NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: June 8, 2017

Cook, Jeff ~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

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Background

Name of person interviewed: Jeff Cook [JC]

Facts about this person:

Age
Sex Male
Occupation Owner New Bedford Welding Supply
Residence (Town where lives)
Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Laura Orleans [LO]

Transcriber: Tracy Gillen [TG]

Interview location: New Bedford Welding Supply, New Bedford, MA

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Key Words
dredges**,** welding consumables, compression tanks, oxygen tanks, oxy acetylene gas, welding machines, regulators, hoses, cutting torch, engine room, welding leads, settlement house, cutting tip, plasma cutters, torch cutting, stinger, welding electrode holder

Abstract
Jeff Cook is one of the owners of New Bedford Welding Supply in New Bedford, MA. He studied welding in high school and college and has worked for his family run business from a young age, starting with painting the gas cylinders and working his way up to customer sales. He discusses the role of New Bedford Welding Supply in the fishing industry, the changes in welding equipment over the years, the role of his family members in the family business, and the positive and negative aspects of his job.

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[00:00] Intro; Jeff Cooke was born in New Bedford and raised in Fairhaven. He is currently an owner of New Bedford Welding Supply. His father had a commercial lobstering license for many years and his grandfather worked for New Bedford Steel Company until he started New Bedford Welding Supply after New Bedford Steel Company closed. Both Jeff and his father studied welding in college. He discusses the importance of his business to the fishing industry as the majority of the fishing boats are now made from metal.

[4:48] Discusses the function of the New Bedford Welding Supply within the fishing industry. Discussed how Jeff started in the industry by painting steel gas cylinders, then delivering cylinders to fishing boats. Also explains the equipment needed for a typical welding job and discusses how sometimes the welding needs to be done at sea.

[10:17] Talks about a typical day at the showroom counter and how the seasonality of the fishing industry affects the welding business.

[14:23] Discusses how well his family and long time employees work together to run the business. Also, explains the training process for new employees.

[19:47] Elaborates on some of the improvements in welding technology over recent years. Explains that the equipment is getting smaller, easier to control, and safer to use.

[24:24] Discusses his favorite part of the job, interacting with the customer, and the most challenging part, working in bad weather. Also discusses the name stinger, a welding electrode holder.

[29:45] Explains the roles of his brother and his mother in the family business. Discusses the progression of jobs within the business, explains circumstances in which he does actual welding.

[35:00] Explains how New Bedford Welding Supply got started and future plans for the company.

[37:59] End of audio.

[00:00]
Laura Orleans: I have to read an introduction so I'll do that first. Today is June 8th 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 interviewing Jeff Cook. My name is Laura Orleans and we are at New Bedford Welding in New Bedford. It is about 10:40 in the morning. So, as I said, we're having you fill out a form but for the purposes of the recording do you give us permission to record you?

Jeff Cook: Yes, I do.

LO: Excellent. So, I know we just, I just said your name but if for the tape if you would just introduce yourself.

JC: Hi, my name is Jeff Cook and I'm one of the owners of New Bedford Welding Supply.

LO: Okay, so currently your job is one of the owners of New Bedford Welding Supply. Let's back up a little bit, maybe just in terms of like your, your young years. Where did you, where were you born? Where did you grow up?

JC: I was born in New Bedford and I was actually brought up in Fairhaven. So pretty much lived around the water all my life.

LO: And before we turned the tape on you mentioned that your Dad had done some lobstering**?**

JC: My father grew up down the south end of New Bedford on Aquidneck Street and I want to say he had started lobstering right around eleven or twelve years old. He's always had his commercial license. And he's, he did it up until I was, well, probably up until eight years, eight or nine years ago when he finally sold his licenses and his boat. Just arthritis and his back and knee kind of took over and he realized that I can't do this no more.

LO: And was there a connection between, I mean I gather this is a family business, between his commercial lobstering and the creation of the New Bedford Welding Company?

JC: He, he had always, my grandfather actually had worked for New Bedford Steel Company way long, long time ago. And then when the steel company finally decided to close their doors, that's when he opened up New Bedford Welding Supply, which was about forty-eight years ago. And then my father kind of just went along, started helping him and he did his lobstering on the side. And then it got to the point where New Bedford Welding Supply got so large that we actually, he had to stop doing lobstering during the day and would kind of just go out at night when he got done with work about 5:00, 5:30 and then the next morning he would get up and go to the Welding Supply.

