



# NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: March 22, 2017

## Gundersen, Gunnar ~ Oral History Interview

Fred Calabretta

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## **Background**

**Name of person interviewed:** Gunnar Johann Gundersen [GG]

### **Facts about this person:**

Age 37

Sex Male

Occupation Owner/Manager, Scandia Marine Services

Residence Fairhaven, Massachusetts

Ethnic background Norwegian

**Interviewer:** Fred Calabretta [FC]

**Transcriber:** Michelle Murray [MM]

**Interview location:** Scandia Marine Services, Fairhaven, Massachusetts

**Date of interview:** March 22, 2017

### **Key Words**

Boat propellers, hydraulics, boats, fishing boats, marine services, fishing industry, New Bedford waterfront, Fairhaven waterfront, working waterfront, family owned business, welding, winches, hydraulic-driven winches, Norwegian immigrants.

### **Abstract**

Gunnar Gundersen describes his work as the head of Scandia Propeller Services and Supply, Inc. located in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. Scandia works on marine propellers and hydraulics. Gunnar is thirty-seven years old and is a third generation worker in this family-owned business. His great-grandfather immigrated to the United States from Norway and founded the company in 1961. He has been working at the company since he was sixteen years old. His father recently retired from the day-to-day business operations and Gunnar has stepped in and now heads the company. He is very proud of his Norwegian heritage and has a strong work ethic and deep desire to keep his company moving forward. He speaks about the sense of history and community that is present on the working waterfronts of New Bedford and Fairhaven. He talks about the operation of the business and the pros and cons of working in a family-owned company. His job isn't just work for him because he considers it a career that he's invested time and training in and he loves it. He's determined to show that the third-generation of a family owned business can succeed. He enjoys the support of his family and their presence in the company.

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[00:00] Gunnar speaks about Scandia (short for Scandanavian), the family owned company started by his Norwegian immigrant grandfather in 1961. His great-grandfather came to the United States prior to that as a fisherman. Gunnar loves to hear stories from the waterfront community about his great-grandfather and grandfather. He loves being in the business and working around boats for a living. The company services boat propellers and marine hydraulics.

[05:00] Gunnar talks about how his father Johann Gundersen has recently retired from the day-to-day operations of the business. Gunnar started working for the company when he was sixteen. He had small jobs at first and then was later trained in the propeller shop. He then trained in the hydraulics department. Just because he was the owner's son, he wasn't shown any preferential treatment and had to learn the trade hands-on. He has learned a lot from his father and his co-workers at the shop. He was taught a lot by his grandfather who even at a very young age taught Gunnar how to swing a hammer and work on projects around home.

[10:00] Gunnar talks about how a lot of his work involves supporting his staff and purchasing inventory, dealing with customers, scheduling jobs. Even though he's in charge, he's still "low man on the totem pole" because the guys have many years of experience and he respects their knowledge and skill. His sister also helps out at the business. He talks about what it's like being in a family owned business. He also speaks about his travels to Norway and other countries and the perspective it's given him. He's proud of his Norwegian heritage and it's traditions because it contributes to a community feeling on the waterfront. His family lives in an area of Fairhaven he calls the "Norwegian Ghetto."

[15:00] He next speaks about how his role has changed over the years from the dirty, odd jobs assigned to him when he was a kid to what his responsibilities are today. He has a strong work ethic and the company prides itself on strong customer service. Gunnar talks about the company's busy times of the year and how they gear up to work on fishing vessels and other boats. Fishermen need to get their boats worked on quickly so they can get back out on the water and he talks about dealing with stressed out fishing boat owners.

[20:00] Gunnar talks about how dealing with people involves about half of his time at work. He talks about the pressure in commercial fishing and how he works hard to get fishing boats finished and back out. He's proud to support the New Bedford seafood industry. About 75% of the company's business is work done on fishing boats. He likes to purchase stock from local vendors or smaller-sized companies.

[25:00] He talks about how important it is to build good and long-lasting relationships with his suppliers. The business is split about 50-50 on work done on props versus hydraulics. He describes what a somewhat typical day is like for him on the job.

[30:00] Gunnar continues to discuss the things he typically does at his job such as scheduling the work. He feels like he's a "fortune teller" sometimes because he tries to be prepared for what may be coming up next, to have stock on hand, etc. Sometimes he and his employees work inside the shop and they also do installations right on the boats. An employee will travel outside

the area to work on boats for customers. He talks about how a boat doesn't always have to be hauled out of the water for them to work on the propellers. His customers will use their smart phones to send photos and this helps him to trouble-shoot. He's trying to modernize to "work smarter, not harder."

[35:00] Gunnar talks about typical break and lunchtime hours for himself and his crew. The official work hours are 7:30-4:00 but he usually works much longer hours to stay until work gets done. He offers his workers overtime. Gunnar finishes his paperwork and billing and then changes into his uniform to work with his guys. Because the job can be very dirty, he supplies a uniform to his employees and includes a cleaning service for the uniforms.

