



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: July 12, 2017

Jeff Ferreira ~ Oral History Interview

Fred Calabretta

Jeff Ferreira. Interview by Fred Calabretta. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. July 12, 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: Jeff Ferreira [JF]

Facts about this person:

Age 50
Sex male
Occupation supervisor at F & B Rubberized
Residence Mattapoisett, MA
Ethnic background Portuguese
Interviewer: Fred Calabretta [FC]

Transcriber: Amy [AO]

Interview location: F & B Rubberized, New Bedford

Date of Interview: July 12, 2017

Key Words:

commercial fishing, recycling, tires, scallop strip, chafing gear strip, chain bag, rubber, fishing rollers, bumpers, rock-hoppers, fenders, ground cable, cookie cover, gear, fishing boats, Portuguese, side rails, top rails, decks, trawlers, floppy discs, trawler discs, wire, dragger, sweep, cookies, safety, club stick, net, car springs, steel belted radial tires, waste energy industry, docks, tugs, scallop boats, trawling net, regulations, family business, New Bedford

Abstract

Jeff Ferreira is a 50-year-old supervisor of F & B Rubberized in New Bedford, MA, a company that specializes in tire recycling for use in the fishing industry. In this interview, he describes the history of the company, his job at F & B Rubberized, and the uses of recycled tires in the fishing industry. He speaks about his company notably as a family business and what he hopes for the future of fishing and tire recycling.

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[0:00] Intro: Begins with where he grew up and how his father started the business. Describes the large used tire piles that were present in the seventies and how his father experimented with recycling tires from these waste piles. Speaks about how the business grew after his father developed a chafing gear strip that worked extremely well.

[5:00] Speaks further about how the business grew over time. Describes when he became involved in the business. Details the products that they make for commercial fishing gear.

[10:00] Explains how their products protect and extend the life of the gear. Describes the improvements in safety for fishermen that are a result of the use of rubberized gear. Talks about his start in the business. Describes the job he did when he first worked for the company and jobs he did later in time.

[15:00] Explains jobs he has done for large West Coast gear. Describes how the rubberized gear worked well to increase fishing catch, protect gear, and extend gear life. Speaks about the informal social network that existed to help the company improve their products in the past.

[20:00] Describes how the relationship with fishermen was a big part of the business in the past. Explains how the business has had to change and adapt because there is less fishing now. Details the other areas they have diversified into to keep company in business, such as waste energy. Estimates fifty percent of business now is fishing gear, mainly for scallop gear. Describes how the hours he worked in the past and what he works now.

[25:00] Describes his dad's continued role in the business. Speaks about the stress of a family owned business and how they cope with the difficulties of a family business. Describes improvements made in safety in the industry over time. Talks about the effect fishing regulations have had on their business.

[30:00] Speaks more about fishing regulations and their effects. Talks about the change to steel belted radial tires and how that has affected the business. Describes competition from foreign businesses. Explains the difficulty in getting rid of big tires. Explains challenges of finding good employees.

[35:00] Continues to speak about the difficulty of finding good workers. Describes his typical day and responsibilities. Speaks about how he prioritizes orders. Describes the company inventory during various parts of the year. Explains how and where he gets tires now, and the difficulty of finding nylon tires to stay in business.

[40:00] Talks about his children, how he encouraged them to work in other areas. Discusses the uncertainty of the business with changes in fishing and tire manufacture. Speaks about the advantages of working in waste energy products. Talks about the lack of face-to-face relationships in the present as the fishing industry has changed.

[45:12] End of Audio

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Fred Calabretta: Okay, I just have to read this introduction here. Today is July 12, 2017. 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 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'm Fred Calabretta, and today I'm speaking with Jeff Ferreira at F & B Rubberized in New Bedford. And do you give us your permission to record this?

Jeff Ferreira: Yes.

FC: Okay, so just to start if you could just give your full name and your date of birth.

JF: My full name is John Jeffrey Ferreira. I was born August 25, 1966. Everybody calls me Jeff though.

FC: Okay, and grew up in New Bedford, or ---

JF: Yep. Grew up in Mattapoisett, which is two towns away from New Bedford.

FC: Okay. And was your family involved in the fishing industry, or in --- connected with it in any way or ---

JF: Not really. They weren't fishermen, commercial fishermen, so to speak. They fished, like crazy. You know just regular old fish, but my father and basically my family was into recycling tires, since 1966 I think?

FC: And so this is a business that was started by your family?