LO: Tell me your grandfather's name.

JC: My Grandfather was Robert Cook also. My father is also Robert Cook; he's the junior. And it's just, we all have a wide variety of backgrounds in the welding industry.

LO: Do you want to say more about that?

JC: Well, with my grandfather starting off at the steel company, my father began, you know, his education in high school at Greater New Bedford Voc in the welding department. I also went on to graduate from New Bedford Voc in 1995. My father went to a college in New Hampshire, which I believe was called New Hampshire Technical College. It was same college I went to. We both took up welding. Obviously, he graduated a lot earlier than I did because he went before I did. And our, our backgrounds in the welding field really took off after, you know, when I graduated from college and just going to different courses and classes and stuff like that that our manufacturers offer to learn about the different materials and metals and stuff like that which is in every fishing boat today. If you notice fifty to sixty years ago most fishing boats were made of wood. If you look at them now they're all pretty much made out of metal. So, we, our presence in the fishing industry is, is very much needed, just because of all the materials that the boats are made out, of especially metal.

LO: So, tell me more about that because I'm aware of welding as it factors into the creation of dredges for example.

JC: Yep.

LO: There's that piece, which more the gear?

JC: Yeah, the gear. All of the dredges are steel. So everything on that dredge is, is welded and put together. Also, when they remanufacture the dredges when they have to bring them back in to, let's say they hooked a rock or they bent it or something like that. They have to use all the welding gases to cut off the bad parts and then welding consumables to weld in the new parts that they're replacing.

[4:48] LO: So, maybe let's, let's have you do kind of an overview of New Bedford Welding Supply and the services and products. I mean I was interested walking in to see the showroom.

JC: Yep.

LO: Obviously you are doing that end of it but I gather there's quite lot of more so maybe just a snap shot.

JC: Oh yeah, if you look at our show room we have a lot of hand tools that are all within the metalworking industry. A lot of them do fall into the aspect of being used in the fishing industry just because like I said before all these boats are metal. Everything on them are steel, stainless or

aluminum. And all these metals can either be cut or welded so you know, this is where we come into play of offering the special tools or the gases that are needed to cut and weld or even form if they have to bend something back. If they hit something and something bent and they got to heat it up and bend it back. It's kind of, it falls into our lap of where we got to tell these fishermen this is what you need to use, this is how you need to do it so they can fix that.

LO: So, are most of the repairs done by fishermen or do you have folks that go out and do some of that work as well?

JC: We don't actually do any of the work. We supply all the materials for that work.

LO: Okay.

JC: A lot of the fishing boats do have their own welder, per se, or there are a lot of independent people that have welding machines on their truck that will actually get subcontracted to do that.

LO: Mhmm, mhmm. So, that I didn't realize. So basically, you're, you're basically providing product.

JC: Yeah, we're a supply house basically.

LO: You're a supply house, yeah, yeah, yeah. And so that changes my line of questioning, which is fine. So, tell me about your own trajectory in this, in the business, maybe. Why don't you start with what was your very first, as a kid, your very first involvement?

JC: My very, well, my very first involvement was the, the cylinders that we put all these gases in are steel. And if you notice when they go out on the boats they're on salt water. What happens to steel when they're on salt water, it rusts. So, one of my first industry, if you want to say, jobs, was painting these cylinders because if they get too rusty, they rust out and they become junk. And they're not a very inexpensive piece of equipment. So, we always try to keep them painted, looking nice. That was my very first job, if you would say, in the industry of knowing what happens on the fishing boat. Eventually I worked up, once I got my driver's license, I would deliver these cylinders and other stuff to these fishing boats, whether it would be, you know, on the dock or in the shipyard or something like that. Just different, as you get older you would do different things because you get your license and so on and so forth.

LO: So, you have a fair amount or at least others here have a fair amount of interaction with fishermen both on and off the docks.

JC: On a daily basis, yes, yep. We'll probably have thirty to forty a day fishermen or deckhands, whatever they may be, coming through the door. Yep.

LO: And are you servicing, you know we have a pretty diverse fleet I guess I would say…

JC: Yes.

LO: In terms of fishery and size of vessel and all of that. Is it universal? Sort of you've got the herring fleet, you've got the scallop fleet, you've got the ground fish fleet.