[40:00] Gunnar thinks that uniforms look more professional. He enjoys working out in the field with the tools and likes it better than working in the office. Outside is less stressful and the day goes by faster. The crew enjoys listening to all different types of music while they work. He talks about the number of full-time employees and how his mom used to work for the company but is now retired. She trained her daughter to take over her job and Gunnar's niece works in the office to earn extra money.

[45:00] He talks about what it's like to have his niece work for the company and how he feels good that he's teaching her a work ethic and how to work for what she wants. In addition to his sister working there, she has started taking nursing classes. She gets to put her new skills to use when anyone on the crew suffers minor cuts. His business has a community feel where friends and former employees stop by often. He doesn't feel the need to temper any language just because females (sister and niece) are in the shop. At this point, Gunnar's father Johann Gundersen joins the discussion.

[50:00] Johann Gundersen relates an anecdote about "foul language" from when Gunnar was a young kid. Gunnar concludes the interview with a discussion of his style of being the boss and that he's laid back just like his father was. He comments that this type of work is great for the next generation. They get to work on some really interesting projects. He's willing to train the right people but you can't train work ethic. He hopes to find people who are willing to work hard.

[55:13] End of audio

## Interview

[00:00]

Fred Calabretta: Today is March 22, 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 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'm Fred Calabretta and today I'm speaking with Gunnar Gundersen at Scandia Marine Services in Fairhaven. Do you give us your permission to record this?

Gunnar Gundersen: Yes I do.

FC: Okay. Just a start. If you could just give your full name.

GG: My name is Gunnar Johann Gundersen and I've been working in this industry for as long as I can remember. A family business. My grandfather founded the company. He was an immigrant from Norway so we're keeping the tradition and his name proud.

FC: And your date of birth so we have it?

GG: Mine is 6/10/80.

FC: And where were you born?

GG: I was born here in New Bedford.

FC: Okay. And grew up around here?

GG: I grew up around here but I did a lot of traveling. It made me appreciate being home.

FC: Okay. Could you talk a little bit about your family background and where they're from and how long they've been in this area and that kind of thing?

GG: Sure. We've been in this area for generations. My great-grandfather came over from Norway to fish in the area. So, the family lived in Norway while he was fishing here but during the occupation in Norway, my great-grandfather was here so my grandfather decided it was time to take the family and move to the States. As a forty year-old man, he decided to uproot everything and live the American dream.

FC: When would that have been about?

GG: I want to say the 1940s, '50s. '50s I want to say, maybe? So my dad - he was born in Norway, came here when he was young. He was still a kid so he speaks Norwegian like a little child some days. Which is great because he has the old world dialect still. So they still have it from when they left, they still speak that Norwegian. We keep our heritage, our culture, as much involved in what we do. We are named Scandia which is short for Scandinavian. My grandfather thought that was a great way to incorporate his heritage into his new area of where he's living. I also have, share his name. His name was Gunnar Gundersen. My great-grandfather was Johann Gundersen. My father's name is Johann. So there's a lineage of going back generations with the name, and working on the waterfront. So I always loved to hear stories from when people either worked with my grandfather or my father and something about the community and how their father worked with my father, their father and father before that. So it's great to hear the history and stories that I might not have always known or heard from. I don't know many places that you can work and have these stories be told to you. The waterfront always has a story.

FC: Sounds like you appreciate that part of it.

GG: Yeah. I love the history. The history of the waterfront, especially in this area, is pretty entertaining and there's always something. There's - we're fighters in the area. We're going to always do what we need to do to survive. And that's... there's a lot of respect that you can give a lot and take. We're learning what to do keep going. I want to keep the business running. Keep everybody happy, working and you know - it's a great job because we get to work on boats for a living. We work on toys and different things and we really enjoy what we do. We get to do stuff that you don't go to school for. You might go to school to learn how to weld and to learn how to machine and when you start putting all that together - that's really what we do here. And that's where we have a lot of fun is taking bits and pieces.

FC: And it was your grandfather who started the business?

GG: My grandfather started the business in 1961. This was a propeller shop before that. So he incorporated the propellers and brought over hydraulics for the fishing boats. It was something they had used in Norway, so they were starting to do here. So he put on one of the first winches, hydraulic-driven winches, on a boat here. So it was great to know the history that my grandfather helped put some of this together. So of course, I want to do him proud. Having his name - when I introduce myself I always introduce myself as Gunnar, which is my grandfather's name. So having that aspect - I always want to make sure I'm keeping him proud.

FC: The business has always been at this location?

GG: Always at this location, yup. Even the bricks here, they're from - they're recycled from old mills in the New Bedford side.