JF: That's right. This business branched off of just the regular normal recycling routine from '66 to '76. Basically it was just tire piles of junk. You know reselling the used and stuff like that. And that's how they got rid of them back in the day was made a big pile in Maine or Montana or wherever you were.

FC: Yeah, yeah. And then how did the, how did it change, and how did the business, or when did the business start getting into other products?

JF: Well, the necessity was there because the tire landfills I guess you would say, for a lack of a better word, they, they just they weren't, they were never disappearing so they just got bigger and bigger and bigger. They were with my father, my grandfather, fishing all their lives, you know, out in the boats, looking at the boats, being a part of New Bedford, the whole scene. They just -- I can remember my father trying to melt rubber. Cut rubber with knives, just try to do anything to make it something else. Not necessarily fishing, just anything. And fishing's what he come up with, on his first thing.

FC: And then and how did it grow from there? Or how did you --- sort of the product development part of it?

JF: Well, it started out with basically a scallop strip, a chafing gear strip, that was just in a scallop bag, and once that got introduced, basically the bag just dragged on the bottom of the ocean. And it you know, tore the rings out, stretched the rings up, wore the thing down, and when they started the thread, just strips of rubber just through the chain bag, that was it. They said, "Oh boy, we're really, really onto something." You basically just got the tire, cut it with a knife into a long strip and weaved it through there and it wore down, about a hundred percent, so it got rid of the tire, and it also protected the chain bag. And then everything he looked at from that point on, he said, "I'm going to put rubber on that, I'm going to put rubber on this," and of course it just helped fishing out because the catch was increased, the gear lasted longer, and it really, I mean, from 19 --- like I said, I can remember him as early as like '74, just trying, filling the house up with smoke, cooking tires in the oven, basically. Trying to make stuff happen. Until he just cut it that time and he said, "Let me just try this out," and then that was it, man. He rented hydraulic presses and forget about it. It was on.

FC: So it just took off from there then.

JF: It took off from there as far as fishing rollers, rock-hoppers, fendering, bumpers, ground cable cookie covers, it was just insane. Back then, people could fish, all the time. So they were wearing gear out all the time.

FC: Yeah. And was, was the rubber being used I mean,

[05:00]

kind of as is, you cut up a tire, or did you, was there a process, did you have to do anything with it? Or just ---

JF: Oh, well it was very labor intensive. Basic --- at first, you cut the tire with a knife. So you had a guy, you gave him a knife, and you said, I want you to cut strips of rubber out of this, by hand. Until --- forever. Because you just needed so many of them. And the boats were fishing and it would just wear out. And the piles were endless because there were just so many tire piles around so they started to get --- they started to need you know, tires, and then they really started to look at what kind of tires they needed for what. And they just --- my father went crazy. I mean, he started emptying out --- probably recycled tons and tons, millions of tons of tires. Just for fishing gear. He probably single-handedly cleaned up Massachusetts. I'm pretty sure about that. Never mind, the northeast coast.

FC: And that's an interesting kind of piece of the story, because you're creating a product, you have a business going, that's working, but you're also getting rid of these tires that have been sitting there for ---

JF: One hundred percent recycled, environmentally perfect. You know? No burning it, no nothing. It --- just like a tires supposed to, wear out, naturally, is what it did. So there was this, there's no cleaner or greener way to get rid of an automobile tire than to put it on a fishing boat.

FC: And then when did, when did you first get involved?

JF: I got involved of course I was involved my whole life because it was just, it was my dad, so I just watched him every little thing he did. And back then it was a different time so I mean, sixth grade, summer vacation, you're working. But officially, I started here in 1982. So it was six years after the fishing gear started to go but unofficially I've been working here since probably, I remember when we bought the building. And I emptied it out with the employees so I've been here a lot longer than that.

FC: Now how long has the business been at this location?

JF: 1976. We bought the building. It was an old bakery. And that was kind of --- indicative of going on, you know? New Bedford was a Portuguese city, hard-working, immigrant fishermen and bakers. Bread was huge (*laughs*), believe it or not.

FC: Yeah, yeah. So you were --- you've been around it since you were a kid then, really.

JF: I've been around it since the beginning of it.

FC: Yeah.

JF: You know? And since then, I mean we make over two hundred products out of a tire. So we've branched out other than fishing, but I mean there's still just everything that you see that's made out of a tire on a fishing boat, is F & B. It just about is. There's a few other companies overseas that started to do stuff, but ninety-five percent of everything you see on a boat that's made out of a tire, F & B did it.