JC: Yes. Yep.

LO: Lobsters and crab.

JC: Yep, exactly.

LO: So everybody needs your supplies?

JC: Pretty much, yep.

LO: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the compression tanks or oxygen tanks and how that sort of… Walk me through kind of the, the supplies and tools that are needed in doing a typical welding job.

JC: A typical welding job, you're, especially for a fishing boat, you're going to need a cutting torch, you're going to need the oxy-acetylene gas for that. Most, most of the time, these things are going to go hand in hand because you have to cut something to weld it back on so a lot of boats already have a welding machine on them so a lot of times they'll use, before they even go out, they'll have a set of tanks on there. They'll have the regulators, the hose, the cutting torch. They'll have a machine probably somewhere in the engine room and they'll have the welding leads that will be pulled down to deck if there's something they have to weld on the deck. So, a lot of the boats have the capabilities of making a repair out at sea if something breaks.

LO: I was going to ask you about that. So, I'm guessing, you know, they would prefer to do it dockside where the boat isn't moving?

JC: They would prefer to do it dockside where it's not going all over the place, yes, but a lot of times you don't have that option, you have to do it out on the sea.

LO: Wow, that must be rather dangerous, I would think.

JC: Yes, it would be rather dangerous, especially if it's high seas. You have an open flame, basically, that is in your hand. If you get a wave that comes over hard and throws you, it's going to throw the torch and you don't know where that's going to land.

LO: So, yourself, having the schooling that you do, it sounds like you know you've got a perfect combination of some background in the industry with some family ties going back a ways. Schooling in terms of Voc and the college training.

JC: Yep.

LO: So you know how to actually do the welding and then.

JC: Correct.

LO: And you can kind of teach people or…

JC: Oh yeah, yes.

LO: Let them know what they need.

JC: Yep.

[10:17] LO: So, tell me kind of what a typical day is for you?

JC: Well, I won't give a typical day for me but what I'll do is a typical day for me if I was working the counter [Okay.] just because when I was coming along that's one of the jobs I had was working the counter at sales. And that's where you, where you meet most of the deckhands, fishermen, stuff like that, captains when they come in. You know when you're working the counter especially first thing in the morning, usually about 7:30, quarter of eight, you'll get a lot of the deckhands, the fishermen, stuff like that, coming in. Because they're getting their supplies for one or two things. Either because they're doing gear work or they're getting ready to go out and they realize that all right we need ice, we need gas, we need welding rod, we need you know cutting tips. You know they want to make sure they, when they leave, they're all set; they don't need anything so if something breaks they can fix it while they're out there. So in the morning, a lot of times you'll see at least eight to ten, we'll just say fishermen, coming in, getting either ready to start the day or getting ready to leave port so they can go out and you know, catch some fish.

LO: And just out of curiosity, I know because of the way the economy works with the fishing industry, you know they go out, they come back, they sell the catch, there's the settlement house thing. Do you get paid through the settlement house or is it direct?

JC: Yes, we do, through the settlement house.

LO: You do? So that's interesting.

JC: Yep.

LO: Yeah. And going back, you mentioned something in your list of things they might be purchasing, ice.

JC: Right, we don't, we don't sell ice but with the ice house right down the street a lot of times they'll stop, you know say okay, we got to go from here to here to here. Because a lot of times they're on schedules because the ice house will tell them, all right you can come in at 8:30 and that's really the only time they have. So, if they say hey, we got to be at the ice house at 8:30, can you deliver down to the ice house at 8:30, these items that we need? And a lot of times we try to as best as we can schedule that but if you have four or six boats that are asking for the

same thing, it's very hard. So you, you try to do the best that you can for everybody so that way they can get out and get out there and make some money.

LO: And so going back to the typical day, you've got kind of a flurry of activity first thing in the morning.

JC: First thing, yep.

LO: Does it kind of peter off through the day? Or how does that work?

JC: Usually by about twelve, one o'clock the fishermen have stopped coming in because they have everything they need. Unless a lot of them are coming back in and they realize, hey I got to do gear work tomorrow, let me run down there, get this now, so I have it for first thing in the morning.

LO: Is there a seasonality to the business?

JC: Usually, when they have their days, is when they're busiest. So if they have days, right now they probably going to be very busy because the weather's broke and they have their fishing days. Usually, wintertime is tough for them just because who wants to go out, you know, in the winter? They have to and they do but a lot of them try to use their days before then.