[05:00]

The bricks are two, three hundred years old. They must have stories. If they could talk, there'd be some great stories coming out of these. And this is why we really love where we are and what we do.

FC: And your father was also involved in the business?

GG: Johann, yup. He's recently retired. But as most of the people on the waterfront, when you retire you don't go away. You might go travel a lot but you still tend to come by, check out, see how we're doing, see if he can help me out anywhere, anyway, anyhow. I'm sure he'll be in later today just to come peek in and say, "Hey! Do you need help with anything? Is anything I can do?" When you retire, you don't really leave. You still come by, talk to people, see people. It's almost like a drug where you don't - it's tough to get it out of your system. You want to go back. You're used to doing stuff everyday. You're used to being busy working five, six, seven days a week. It's a different change when you retire. You're not ready for that. I've noticed that.

FC: It must be helpful to you too because - you know he's been around it for so long and he knows the tricks.

GG: Oh yeah. He knows the tricks. He has a lot of knowledge that I'm trying to take out of his head. I'm trying to learn everything I can and there's stuff that I know that he doesn't. But the stuff that he knows that I don't is really what I'm trying to learn. We have different strengths with us so I'm picking up as much of what I can from him while I can. [Johann Gundersen walks in] Oh speak of the devil. Hi Dad!

FC: How are ya?

FC: So when did you first get involved in the business? As a kid?

GG: I've always kind of been involved. I was afforded the luxury of doing what I wanted. I could go work for somebody else. But I realized early on in life that having a boss that wasn't my father wasn't something I was interested in. Being able to work for your self is definitely the way I wanted to go. I been working here officially since I was sixteen years old. As soon as I got my drivers license, they put me to work. I mean I did learn to drive a forklift before I was sixteen so, you know, I was always the kid around the shop. After school, I would stop by if I didn't have sports or on the weekends just to help out, sweep up, do little things like that. It's nice that my oldest niece has been doing that. She comes in on the weekends. If she wants a game or if she wants to do something or...we encourage her to, you know, work a little bit at it. And then you can build up money. But you're going to have to work for it.

FC: How old is she?

GG: She's thirteen.

FC: So do you really think this might be something that she'll get into or help out with?

GG: Well, she likes to help out in the office and stuff like that. But it's more teaching her a work ethic. We want to make sure that if there's something that she wants, that she knows how to work towards that as a goal.

FC: So you said you started just helping out a little bit when you were maybe sixteen or something but then how did you learn, continuing on from there?

GG: I got thrown to the wolves. My father said, "Alright. Here's my son. Couple years you're going to be with John in the prop shop. Learn how to do props and then we're going to throw you with Jim and learn the hydraulics." So, I wasn't able to just say, "Daddy, daddy, daddy - can I do this?" It was, "John, how do I do this?" So my dad was able to run the company while I was learning from the guys. Which, it's great because now I've got somebody else's perspective on how to do the project, how to do it a different way. My father taught me the way he knows how to do it. So now it's great to have another view; maybe something that he doesn't know or maybe something that the guys learned over the years. It was kind of almost like an updated - like I'm learning as I go and I'm learning with the guys. So now fifteen years later, my prop guy's on vacation, I can jump in and do props without needing him. My hydraulics guys - we stay late. We do extra projects. I mean we get involved with some fun little projects and my goal is to keep our name out there so when somebody has an issue or something that we can help with, we can help them when they need it.

FC: And when you first started spending time here, was your grandfather still involved too?

GG: Oh yeah. My grandfather was still involved. Every summer I would always do a project with him - whether it was at the house or here at the shop. He taught me how to swing a hammer at five years old. So he made sure I knew how to use my hands. I knew how to build stuff. He was always working on something whether it was the house, the yard, building something for someone. It was something that kind of got ingrained in me at an early age. So swinging a hammer at five years old, you know, when you get to be fifteen all of a sudden you can really swing a hammer pretty well. All the guys on the prop side said, "We're all getting a little older and like - oh a young kid

[10:00]

who can swing a hammer? We've got a job for you." So it was great that they didn't treat me any different. They started me at the bottom and I had to earn their respect to get to where I am today.

FC: That's interesting. My father was a building contractor and carpenter and stuff like that. I always thought if you're the boss's son, there's some good things about it but sometimes it's not as easy, you know?

GG: It's not as easy but if you work really hard at it, and you get the respect from the guys, the transition can actually be a lot easier than you expect. The guys - when...recently we went through the transition for my father handing over the day-to-day activities - the guys didn't have one issue with it, didn't have any problems with it and rely on me for certain things, certain stuff



that they're looking for. I do a lot of the shopping, the purchasing, on top of running the day-to-day, running the office, doing as much as I can. I figure even if I am where I am, I'm still the low man on the totem pole. Everything needs to get done. If I don't have somebody that can do it, I have to do it. So in a way I need to learn everything...I need to know everything. But it's great to have the family around too. My sister comes in and helps out as much as she can - while she can, when she can. My father, who just pops in magically, comes in as much as he can, when he can. So it's great to have the family and the support of everybody here.