FC: Could you just sort of rattle off some of, some of the stuff? I mean I know that rollers and --

JF: Absolutely. Absolutely. We make fendering for the side rails, the top rails, and of course the decks of all the boats. We make rock-hoppers from six inch to thirty-two inch for the trawlers, we make floppy discs the same amount of sizes, that go in between the trawler discs. We make all the cookies, all the whole sweep, we make all the rubber for. All the wires, all the fathoms of wires for scallopers, draggers, everything else, is all covered with a rubber cookie. You go out on the dock today, you'll never see a cable. Because it's covered in a rubber cookie, half inch thick, that some guy has just laminated it, and stretched it on, and then wire nutted it, so it would just last ten times longer than it would, you know, just being out there, and it's a hundred percent more safer. So all the ground cable cookies have been done, and of course most importantly I think the *crème de la crème*, of my father actually patented it, is the chafing gear. A bick or a split. Which goes in around the link of the chain bag, hangs down over the rings, drags on the bottom of the ocean. That right there is probably a single best ever idea that

he ever had and it just --- because it just wears. Scallop dragger just wears. Like a ground cable cookie can just go through the water forever. And it's just going to

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wear out slowly and gently and just nicely. Where a chafing gear is like, just brutalized, so they just keep needing it. And that's what scallopers need. But it increases the catch. It saves the bag, you know it's less labor for the guy he can just concentrate on catching scallops basically. But that's certainly our flagship.

FC: Yeah.

JF: For fishing, anyway.

FC: Yep. So a lot of what you're doing, a lot of your products are protecting other gear and extending the life of that gear, is that right?

JF: Absolutely. It's protecting the boat, it's protecting the gear; it's protecting the fishermen even. You know without all this stuff you'd have all those cables just frayed. It would be, you know, a hazard there. There's dinging and danging on the sides of the boat. It's nice to see like everybody else sees a boat tied up to a dock, and there goes the winch up, and the chain bag's hanging there and everybody's there, "Hey hey hey." But now you put ten, twelve, fourteen foot seas. And the bag is swinging over this way, swinging over that way. If it's all steel, the deck's all steel, the side's all steel, there's nothing to grip it, there's nothing to stabilize it. You rubberize the inside of the wall of the boat, you rubberize a few little pads on the floor, you rubberize the net or the bag, now it kind of settles in there, it's a heck of a lot more safer, a thousand times safer, once you put the rubber on it, for the guy who is actually using it. At the dock it could be just anything, who cares?

FC: Yep, yep.

JF: But once you're out there it's never --- nice. (*laughs*)

FC: It's not always flat calm.

JF: It's not always nice, I mean you know! Anybody who goes out fishing once --- you know you go out on a good day and you look out there and you say, "Man I've never seen it like this!" You know? That's the work, because it's always a struggle.

FC: So there's a safety factor going, to this ---

JF: Humongous safety factor. It's a giant safety factor. It protects a lot of stuff, but most importantly I think it protects a lot of fishermen because you, well look at the accidents on boats back then, and look at accidents on boats today, and I would like to think, and I know for a fact, that a lot of it has to do with the rubber. It just holds things down from slipping and sliding all over the place.

FC: And so, well getting back to your start, what were you doing, what kind of jobs like when you first got involved in the business?

JF: Well, oh boy. When I first got involved in the business, my main job was making club sticks. A club stick is just a bar that hangs on the back of the net. When they pick the net up, it keeps the net flat out. When they're dragging a net, it just doesn't ball up; it keeps it flat out, the chain bag flat out. And before F & B, it was just a bar; a steel bar. Where we started putting six-inch cookies over the bar. So now we would put that rubber over the bar, which would make the bar definitely better, and operate better in the water, and would protect the bar also. So that was my main, main job. I would cut pieces of steel for the end blades, and then I would actually, when my father would send guys out to pick the tires up in the junkyard, they would also grab their springs, all the car springs. And we would cut the spring, squeeze it in a vice, weld it so it made a ring. And that would be the ring that they would connect the club stick to the chain bag. *(laughs)* We went through hundreds of thousands of car springs. And just would squeeze them in a vice, put a weld on it, slide it down, put some six inch cookies, slide it and cut another ring, put a weld on it, slide it in, put some six inch cookies, until the club stick was made. That was my main, main job. And then I got into other aspects of the building. Basically punching chafing gear, working on presses, at that time we even did wire, so splicing cable, lining wire with the cookies, I did that for ten years straight. And then I went into other stuff, that we started to get more accurate on, as far as fishing goes in Alaska and in the West coast, really really big, was giant discs, punched out of giant tires, twenty-fours, twenty-ones, twenty-sixes. Well someone got the great idea to run a pipe through them and make them twenty-eight inches long. So I did that for six years. Now that, I just hated that job. I hated that job because I was in one place all day, every day. So if I wasn't there, you knew I wasn't working. *(laughs)* So I'd be in a lot of trouble.