LO: So, how does that work for you as a business? Do you have other customers that are not in the fishing industry?

JC: We have, yes, we have other customers, that, yes, yeah. We realize that with all the regulations and stuff, the fishing industry really did take a big hit, which does affect us, because they only have certain days, which means, if something's broken and they have no days, they're going to let the boat sit at the dock, broken. Then, when they get their days back, then they're going to say now we can fix this because we're going to go out and make money to pay for that bill to fix it.

LO: So, I'm guessing there's sort of almost a credit thing where they're buying it.

JC: Yes.

LO: Go out to make the money.

JC: Yes, we do offer an in-house credit, yes.

LO: That's nice thing for you, for them.

JC: For them, yes.

LO: For you to do. So family businesses, I'm interested in that, and they, there still are a lot of family businesses on the waterfront, as far as I can tell.

JC: Correct.

LO: Talk to me a little bit about what that is like. Good, bad, ugly.

[14:23] JC: Well, look at it this way, I have an older brother and we both work in the industry. He does work here at New Bedford Welding. We're a third generation, so we come every day. So, basically I see my older brother every day. I see my mother and father every day because they both work for the company. You get very close to your family. So, when you're at a younger age it's one thing but when you get to an older age, you realize how well you work together, just because you understand, they understand what you're trying to do and you understand what they need from you to do. You work well. I'm trying to figure out how to word that but it can be very difficult at times but it also is very good. I just don't really have a way to explain it.

LO: Can you give an example? Of sort of something that's really positive about it?

JC: Well, when you're working together as a family, everybody understands that they have their job that they have to have done and everyone understands on that if I do what I have to do, then that means the next person is going to be able to get done what they have to get done. So, a lot of times, if I'm, if I'm, if I have an order or if we have situation with a customer, or something like that I can go to either my older brother or I can go to my mother or my father and say look this is the situation we're in, this is what we need to get done today. This is of high importance and they understand that. So, then the four of us can come together and work together on it to get it done. So that way it doesn't affect the day-to-day business and anybody in the company and the customer if it it's affecting the customer. So, it's a lot easier to get things done because they understand where you're coming from. Where whether if I was talking to just a regular employee or an office person it probably wouldn't much matter to them because it's not their business. They don't really care.

LO: I hear you. [Laughter]. And what's also been interesting in the interviews I've done because a lot of them have been with family businesses is that sometimes, the culture of the employees also kind of, the culture of the family rubs off a little bit on the employees I guess is what I'm trying to say.

JC: Yes, it's true. Yep, very true.

LO: So that it, I don't know if you've got employees who've been with you, you know the business is forty-eight years old, do you have folks who've been here for a lot of that time?

JC: Yes, actually, one of my, one of my, one of my best friends, actually, we both graduated from New Bedford Voc in the welding department in 1995 and he came to work for us in 1995 after we graduated and he's still here today. There's another gentlemen, one of the older salesmen, who just retired, well, semi-retired, I should say, he used to call on a lot of the fishing industry down on the Cape, down in Truro and P-town [Provincetown] and stuff like that and he was with us for I believe thirty-five years. So, we, you know, we treat our employees very well

and they understand that, and fair. I mean if we didn't I don't think he'd be here for thirty-five years.

LO: Well, and I think too that a lot of people that I've been talking to the industry sort of never sleeps. And if there's a job that has to get done, people seem to just…

JC: Everybody pitches in.

LO: Pitch in, right. It's, I mean, you know, it's an eight to five thing on your door but that doesn't really…

JC: Exactly, yes.

LO: Yeah. Yeah. So you talked about some of the schooling that you had that was kind of formal education. When somebody comes in to start working here is there a training process?

JC: Well, there is training process. If you are, we've had, we've had both people that are, are familiar with the welding and people that are totally green to welding. And one of the things that we do is, we'll actually ask them if they would not mind taking a night course at New Bedford Voc on welding and the company pays for it. All we ask it that they do it on their time at night and a lot of them will do it and they have done it which is the reason why they're still employees here. And that opens up their eyes a lot because instead of them trying to figure out what a welding rod is or a cutting tip is they actually get to see it, sell it to the customer, and then at night when they go to night school, they get to use it. So, they actually know how to operate.