FC: What are the best things about working in a family business? You've mentioned some of it...

GG: Well working with the family is one of the best and the worst. But for me, it was having the option to do what I wanted to do. I could've gone and got a job somewhere else. I could've gone - done this. But to me it's great to...every day I get to see my family. I come in to work I see them. We talk on the phone, we text; usually, I talk to everybody once a day - at least once a day. So having that aspect is great because now you know everything that's going on in the family. You're in constant communication. Another thing that I love about what we do here is that my guys - my guys are great. They've been here - I think the newest employee has been here twenty-seven years. So these guys really know what they're doing and it affords me a luxury of I don't need to watch over them so much. I can let them do what they need to do and they don't have me hovering over them. Which, you know as a worker, I appreciate that when the boss doesn't hover. So switching into the new role, it was one of the things that I took with me.

FC: What are the tough things about working in a family business, or challenges maybe?

GG: Umm. There's good days and bad days. You know, if you get into an argument because my sister is here...there can be days where we might not see eye-to-eye on something. And we make sure that work is work, life is life. So there's always that balance. There's always a constant balance with that. I mean working on the waterfront, working for yourself, having your own place. My father always told me, "It's not about how much vacation you accumulate, because you're not going to use it all. You work as much as you can and when you're afforded the time that you can free up time to go on vacation, that's when you take your vacation." I've always wondered how my grandfather was able to take months away. I'm still trying to figure that aspect out. He would - he made sure that his - he took the family to Norway, to a few different places. We traveled as much as we could when we were younger which really gave me a great perspective on a lot of things in life.

FC: So you've been back to Norway?

GG: We used to go every few years - every three to five years. But honestly, I haven't been in over ten years. All my cousins are asking and begging and pleading. My sister should be going back this year. That's her goal is to go back this summer.

FC: So you had a pretty strong connection to the - to your family traditions and to Norwegian culture and all that?

GG: Exactly. That's part of the community feel here on the waterfront. We live in a little part called the Norwegian Ghetto. Where we grew up - where my parents live - probably half the people in that neighborhood are from the same island in Norway as my father. So, it's nice because we have a little transport of Norway. There's also Portugal. We have a big Portuguese culture down here. And Cape Verdean. And these are all places I've visited in my travels to see where everybody kind of came from, to see what's it's like back home versus here in the States. Because as you know, this country versus like Cape Verde, Cape Verde is a third world country. We take for granted a lot of the stuff that we have here versus there. But they're always updating and they're modernizing and the way that the people react there,

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is something you don't get here. They'll give you the shirt off their back. They're so friendly and so outgoing and sometimes you can just - every time you travel to take a little bit of what you saw and where you were from back home with you. So it's great to see how our area is multicultural and very diverse. And I think that has a lot to do with the fishing, with people coming over for a better opportunity.

FC: You talked about it a little bit, but how has your role changed in the business over the years?

GG: Umm. Started from the bottom. I started as - I would sweep and do the dirty, dirty jobs and I never complained. If I had to work twelve, fourteen hours a day, that's what you had to do. We had to do what we had to do to get the job done. So for me, it's...you learn quickly about work ethic. Not everybody has strong work ethic, but I think that's something that was passed on from generations of my family doing this. So, we have a tendency to - I like to say that here at Scandia, that it's our service that puts us above and beyond others. We go out of our way to help. If somebody can't make it Monday through Friday, I'll meet them here Saturday. Just to make sure they can sit down talk with me about a project that they're working on. Because if they don't feel comfortable about the project, I don't think my service is going to provide anything extra to them. So I want to make sure that they feel comfortable being out on the boats.

FC: So when you were a sixteen or seventeen year-old kid were there nice summer days where you're thinking, "Boy I'd really like to be...?"

GG: Constantly. Constantly. I was a kid and I grew up two blocks from the beach. I would rather be spending my time at the beach. But up until fifteen I was afforded that. I could go to the beach. I'd spend all day at the beach. I'd spend summers at the beach. I would be very tan and you know, I love the beach life, which probably is why I love boating. So, it was kind of that point where you get to where you're like, "Well, I think it's time that I got to start learning my career." Because I don't call it a job - it's a career. Something that you invest time, you invest resources in and you know, a job - some people hate their job. You don't really hate your career. Most people love their career because there's a reason they got into it. So, with that - that's...I wanted to make sure that with this being what I was going to do for the rest of my life, that I was on top of everything. That what I was learning was going to be something that stuck with me. And you know, we do miss the summer days. That's what vacation's for. Sometimes you just - I

need a day off here and there. So, we're afforded that. We can do that. You just have to work a little extra harder some days.