FC: And it was all about cranking out as many as you could.

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JF: All day, every day. That's all I ever did. We punched those twenty-ones, twenty-fours, twenty-sixes, twenty-eights, eighteens, and I laminated them on a pipe, squeeze the pipe down, welded a washer on the end, put it on a pallet, loaded the truck, bound for the west coast. All day every day for eight years. No, no questions asked. We used to even laminate rollers where he got into that instead of, because it started to get tough to get just the disc, because now we're cleaning out so many tires, that we can't find a tire big enough to get the disc. So we started punching pieces called tabs out of smaller tires, and we would laminate these tabs in a row, and squeeze them with a series of eight pistons and weld the band in the middle, and it would create a twenty-four or twenty-six. It was --- what we did here only --- people would be like, "I can't believe that you did that for a living. Because there's no way in hell I would do this. Or would think to do this." We used to have big giant shoe planers with the leather soles? And we would plane angles in it so it would come out to twenty-sixes, twenty-eights. Here we are a bunch of Portugee farmer fishermen, no engineering, no nothing. You know? Just a guy with a cutting torch and an oven, and uh, who thought of all this. You know? And I mean there was plenty of people for work back then ---

FC: Yep, yep.

JF: Who just said, "I'll do that!" No problem!"

FC: And the fishermen took to this stuff right away? I mean they could see that it was ---

JF: It fished. It fished like no tomorrow. It beat the alternative, which was nothing. You know? You went through the water and you had whatever you had for rollers. A lot of times you would have these rollers that were particle rubber made, that they started to make. They weren't going to last. A tire is a tough, tough thing. It will last. So we would outlast the competition ten times. So it was a no brainer. But there was other stuff that kind of accidentally happened, and people said, "Oh, this catches more fish with this, you know, with this or like that." So you used thinner discs, it would make a noise or a vibration, chase the fish off the bottom. And all of a sudden they would say, can I get any of these thin ones? And we started calling them floppies, so a lot of the times it was you know, like a fisherman just a regular fisherman who put the bait on the hook and he'll leave half of it off, or half of it on, and each fisherman will fish differently, well, at that time, fishermen knew everybody. They had a --- just a friendship, but you got like the coconut telegraph, you know, when you were down at Cultivator Club, or any of those little bars, that you know were just there, next to the settlement houses, these captains would all meet and say, "Hey I did this, I did that, I did this!" You needed to. You know? If you were going to survive and everybody was friends at that time. So of course my father was involved in that, and he learned a lot from them. You know?

FC: And then did so ---

JF: Before computers. (*laughs*)

FC: Yeah! Well at that time I mean, are most of the fishermen building their own nets? And ---

JF: They're doing everything.

FC: Yeah.

JF: Yeah. And you know, Reidars ---

FC: Are they coming in here and asking or you know, telling you we need such and such, or ---

JF: Oh yeah! They're coming in here, daily. You know, and saying what worked and what didn't work. Because don't forget, we're trying to do everything. We tried to cut stuff out of steel belted radial tires. And you know they're hauling up a giant Brillo pad, cutting the guys oil as he's walking by and "Woah! Don't do this anymore." So there was always somebody doing stuff but it was hands on back then. You know, there was guys that were fishing boat owners that were the fishing boat captains, and uh --- they just had everything to do with it, they were the secretaries, they were the purchasers, the sales, their everything. So they knew everything. They counted every dollar. The settlement house always kind of you know, helped

out and stuff like that but, I can remember guys like Dick Rose, and stuff they just they had their hands in. They had one boat, and they, they ran it. And that boat like especially during the '80s, that boat would run twenty-four hours a day, a lot of times. They'd go out for ten, twelve days, unload, refuel, re-ice, and go back. I remember I have a lot of, obviously

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doing what I did back then, and through the '80s and the '90s, I had a lot of, a majority of my friends were fishermen. So, I seen how quickly their life went by. Because they've spent very, very few days on land.

FC: Yeah, yeah. So, but that, for the business, that the relationship with the fishermen was a big part of it?

JF: Absolutely. Absolutely. And it was a huge business back then. Without all the regulations and stuff like that you got today, you know, it was a --- recycle rubber, crazy, crazy all the time. Where now it's this you know the boats are tied up more than their fishing.

FC: Yeah, yeah.