LO: And I'm guessing as new products come on the market, do you have opportunities to try to test them?

JC: Yes, we have opportunities to test them in house here and also the manufacturers' products that we sell, their representatives come in with that product, do a training, and do a hands on.

[19:47] LO: So, over the time that you've been involved, what kinds of changes have you seen in terms of the technology or the, you know, the products?

JC: A lot of the technology is getting a lot smaller. I can, for example, some of the first plasma cutters that came out. Plasma cutters are used mainly for cutting steel and aluminum. You can use them to cut steel but it's really mainly used for doing steel and aluminum. They went from the size of like a juke box, the big old '60s juke box, now they're the size of maybe a kid's lunchbox. So, they've come a long way. That's one of the things right there. And the same thing with welding machines; they were, used to be these big bulky, you know, refrigerator type things, now they're, you know, like I said, they're the size of a briefcase or a lunchbox. They've, they've come way down in size, which is technology.

LO: Absolutely. Are there any new or interesting things that have come on the market maybe in the last five years?

JC: I don't think so much anything new. Well, let me rephrase that. Nothing new as technology wise but new as, as progression as how better the equipment has gotten. From, like I said, from the '60s 'till now, some of the welding machines that they had then are still around believe it or not but if you use some of the new equipment now and you compare the two it's like night and day. You don't realize, it's, yes back in the sixties that machine welded great but if you weld with a machine from the 2000s and it's like, wow this thing is one hundred percent better than this old refrigerator that I used to have.

LO: So better in what, what ways?

JC: Just the way that the, the arc characteristics of the weld itself. You get a lot more control. What a lot of the manufacturers are doing now are making it so it's easier for the average Joe to take in to weld basically because let's just say the people in their educations nowadays do vary and you have a lot of high school drop outs or people that either didn't go to college or even young people who are in high school now. A lot of those kids are actually seeing this technology where you show them something from the sixties and they can't weld with it. But you give them the newer, you know, the newer 2000s and it's like whoa I can do this, this is easy. Well, it's easy because you get help from the machine, believe it or not.

LO: What about in terms of safety of the equipment. Has that changed?

JC: Well safety has come a long way, definitely. There are a lot more safety options on the machine whether it's a safety latch or a safety button compared to the older ones, which probably didn't have any safety mechanisms on them at all so.

LO: And then obviously there are helmets, there were always glasses.

JC: Oh yeah, there's glasses. I mean helmets, that's another thing that's come a long way too is the helmets. You used to have a helmet that had a lens in it and that if it was a shade, a specific shade, that's all it was. Now you get lenses that automatically change and it's, you know, five or six different shades and you can use it for grinding or plasma cutting or torch cutting or welding. It just, that's one thing that's come a real long ways from when welding started.

LO: So, I was, I mean I should know this, but I was surprised I guess to find out that so much of the welding was done by the crew.

JC: Yes, especially when they're out when they're out in the ocean, I mean you have no choice. A lot of it is the crew members a lot of them probably didn't know how to weld so they were either self taught or they were just taught by maybe a guy that welded on a boat that they were on before. And they just know enough to get the job fixed, to get them to stay out there so they can keep fishing and then when they come to port they know it's, all right now we got to call so and so or call this guy or call that company so they can come and, and, and fix it right.

LO: All right, we kind of talked about typical day. I don't know if we got all the way to the end. [Laughter]. But talk about, sort of is there a, a favorite kind of part of your job that you like?

[24:24] JC: I don't know if there's a favorite part of the, well, I, actually I shouldn't say that. One of my favorite parts is actually going to see the customer. You get to see, you get to meet the person that you're talking to on the phone all the time. You get to put a face with the voice. You actually get to see what they do or what the problem they may have or see what type of equipment they have and you actually get to, to really put it together to see how his day goes and how he does his job. A lot of times, you know, I can make suggestions on equipment or tools to say look, you know, if you had this you might be able to do this a little bit faster, a little bit easier. Let's just say, as we get older, the job gets tougher. Steel is not the lightest thing to be picking up and putting down so a lot of times you try to find tools and find equipment to make that easier for you. That's what I've noticed, especially to, with the customers.

LO: Do you get to hear much in the way, I mean if they're coming in to see you, well right before setting out, they might not have so many stories on the tip of their tongue probably ready to roll but when they come back in from a trip do you get to hear some of that stuff?