FC: Is there a busier season or time of year where you really can't get away when things are really jumping out there?

GG: Yeah, there is. Usually spring and fall; when they're putting the boats in, taking the boats out. But since we do a lot of work with the fishing community, they go all year. So they're constantly breaking things or hitting things or just - they need to fix something, adapt something. They have an idea that this might make it a little more efficient. So we try to schedule out things where if it's like a winter project, we want to make that when they have their downtime, that we can do that project. Because once - in the fishing community - once that clock starts ticking, it doesn't stop. They need to have everything done right away. They need to have everything. So we kind of prepare for that as much as possible where we get everything done for that time. So when something does come up, we can jump on it quick and get them back out fishing. Because if they're not making money, they're not supporting the local community. And our job is to make sure that everybody else can keep going, keep making money. Because if they can't make money, they can't pay their bills. Then nobody in the area gets paid. So we want to make sure that everybody's out there and you know - we're not asking for people to make millions and millions of dollars, but everybody needs to make enough to live off of.

FC: You have to deal with deadlines and pressure...

GG: Oh, constantly.

FC: Because when their boat's down, they want to get back out there.

GG: And then you have to deal with an angry fisherman. I'm sure everybody's - a lot of people have heard stories of how friendly and non-swearing the fishermen can be. So, when you have somebody that's very agitated and aggressive, one thing that you have to learn to do is not let your temperament, your...you don't bounce back anger with anger. You sit there and um, my father taught me this very well because he has a customer who was known for being very gruff. And ah,

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he'd love to come and talk to my dad, because he would always calm him - my dad would calm him down constantly. And he called him his psychiatrist. [gruff voice] "I got to see the psychiatrist...argggh." And he would just come in with the worst, rough, gruff, swearing every other word...by the time he left, he was happy-go-lucky. It was night and day change. So, we're kind of used to dealing with that. And it's - you got to - we put it as, we try to tell them that we're trying to help them get back out. We're doing everything that we can to get them back fixed and going so that they can make money. We understand that, if something happens we try to keep everybody involved as much as possible but if something happens, we want to make sure that they understand. We're doing our best to help them. Sometimes, it's unrealistic expectations. So we have to temper that. But our goal is to make - get everybody going as quick as possible when

the season's started. So we try to do maintenance beforehand so that when the season comes, they can get out there. They can do what they need to do. That we're not holding them up.

FC: That dealing with people part of it, is an important part of the work then?

GG: Oh it's half the job. And that's where I found where most of my time is spent now. I used to be in the field, now I moved into the office. And I found that I'm dealing with the people more - talking people off the ledge, helping people. There's always...there's wheeling and dealing. There's always something that somebody's trying to get my attention whether they need a prop or they need a hydraulic fixed. Like Chris came in, he's actually a telephone guy, he's putting together a truck to be able to go from job to job to do the wires to the building. So he put in our phone system and asked one day, "Hey, do you guys do this and this?" So just randomly talking and he bought a truck over the summer - I mean over the winter - and now we're rehabbing it with him. So, we try to help out as many people as we can because they've helped us out. And that's the community feel that we like to keep going here.

FC: One thing I wondered about, getting back to the fishermen, is the regulations have changed things a lot, and it seems like that adds pressure because now they might have a lot of days they can't go out and so again, if they've got boat problems....

GG: Yep. Yep. Overnighting a \$4,000 pump is not unheard of. So we try to make sure, we try as much as we can to have everything ready before season. If we see anything that could break down or if we notice anything during routine inspections. But there's always something that comes up. There's always, you know, you can go out there and you can wrap a line in your wheel and break it or break the shaft. So we kind of always have to be on our toes, ready for anything. And as soon we get that call, we have to learn to jump right on it. And you know, there are some things that we can do - we can spend a little time and we can push off a little bit and there's some things that need to get done right away. So we - my job is to distinguish who can we fit in first, who can we push maybe a day later. With the commercial fishing we try our best to get them out as quick as possible. They make a living off of it plus they're feeding a lot of people. New Bedford is great where we find the seafood everywhere. I was in Vegas last year. Right on the menu, in a very high-end restaurant, says "New Bedford Sea Scallops." I almost had a heart attack when I saw the price, but you know, I was like, "Oh, I've got to try it." They brought out five little scallops and I said, "Where's the rest of it?" But um...

FC: You saw the price and you knew what the guys were getting around here.

GG: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

FC: Bringing them in.

GG: Bringing them in. Yup. Yup. But it was great to see that it actually called out: New Bedford sea scallops. I'm on the other side of the country. Things like that make me proud for the industry that we're in.

FC: How much of your work is on fishing boats? Most of it would you say, or...?

GG: [addresses Johann Gundersen] What would you say Dad, 75 percent?

Johann Gundersen: [in background] Yeah, about that.