JF: So. We had to go look, everyday we're always looking for something else to do with a tire. So a lot of the business, we do a lot of other business with a lot of other areas now. But back then, it was one hundred percent fishing.

FC: So and now, like ---

JF: More waste energies, more, waste is like a big, big thing with us now. We make cutting edges for placed, for the buckets that go inside transfer stations, that pick up the trash and burn it and stuff, and separate trash and recyclables. We do a lot of fendering, with docks and tugs, and this type of stuff.

FC: What percentage of the business is fishing related now? If you had to guess.

JF: Fifty percent.

FC: Okay.

JF: Yeah. It's half and half.

FC: And is a lot of that scallop boats?

JF: A lot of it's scallop boats. Scallop boats, like I said, a fishing boat will make a, put a trawling net together with you know, it's all smaller discs now because of the regulations they can't fish with a twenty-one, they can only go out with a twelve or whatever, so a lot of these guys will make a net, and then that will last. You know it's only water that really raises it up, you know and same thing with the ground cable cookie, lasts a pretty good chunk, but a scalloper

digs into the rocks and everything else so that chafing gear? I mean they literally come back and say "I need more chafing gear." We're like, "Yes." Because without that, we wouldn't even be here. We would not even be here. So when they untie, whether it's March, you know they start to gear up in February, we're like, our head has been held under water since September and you know you finally are ready to just say, "I'm going to breathe in the water." You *argghh* --- February comes around and you're like "Thank God!" and they start fishing and gearing up, and it's happy days again.

FC: Yeah.

JF: You know. But.

FC: So, let's see what else I got here. So when you first started, you were talking about some of those jobs where you were at just same thing hour after hour, what kind of hours were you working?

JF: It was right back then, it was seven to five, every day. You had two fifteen minute breaks and you had a half hour lunch. And every day was seven to five. That's weird because it's like it's just a long day. It's like today you know we work eight to four. And you get an hour lunch. And you get two fifteen minute breaks. But back then it was like, man. And it was normal!

FC: Yeah.

JF: It was normal! I just think back and say, "Wow." You know?

FC: Do you ever have to work weekends then or now? Or ---

JF: Oh yeah, weekends all the time. Now it's like being in the position I'm in, I work twenty-four hours a day. But it's not just physically hydraulic fluid and welding sparks, it's the reading and billing, and calling other people to see where they are with their orders and who wants to, it's more of a --- New Bedford, but it's also west coast, it's also Nova Scotia, it's also Texas. It's everywhere now. Because we need to be everywhere to keep the people that I employ employed.

FC: So it seems like communication's a big part of it, which means computers and cell phones.

JF: Absolutely. Absolutely. And keeping up with the regulations. Who's going to need what? What are they not going to be able to use? What are they going to be able to use? You know? These things are important as everything else. To my father, no. To me, yes. Like right now I'm in here doing an interview, and where's my father? He's outside working. Because he's still like --- he still thinks like you come in here and say, "Ask the computer this,"

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and I'll know. And it's like, "Err, it's not like that."

FC: Yeah.

JF: I give him a computer, it lasts about three days.

FC: *(laughs)*

JF: It's like, "This thing ain't working anymore." I'm like, "Oof, God."

FC: So he's still involved in the business then.

JF: Every day. He still works Saturday and Sunday, every day. He punches stuff and every day he comes in, and not every day but feels like every day, "You know, could this work? Could that work?" That's the kind of mind he has. He has three patents. Legit patents. But his mind, he would have three hundred, if he just said, "Well just let's patent that." He really, really, would. It's like "Uhh."

FC: How old is he?

JF: I'm fifty so he's sixty-eight.

FC: And so what's it like working in a family business?

JF: Stressful. Stressful. I have my mother, who works as the secr --- bookkeeper, half a day, there's my father, who works here every day all day, I have my brother, who works in the pay --- as payroll, my brother-in-law, who runs the shredding department. There's so few tires nowadays that you can recycle. Because everything's a steel belted radial, everything's --- this and it never stays the same. You know you notice what would go on your car, you know like you had a thirteen inch car tire, then you had a fourteen inch car tire, then you had a fifteen inch car tire, and then you had a twenty inch car tire, and now it's a twenty-two inch and it's a metric, and now it's back down; they never makes the same tire for too long anymore, so it's always trying to innovate and stuff. There's so many tires that you just can't keep up with it, you have to shred. You know?

FC: Yeah.

JF: Well, we, like I said, I think in the last four years we've just discovered how to do sixty percent more of the tires just to recycle them.

FC: Yeah.

JF: But it's stressful with the family. It's ---

FC: So there's like five of you.