JC: Some of it yes, a lot of it is, we're out there this broke, and you know we had to take and do this and do that and you want to talk about a nightmare this was and we hear some things, yes.

LO: So, do you, and I'm curious are there times when they come in and they say this isn't working and here's what's happening and like do you ever get to suggest stuff to the manufacturers and say we're hearing a lot from the fishermen about this issue?

JC: We've actually had equipment brought in by the manufacturer to ask us to test for them on certain fishing boats. We've actually had manufacturers come in and want to see a typical fishing boat and try to understand it better how they can make their product better so their product lasts longer or does a better job for them on the boat. So yes, yes they, they do.

LO: So it must feel kind of good, like you're contributing something…

JC: Yes, yes, yep.

LO: Pretty significant. Okay, so we talked about the thing you liked the most. Is there a part of this job that just you wish you didn't have to do?

JC: A lot of this job is outside, and a day like today where it's beautiful out I love to be out there. But when it's snowing or raining or something like that you have to be out there with the job. So I'd have to say the weather has it's good parts and it's bad parts.

LO: And tell me if like in those outside situations is there a job that sort of stands out for you where you had a real challenge and you got it done and you saw it through to the end?

JC: A lot of times when you get a heavy snow you know some of the boats, before a lot of the regulations and stuff I can remember you'd have to deliver tanks to the boats and let's say for instance the city didn't get around to plowing the pier or something like that but they need their stuff so you, you do what you got to do and you get it down to them somehow. But…

LO: And when you're delivering to the docks I know a lot of times the boats are rafted out two, three, four deep do you actually have to?

JC: I have but we don't anymore. The reason being is if someone gets hurt our insurance just does not cover that and it's a headache. A lot of times we bring them to the dock and they have to bring us the empties over and they have to bring the fulls over.

LO: That make sense. Let me see. Oh, I know, I'm curious if there's, it seems like in every workplace there's special words, terms, that you use that you know, somebody welding would know but somebody who's never been around that I mean, besides torch and arc, can you think of anything?

JC: Stinger.

LO: What's that?

JC: Yeah, stinger is a welding electrode, it's a welding electrode holder. So, a lot of guys will say I need a stinger instead of saying they need an electrode holder, I need a stinger. So, a lot of them will say stinger. That is the main one, right there.

LO: Any words for something that doesn't, you know, something doesn't work the way you're wanting it to, I mean I'm thinking I talked to the guys over at Chris Electronics, they talked about Medusa's hair when all the wires are in a tangle. You know that kind of thing.

JC: Ah, no, no, well there's some swear words that they usually say but I'll leave those out.

LO: That's pretty funny. Any nicknames in your workforce?

JC: Oh, yes we do. We have some nicknames. I, I won't say them but we have some. They're not bad but I just don't want embarrass anybody.

LO: Okay. So, let me just see about the family business if I had any other questions on that. Tell me, you mentioned obviously your grandfather and your father, does your brother have a particular role that's different than your own?

[29:45] JC: My brother is, he's in charge, his main thing is purchasing. So on a, every day, daily basis, he's running reports, checking the inventory, placing orders with our manufacturers to see what we need. Checking prices, seeing if there's anybody that has a better deal, because we actually pass those savings along. I mean, the way we look at it as if we can save, you know, the fishermen money and we can save ourselves money and the product is still a quality product we try to do that.

LO: And what about your mom?

JC: My mom is, she does all the headaches [Laughter]. She, she takes care of payroll; she pays all the bills. She basically handles all the money and that like I said, all the headaches.

LO: And how long has she been, has she been doing that? Since your Dad stepped in?

JC: Yeah, yeah, pretty much yeah. Well, no, let me rephrase that. When my parents got married is pretty much when they started, when she stepped in. Because my grandmother used to do it and when my grandmother got older my mom started helping a little bit.

LO: Let's see, and you kind of, I mean you talked about painting the tanks as a kid.

JC: Yep.

LO: You talked about working the counter. Were there things in between those two jobs?

JC: Oh yeah, delivery, yep delivery.

LO: Delivery. I'm sorry you mentioned that.

JC: So, a lot of times there was, actually when we're done here I can bring you next door and I can show you the different steps on basically what I did to get up to where I am now.