GG: I'd say about 75percent.

FC: That's a big part of it.

GG: Oh yeah.

FC: Do you stock things like props and bearings and everything or do you get it locally when you need it?

GG: Um. We try to stock as much as we can but there's so much stuff that it's hard to stock everything. So we stock as much as we can. If we don't stock it, we first try our local vendors. We have great connections with a lot of the local people. So we want to keep as much local. If we can't, we usually try to find either the smaller businesses or we want to always try to stay as local and small as possible

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because if there's...if we need technical advice or technical data, if you got to deal with some of these bigger companies like Parker, you get the run-around: "Oh, let me pass you off to him. Let me pass you off to her. Let me keep passing you off." Where these smaller companies - these are still big companies but they are still a little bit on the smaller side - where we call and need technical advice, they pass us to the person that we need and we can actually go over some stuff. And there are times that they don't even have the answer that we need, but they can find the answer we need. So having a great network of vendors and suppliers both local and international - that's something that we pride ourselves in and it's the product ourselves. We want to stand behind our product as much as possible. We try to find vendors who stand behind their product so if there's a problem, I know that I can go to my vendor and say, "Look. I'm having an issue with this," or, "This happened. Is there something we can do?" Most of the time there is. So it's great to have a really good - I guess really good vendors, really good relationships with them and long relationships with them.

FC: That counts for a lot because if you need something, you're hoping they can help you out.

GG: Sometimes you need to pull a favor, you know? Then they understand that. They'll do the best that they can. You know, sometimes we understand that we're dealing in unrealistic expectations half the time. And my job is to get them to a realistic expectations. And even sometimes we surprise ourselves.

FC: How much of the work is prop related and how much hydraulics? Is it fifty-fifty maybe?

GG: Almost fifty-fifty. The props - it's like um...it's almost like two companies. My prop guy is great. He's got thirty years of knowing how to twist and turn the props and what happens if we do certain things to certain props. If one's humming and one's singing how we can change it so that they don't anymore. I've just...I can rely on him to schedule himself. He knows when the fishermen need to get their props done versus when the weekenders, the people that like to enjoy their boat. Now I don't want to say that we don't work as hard for them as possible either, but we do. We want them to go and enjoy the boat because they work hard. They want to enjoy their free time. So they, you know, when they have a weekend that they want to go on their boat, they can be as fun as the fishermen and because they want to enjoy their time on their boat and they deserve it. So we try to make sure that during the season that we're kind of gung-ho to make sure that everybody can go and enjoy themselves, or go and work. So we try to pride ourselves. Like right now we are ramping up for the season. We are trying to finish up all the winter projects so that we can start scheduling the spring and summer projects. It's kind of that time of year where it's about to kind of go crazy where people needing stuff and unrealistic expectations. So we find if we can be ready for them, it's easier to tackle. You know, we can, we can move things around and we can say, "We might not be able to get it for Wednesday, but we'll have it for Friday so you can put it in." And, you know, keeping an open dialogue with everybody. They can talk to the shipyard or we can talk to the shipyard and if we can usually move something around and kind of keep everybody, maybe not super happy, but keep everybody realistically happy.

FC: What would be a typical day for you if there's any such a thing? Say things get busier a few weeks from now - spring's here - you know, from start to finish coming in in the morning...

GG: Yeah. I like to come in 7:30ish. That's about...I have one guy who comes in really early so he kind of gets the shop running. Fishermen don't have a normal nine-to-five schedule. They work anytime, anywhere, anyhow. Having a guy here early in the morning is great because sometimes they come in and need to pick up a part. So being that we can open early with John, makes my life easier [telephone rings in background] so I can come in at 7:30. As soon as I come in, I usually have some paperwork on my desk ready for me to review for the day's projects. I go out there and I look around to see what's come in, what needs to get finished up. I try to talk to my guys about what they're working on, what they have in line, what's next. If I get a call, can we move - maybe do this shaft before we do this shaft. There's kind of constant open dialogue with everybody because I find constant communication, finding out what we have in the pipeline, makes it a little easier to be able to move things around if and when we need to.

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A lot of my day is also - the guys have a question or they need to order a part they don't always have the time to order the part so they'll say, "Hey, I need this." My job is to find out what they need, make sure it's the part they need, order it, get it here for the time that they need. There's other times where they just tell me, "Oh, call this customer back and let me know what they want." So I'll call them and then it turns into a fabrication project. So now I need to figure out what we need to do for this fabrication project - what we need for parts, if there's any math I need to figure out, do I need to figure out any geometry. There's all sorts of different projects that we've gotten involved in that there's math that I never thought I'd use again and I'm constantly using it. I'm glad I'm good at math so that it comes a little easier for me. But it's...we try to

stay as able to move around as possible. We want to be as fluid as possible. So that, you know, we want to make it look easy almost so that when our customer comes to us, that they can - that they won't be uptight and high-strung. We can try to ease their pain and ease their stress. And that's where we really pride ourselves on is that we go above and beyond to make sure that we can really help out in the community.