JF: Yeah.

FC: So what's the ---

JF: Easter's are fun.

FC: What? (*laughs*) What's the best thing about a family business?

JF: Well the best thing about a family business is you love the people you work with. But sometimes it's the worst thing too. You know? You've just got to, I've done it, it's the only thing I know, so it doesn't bother me.

FC: Yeah.

JF: But, it does make for some fascinating birthdays and I think you need to have birthdays and Easters and stuff if you're going to stay a family because you need to like, say, "Okay, that's not part of our work today, let's have some fun." But, we all want the same thing. And it's good that we compartmentalize every little aspect because we can't do the same thing. We all can't do the same thing. You know? It would be to no avail.

FC: Well, plus it seems like you, kind of a trust thing? If you hire somebody you'd think they may seem great but you don't really know.

JF: You don't.

FC: But with family you know.

JF: You don't really know about it, and you know it's, it's a tough business. You know what I mean? And now with all the regulations with OSHA and everything else, you've got to be on top of stuff. So like you said, you have to trust somebody to say, "Hey listen. This guy ain't doing something stupid, is he?" So there's more of us out there, more eyes and knock on wood, the last ten years we've been just great. And that's not a long time. But you know what, it is with our business because we're not, we don't go out and say, "Well, let's buy this machine to do this." Or, "you know what? They're selling this machine now," because if they did we would not be in business. Everybody would do it. So we would make every machine that we use. So sometimes these machines are like Holy moly, you see that machine? I'm not even going next to that thing. That thing needs a little bit more work. Maybe like two more years worth of work. But back then in the '70s and the '80s, who cares? You know accidents happen, nowadays everything's a lot better, a lot slower, but it can be, because nobody fishes like they used to.

FC: Yeah, yeah.

JF: So it's safer, but ---

FC: So, like every, just about every other business around here that's connected with the industry in some way, I mean, you guys have taken a hit because of the regulations.

JF: Big time. Oh, big time. You know? It's not so much even like oh the lack of fishing, it's just the lack of what you can use when you fish. It's not saying, hey look the boat can go out for ten day this year. Or whatever. It's like saying that, "Well, he can't fish this kind of gear anymore. It's got to be this size, or it's got to be this." And now it's like well what do you

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do with all this other stuff? At the end of the day I would love to turn every piece of tire into something I could sell rather than have to pay someone to break it down until it's small enough that I can shred it and pay for that. You know?

FC: Yeah.

JF: It's kind of weird, when you think about it, you know?

FC: Yeah.

JF: Tires are a big, big problem. They were and it seems like everybody kind of forgot about that. Because they're not anymore. You don't have these massive fields of tires. But if it keeps going the way it is, you know it just --- like what do they want? They got to do something, whether it's on the chip end, the fishing end, or whatever. But.

FC: Yeah.

JF: So the steel belted tires, are they limited in terms of what you can do with them? Yeah, zero fishing. Nobody wants a steel belted tire on a fishing boat. It just ain't happening. Because there's just frays of frays; anything wears out and it wears to the steel and it's just, like I said, a Brillo pad. So it can't happen.

FC: Yeah.

JF: Luckily, in the waste industry it can happen. Because it just wears --- we make those rubber cutting edges where nobody touches those anyway. It's on a machine, it's scooping up trash, that's fine. So we get rid of a lot of tires in a very, very, very clean way. Still. A lot of modern tires I should say. But we're still like, I just got a load in from Ohio, of Bias Ply OTR nylon stuff that I'm going to cut into fishing gear. You know? I'm not sure what happened, I don't know if it's Donald Trump or whatever, but I was never getting, like those bigger rock-hopper orders for the last ten years. And whether he like put something on some sort of import-export scale or something, but I'm starting to get orders like that, where they used to get those bigger tires you're you know polling the stuff to start making those things, it's like they sell them cheaper than I could, starting to get phone calls like the last six months like, I don't know.

FC: Interesting.

JF: I don't know if it's just they can't ship them in for the price they used to or whatever? But I'm starting to be competitive in that again so knock on wood, I hope that that works. Because that will help.

FC: And is that, is that sort of something that happens every once in awhile? Where you see these ups and downs of a certain product you know, is not too important and all of a sudden there's a demand for it?

JF: Not really.

FC: No?