LO: Actually, just, maybe just for the tape, give us a quick…

JC: Well, basically I can tell you most of us in, in, in to sales and stuff like that, have started at the bottom. They've started painting cylinders, from painting cylinders you fill cylinders. You recertify them, delivering, counter sales, which then leads sometimes to, to outside sales.

LO: And I'm curious do you miss, I mean it must be pretty satisfying I would think, to actually do the welding when you are skilled at it, do you miss that?

JC: I don't miss getting burned. [Laughter] I still do actually do weld here and there. A lot of times we'll have a customer that will come and we deal with a lot, I mean we do deal a lot with the fishing industry but we also do deal a lot with other industries and one that I've been noticing over the years are the, the home improvement type person, the backyard mechanic, the tinkerer in the garage kind of person. And they're looking at welding as a hobby, a hobbyist. So a lot of time they don't know how to weld so, it's like I did a little bit at my buddy's house and I'm really not sure how to do this. So you set the machine up when they buy it and you kind of show them a little bit because let's face it, if they buy and they don't use it, and they don't practice with it, it's going to sit in the corner and they're never going to use it. So we deal a lot with people like that so I do tend still do a lot of welding. We also get the people that come in and say this piece of you know what doesn't work then you hook it all up and then you weld with it it's like I don't have a problem with it it's kind of operator error on the other end so you kind of show them, hey this is you know, what are you doing and they show you and that's wrong this is how you should be doing it.

LO: And do you wear gloves? I'm curious, you mentioned getting burned.

JC: Oh yes, yes, gloves. They actually have gloves, jackets, they actually even have pants. Some people wear the pants. All kinds of different safety, you know.

LO: Is there anything that we, I mean, you know, I've got other things I could ask you but anything you want to share that we haven't covered?

JC: No, I think, I think, no. I think we did pretty good.

LO: We didn't ask about the next generation coming up. Do you and your brother have kids? Anybody who's poised to…

JC: We, well both don't have kids, he has my older brother has a stepson and a step grandson, So, we don't know what they're doing yet though, they're too young.

LO: What do you think about the future of the industry at this moment in time?

JC: It can only get better. It has to get better. Oh, we won't go into the whole regulations thing but I hope that the future does get better for, for the fishermen. It gets better for them it gets better for all of us.

LO: Okay, I think I kind of covered most of what I was after.

JC: Okay.

LO: Yeah, unless there's anything else you want to add.

JC: Nope, nope.

LO: Okay, well, thank you I really appreciate it. I would be curious to take the tour.

JC: Yeah, I'll give you a quick little tour.

[35:00] LO: Alrighty that's… So, I neglected to ask you sort of about the history of the company in terms of how you started out and how you've grown.

JC: My grandfather got into the fishing industry per se by working for New Bedford Steel Company for many, many years. When the steel company closed their doors, he basically bought some of the gas cylinders and took some of the lines, one up to a garage on England Street up the north end of New Bedford and started New Bedford Welding Supply. And it was just him and my grandmother and then my father would help out. After graduating college and stuff he started helping out more and more. Again, in the same aspect as, as I did you know doing deliveries, you know, whatever basically had to be done. And then, as the years went on, they just added more drivers, more employees and sometimes in the mid to late '80s we ran out of room and we wanted to be more than just in a garage. So we built the building next door, which is where we fill all the gas in. We moved there. Of course my grandfather said, "Oh we'll never need, we'll never need a bigger, bigger building. We'll never need any more room. We got more room than

we could even imagine." In the late '80s, we ran out of room so we bought the building that we're in now that houses our showroom and our, all of our inventory for the supplies and stuff for the fishermen. So we went from having a garage to one building that we'll never need anymore space, to a second building, which I want to make the store bigger. So you don't realize that when you look at something in my grandfather's eyes back in the '80s would say, yeah we'll never need anything bigger than what we have and then fifteen twenty years from there it's like wow, we need more room. And you don't, you don't even realize it, you know, as a company you grow. So, that's what we did.

LO: That's excellent. What do you see in the next ten years do you think? More expansion? Or?

JC: Yeah, we see more expansion. One of the things that we did talk about before was employees and training. The welding industry is a very niche business and it's very hard to find employees that understand the business and understand what it takes in the welding industry. So it's, it's not an easy, easy thing to train for or to find qualified help for, even.

LO: All right. Well, thank you.

JC: No problem.

[37:59] End of audio