yeah, it'll get, it'll get interesting. I think it might actually clean up the area a little bit if you're referring to drug use because you're no longer going to have the people out there just looking for a quick buck.

LO: Do you see a lot of that?

JB: Drug use. Oh yeah. It's rampant.

LO: Really?

JB: It's rampant everywhere but even more so in areas like this. This is almost like, you got to think of the fishing industry as almost like farms. Guys, traveling along, a hobo or a bum, I mean we're dating back to the 1800s here. He jumps off a train somewhere in Skokie, Illinois. He gets a job picking apples, maybe he's got an opioid addiction, who knows. Maybe he didn't. Johnny Appleseed was obviously high on something. But.

LO: I think you make a lot more scalloping than you do apple picking.

JB: Exactly. So these guys come down here and they say, well maybe I can get on a boat, lie about my experience and I'll figure it out when I get out there because how hard can it be just shucking scallops? Well, the activity itself isn't hard, it's the manual labor that's hard, it's standing on your feet for eighteen hours while the boat's going like this, hard. You know, I can teach, what's that famous ape's name? The Gorilla? I can't remember anything. It's too bad because he knows sign language. Anyway, I could probably teach him how to shuck a scallop. But, so yeah, they want the quick buck. Just so you can come back and buy more, pay somebody off so you don't have to steal. But yeah, I've seen them all down here. Come up to the boats, "You the captain?" Can I get a job? Yeah, I'm totally the captain. Really? Yeah. Be here tomorrow. Nine o'clock. Seriously? Yeah, totally dude, you're on.

LO: Really?

JB: Yeah, I do that to people all the time.

LO: Oh, you do that. I'm sorry, I thought you were saying captains do that. I was going to say...



JB: No, no, no. Captains, they'll be nice to people. They'll take down the name and number but then they never call them. But I'll hire people. I don't have the right to hire you. Really, have no job for you but, I just like to be... The next day I like to laugh at myself at nine o'clock thinking that you're eagerly down there at the boat thinking that you got a job when the boat's already gone because I know the boat left the night before. That to me is hysterical. Well, you had nothing better to do anyway. So, yeah.

LO: All right, well I think we can wrap it up.

JB: Think Congress will like that?

LO: Sure.

JB: What kind of assholes we got working down there on the waterfront?

LO: Actually, I do have one other question. So I assume, are you salaried or are you hourly?

JB: Hourly. I'll never go salary.

LO: Tell me why.

JB: If I worked the hours, I want to get paid for it.

LO: Oh, okay.

JB: And we get so much time off anyway. I've been here for ten years so I get, I get three weeks, and then holidays, and obviously weekends but I tend to work a lot of weekends. But it, if I work it I want to get paid for it. There are days I can, they're not too strict on time with us. I can say at any given time I don't feel well, I'm going home. Is all your work wrapped up? Yeah. You know just so long as my work is wrapped up or I have time to get to it the next day, it really don't matter. If you want to go home, go home. I've gone over, I've gone over a few years, easily.

LO: Are you guys part of a union?

JB: No.

LO: No?

JB: Nope. We're not big enough to be a union.

LO: Ah, well I figured well the Electrical Workers' Union? Isn't that huge?

JB: They don't like us?

LO: Oh. Why?

JB: Because they're electrical.

LO: And? You're...

JB: We're electronics. We're typically, people would say one cat's the same as the other but it isn't. We're a, we're 12 to 24 and 36 Voltage, VDC. Electricians are 110 to 240. So. Their job is much more high voltage than us. We operate on little teeny tiny voltage. It's all voltage, I mean it's all electronics and current, but, or electric, or electricity and current but it's still, we operate on a different wave length that they do.

LO: Yep. And are there many unions to your knowledge in the shoreside aspects of the business?

JB: No, not really. No. You would think there would be but it's just. I think the general consensus is once you work around boats long enough, you just become too angry to care. [Laughter] You just want to get the hell off the boat and go home.

LO: I see.

JB: So, there are guys that will say, the sea is my life. No, it ain't dude. Your life is so much better back here.

LO: All right, well on that note. Unless you have anything else to add.

JB: Nope.

LO: We're done. Well, thank you. Thank you for making time for me again.

JB: No problem.

[35:27] End of audio.