JF: You know we always had a demand for those and I think the only thing was was like coming in from another country, I think it was always so cheap to ship it and of course the labor was so cheap, to, to make it, that they weren't just buying it off me. On the west coast, and up in Alaska those places they were just like, "Well, you know what? I'll go to Russia and get it." Or wherever else. Where now those guys are starting to call me, you know like, what's going on? I haven't quite figured it out because it's only been six months and I'm kind of just enjoying the little bits and scraps and pieces that I'm getting of that because it gets rid of those giant tires, that I would otherwise have to nibble. But it would be great to get some of that business back. As far as, you know, not as far as me making money, because making money is nice, but as far as just getting rid of that stuff in a good way, and easily. It just makes it so much easier if I can punch ten twenty-one inch discs out of it, I only have to deal with the rest of the little pieces of tire instead of dealing with the whole tire.

FC: It's a lot more handling, and ---

JF: A lot more labor, and everything else, and you know how it is nowadays, it's not like you know, minimum wage is this, and it's going to that, insurance. It takes a lot, to, to, get the -- to do it and this isn't a job that everybody wants to do. So you're not like saying, "Oh man, give me this really" --- you know, I don't want to say this or that but you get the A grade, "Oh yeah I'll go work for you." B grade, no. D grade? Well, maybe. It's that kind of work, it's just hard, it's sweaty, it's hot.

FC: Do you have a lot of turnover? Or do you have people who have been with you for awhile?

JF: You know fortunately, for me, I just have a lot of good people that's been here for awhile. Because if I had to look --- every now and then I have to hire a new person, I'm like Oh God. But the guys haven't been here for awhile but that's kind of --- they can only stay here for so long, they're all starting to get a little

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older. As I am. So, I'm like, Oh boy. We're going to have to get some young blood in here.

FC: Well that's one thing that I've been hearing a lot is that a lot of people seem to be running into is that it can't get young people interested in the work.

JF: No.

FC: I don't know what they're doing but they're ---

JF: It's nice out there! You know what I mean? You can live with your parents until you're thirty-five, (*laughs*) You know what I mean? You can go to spring break and government funded colleging and all the other stuff that I ain't aware of but yeah. It's not like when, like me, I got out of school two hours early in a vocational school just to work two weeks every other week to be here and I couldn't be happier. You know? And I had people saying, "Oh man I'd love to work, come on in! Yeah, we'll do it, we'll have a good time!" Not anymore. So that's why I say right now I got a good crew of guys but it's like --- it's always nice to have like those younger guys who push and add a little excitement and stuff but they're just not --- the ones that are out there you just don't want.

FC: Yeah. So is that something you have to worry about? Down the line?

JF: All the time. It's something that I worry about, that's, that's --- I consider that part of my job. To make sure I have a good balance out there. It's one of the things that just doesn't happen, you know?

FC: So what are your responsibilities? What do you do on a typical day?

JF: Typical day is I make sure that the orders are getting filled, the guys are doing what they should be doing, in the order that the people called in. You know, like I was just talking to you before, fisherman calls, he never says, "Two months from now I want this, Jeff." He's like, "Oh my God, I can't believe they let me go fishing today, do you have this." And I only have this much time to do it. And it's, whether it's their fault or a regulation or they opened up a new spot, whatever it is, it's always they want it today. So I have to make sure that those guys get taken care of but the guys who were saying, "Hey listen two months from now," get taken care of. And I have make sure that the right product is coming in to the building at the time that I need it. So I got a lot of guys that say, "Hey Jeff, I have these tires." I say, "Hold off." I got these tires coming. Because I have this order that I need to fulfill. I actually buy tires now. Not whole tires, but I buy pieces of tires just to fulfill certain orders to help me keep up with the boats that need to go out right away and this and that and everything else.

FC: So are you, do you have an inventory of product or pretty much, you know, making it as you need it to fill an order?

JF: Yeah. I get an inventory in the fall and the winter. And then the inventory's gone. By the time the boats untie in March and stuff, I'm basically making it as they need it. Because nylon tires just aren't around. You look at your tires that you ride in your car, you look at the tires on the truck parked next to you, it's all steel belted radial. So a nylon tire, has to hunt down. Georgia. Louisiana. Indiana. Idaho. Denver. I had a guy just leave me a message, he's

in Colorado. You know what I mean? He found some. And then wheel and deal with the truckers so it's not like, "Oh yeah, bring me in all your tires," and I can just keep up with it. Not with the fishing. You have to really hunt it down. So, I can surplus some of the tires, but most of the time, I'm just winging it by the seat of my pants, trying to get whatever I can get for whatever I can get it for and still make a dollar. A lot of times I just break even. Because it's just payroll, everything else.

FC: And you want to keep that customer.