FC: And part of that comes back to what you were saying before about you've got to be part psychiatrist too.

GG: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And a fortune-teller. You've got to read into the future too. A lot of my day is: What are my guys going to need? What projects are coming up? Can I order something ahead of time? I've got to order these things. Is there anything that I can see coming up that I can put in with the order so that we can have it here so when my guys are ready to work on it, everything's here, ready? So, that's a lot of fun involved in that trying to be a fortune reader and just see what the future holds.

FC: It seems like a lot of the work is almost like a two part operation because everything that goes on here and any fabrication that you have to do but then there's the install, right?

GG: Oh yeah. Yep. There's the in-house and on-boat. So we have one guy who is always going on the boat to fix stuff. It's winter - some days are really cold. We don't always want to be outside and I can understand that. My guys are not going to complain about having to work outside if it's snowy or anything. But there are some days you don't want to be outside in the thirty-two degrees. And I get that, so we make sure that they have stuff in-house to do too. But there is a lot of in and out-of-the-house, so it's great to have guys inside the shop and outside the shop that can go and do different things. One of my guys, I mean we've sent to Puerto Rico, we've sent him down south, we've sent him to New Jersey. Every year he's in the Cape, P-Town [Provincetown] like he's...we send him all over the place. He's not one that likes to sit still. So he really enjoys being able to go different places, see different things, and do the work.

FC: Is it fair to say that you know maybe a lot of the hydraulic work could happen when the boat's in the water, but for the prop work, the boat's got to be hauled?

GG: It doesn't always have to be hauled. We've had people take their props off under water. It makes it a little easier, especially if it's like a Kort nozzle or if they need a visual inspection before to take the boat out. We're lucky that the shipyard - we have a shipyard right across the street. We actually have another one right down the street too. So we're afforded some luxuries with that. iPhones and smart phones - they've...this is one thing that I've used a lot that I've kind of taken and modernized here. People can send me a picture. We can zoom in - it's amazing what we can do with these smart phones. Fishermen use these phones all the time. Some of them use them as a plotter. Some of them use them if they're close enough to shore they can actually...these are so accurate that they can use it to show where there boat is and what they've done. It's amazing. We're trying to use the equipment that we have. For them, it's easy to send a text to me and be like, "Hey - this is broken." Or, "Something doesn't look right. I'm going to take a picture of it to you. You tell me." We can zoom in. I can have them take a different view, different angle. But it's an easier way for us...we just don't have to go to the boat or we just

don't have them take it off for no reason. We can actually visually see something over the phone. So we're trying to modernize with some of these things too, but it's...again it's...we think of stuff that - how do we make it easier? My grandfather always said, "Work smarter, not harder."

FC: Do you have to work with divers at all on props?

GG: Oh we have a few divers - a few friends - we call them that we have faith in their diving abilities and what they've done. So we do. We have people that we recommend.

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Just like shipyards that we recommend. Just like electricians. If we can't do it, usually we will know somebody who can do it. We know what we do. We know what other people can do in the industry, so we try to keep as much local as possible. Fairhaven and New Bedford are great for their fishing community. There's so many shops that - maybe not everybody knows where to go but we can point them or give them advice on who to talk to.

FC: What about, you talked a little bit about your routine - do you take some breaks, do you take a lunch break?

GG: I do take a lunch break. It's...eating a warm lunch isn't always a possibility but I eat my lunch here. I try to - I eat about the time that the guys go away for lunch so that I have somebody here in shop that if a customer comes in at lunchtime - we always call it the lunch time rush - that I can take care of them. I'm not worried about eating a warm lunch if I have customers coming in. I want to make sure that they're taken care of. So some days, you know, you eat a cold sandwich. That's just part of the job. But my guys - I like to give them - they get their breaks. They get a 9:00 break. They get their lunch break and then a quick little afternoon break just because in the summertime, this place can get super hot, super sweaty. I want to make sure that I'm not over-working my guys.

FC: What time do all of you usually get out of here at the end of the day?

GG: Um. Our hours are officially 7:30 to 4:00. I can't remember the last time I got out at 4:00. We give our official hours, but at least one of the guys is here 'til five. I'm here 'til five, six o'clock. Yesterday I was here 'til eight trying to get some stuff done. We try to give our official hours and then we can schedule other appointments. But when you work for yourself or you work in an industry where there's enough work to keep you busy, I give my guys the option. If they want to work overtime, feel free. If there's work here, work overtime. A lot of them will take that and be like, "All right. I won't mind the extra couple a bucks." Especially, one of my guys - his wife is a nurse up the street, so he'll drop her off. He's like, "If I've got time to kill, I'll come to work. Do my work and then I'll go pick her up." For me, that's wonderful. That just gets that much more stuff done. Our customers really appreciate that because now, all of a sudden - an emergency job. Well, one guy has time to squeeze it in because he's coming in after hours. It's almost...I give them the...I afford them the opportunity to work when they can and how much they want.