JF: Got to keep the customer happy, got to keep the fishermen happy, you know what I mean? Got to keep everybody, got to keep the employees happy. Like you said, it's a family owned business so --- my employees are my family also. So it's like everybody's got to do it, it's not like probably people think. It's not like, "Geez, Jeff's making all this money and putting it in a Mason jar and burying them out there." No. No. Jeff's just keeping his family busy, and the -- - you know, busy is pretty much it. *(laughs)*

FC: Yeah, yeah.

JF: The kids happy and like their --- the kids, I don't even have them really working for me. They've worked for me, but they, and they know what I do and how to do it, but they're all in college, you know, learning something else.

FC: Would you want them to get into the business?

JF: I would love them to but it's just, you know, how long is it going to last? How long is everything going to last? Who knows?

[40:00]

Government pork is where it's at almost nowadays. I hate to say it, but it's like you love your kids so you're like, "Hold on second, you need to get ready to do something and have yourself taken care of." Where me, it was like, Oh, you know, I'll do this, I'm having fun, and I'm doing this, and I'm hanging around with these guys, and it's a good time, and all of a sudden it started to get slower and slower so I'm in the quicksand. I got to --- I'm in it. I'm not over there, out of it. So I'm in it, and this is where I am, and I'm probably going to be in it for the rest of my life. So. Don't come next to me! *(laughs)*

FC: Yeah. So you really sort of encouraged them to do something else?

JF: Absolutely. Absolutely. You know, it's --- fishing is everything to my family and everything else, but it's just tie --- unfortunately, tires and fishing, how much more tires there, how much more of this is there?

FC: Yeah, yeah.

JF: Will there always be fishing? Yeah. But you know, I don't know, you look out there every day, you're like a handful of guys making all the money, and --- just not like they used to be. Spread around. Everybody's poor, or everybody's rich, it's just not that way anymore.

FC: What's the toughest thing about your job?

JF: The toughest thing about my job is just finding the rubber. Finding the rubber. You know -- - and selling it. I got like right now, it's kind of like I call it the dog days of summer, where it used to be like three weeks or whatever, four weeks, but I've been in it for two months. I have a surplus of stuff out there for fishing gear. They're just not fishing. I don't know, the regulations are tougher on fishing boats than they are on scallopers, and scallopers have still got it pretty tough right now. But they really hammer the fishing boats. I just don't sell ground cable cookies like I used to, and they're just out there. So I'm making phone calls, and trying to sell them, and it's just a stressful --- who wants to call up somebody and say, "Hey listen, do you need me anymore of these?" And they're like, "Oh Jeff I wish. I just don't."

FC: Yeah.

JF: So now you're like, okay, let me try to do things that are making me money and which is pretty much right now not fishing. It's the waste energy services and stuff like that. For the --- knock on wood, for the last eight years it's been a pretty good balance. Like I was saying, just when my head's under water, and I breathe water, waste energy's there. Fishing's there. Waste energy's there. Fishing's there. But.

FC: So not --- you're not dependent on just one thing. You got some different areas ---

JF: I can't depend on fishing. There's no way in hell I can depend on fishing. Not anymore. I love it. It's where my heart is, the root of the business, it's a lot of what we do, and it's really what we love, because the fishing, it's right there. It's right behind me. There's --- the waste industry is awesome, the guy's in Amarillo, you know what I mean? And it's a computer that sends money. It's not even a thing. Oh you know, the computer sends it. Where it's Tor, or Peter down at dockside, or wherever, Joe, at Ship Supply. These are guys that I've just known my whole life, I see them in the restaurant when I go out for dinner, I see them at the gas station, "Hey Jeff." That's what I like. So. If it could be like that forever, oh man, I'd love it. But I don't know (*laughs*). I don't know.

FC: Well, I should let you get back to work, so is there anything else you would want to add here that we didn't cover or anything you can think of?

JF: No. I think we just covered it all. It's a --- I don't know, it's just like that. You've heard these stories forever throughout history, and hopefully it just stays. It's very, very important to New Bedford. I do know that. It's a port. And around the country and around the world, I'm sure, but I'm one little guy doing tires. There's fish houses, there's ice things, there's just so many trucking outfits, there's so many people, if you just marked a dot where everybody does something, that helps fishing in New Bedford, Mattapoisett, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, it'd be like

"Whoosh!" You would see, I'm sure you would. So if the fishing goes. It's bad, bad news. For a lot of people.

[45:00]

FC: Yeah, yeah.

JF: Hopefully with the regulations, who knows?

FC: Yeah.

JF: They could be right. (*laughs*) I don't know.

FC: Well, let's ---

[45:12] End of audio.