FC: And do you - are there still times when you have to grab the tools and jump in on a...?

GG: Yesterday. Yep, yesterday was a prime example. The whole day I spent in the office doing all the office stuff: paperwork, billing, filing and just whatever I could just to get what I needed done in the office. Roughly two, three o'clock, I put on my uniform and I went out. One of my guys was finishing up a winch. He needed help with it so...swing a hammer here or do this, help hold something or...we had to pull off the clutch band so we needed a little bit of hand doing that. So we stayed late, did that. Then my girlfriend called and said, "Look - I'm going to be late today. I'm not going to be home until about eight, nine o'clock." I said, "Perfect." That afforded me time to do another propeller. So I stayed a little bit longer and I finished up a propeller while I was here. Since my prop man was on vacation, I'm trying to squeeze in as much as I can when I can and where I can. It's kind of...we're kind of at the point in the year where it's - how much can we get done? And when can we get everything done? Because we see the storm coming so we want to make sure that we're ready for it. They always say, "No good fisherman hasn't gone through a good...hasn't gone through a great storm yet." We feel like that can still happen on land.

FC: You said you put on your uniform. What do you wear when you're on the shop floor or...?

GG: Because the job can get dirty, when you're grinding a propeller you get a lot of dust and particles on you and when you working on a hydraulic you can get hydraulic fluid and just the regular dirt, grime and dust from working in a machine shop. I don't want to do that laundry. My girlfriend sure doesn't want to do that laundry, so we get uniforms. That way we can send them to...the uniform company picks them up, cleans them, brings them back. Everyday my guys can have a nice clean uniform.

FC: Is it coveralls?

GG: It's a button-down shirt and pants. So plus I think it gives you that little bit more just - professionalism.

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You can actually - just seeing a guy in a uniform does something visually. It says they're just that much more professional. Having that - it's the little perks that I give my guys. That way they don't have to do laundry. Their wives don't have to laundry and wreck their laundry machine, wreck their washer and dryer. They love that they don't have to deal with the grimy because some of our clothes just get, I mean...this is the sweatshirt - it's only a couple years old and it's covered in grime and dirt and dust. My dog ripped apart my sleeves.

FC: When you - like you said yesterday - you spend a good part of the day back here and that part of it on the business side of it. Do you like - is it a break - working with the tools?

GG: I love working out in the field. Honestly, I would probably rather work in the field. My days go by a lot quicker working on the stuff; a lot less stress. You know you can actually just

zone out and get involved in your work. Being in the office I deal with more stressful situations. I deal with more people who when they've got nervous energy or they're stressed, you know they can - they can verbalize and portray that certain ways. So my job is to help calm them down. Where when we're out there, metal doesn't have that reaction. Sometimes if you're having a bad day and you need to hit something, hitting a propeller with a metal hammer or big mallet or lead pipe or a piece of lead, you know it's a good way to take out aggression some days.

FC: Get it out of your system.

GG: Exactly! So there's perks too being out there too. Um...growing up when I was like twenty-one years old, you know it was long nights. Sometimes the guys would knock on my window because I would be parked right out here knowing I had to get to work early. So there times when the guys would wake me up and I would work ten, twelve hours. You don't complain. You just get your work done. We had a rule here - we still have the rule - it's, if you're going to be hung over, don't complain. You did it to yourself. If you want to start whining about it, go home because we don't have sympathy for it. We have stuff to do. And granted, we've all had hangovers and we've all learned that yes, we're big babies when we have hangovers. I'm no different. So, you know, sometimes just zoning out and focusing on the work that's at hand, makes your hangover go away.

FC: Do you listen to music out there?

GG: All the time. Yep. Actually each - there's usually music in here. Then there's music on the hydraulic side and then my prop guy has his own music playing. That's something that...we find music helps with the soul; keep moving. We all like certain songs, you know. It helps keep morale upbeat. Every weekend we come in, first thing we do turn on the lights, radio goes on. The other day we were actually listening to musicals on the radio. It was a Boston radio station that was just playing - every Saturday they play a lot of different stuff. A customer came in and looked at us very funny. [phone rings in background] She was very surprised with what we had playing. She told me after that she did not expect to hear one of the songs from "Rent" and then another song from another play and she was like, "I was very impressed with the music selection." So, it's nice that it's not always just country music, it's not always rock and roll. We try to do a nice variety of everything. Just like our work - we do a variety of everything.

FC: How many employees to you have? How many people work here?

GG: Full-time there is four of us...wait one, two, three, four of us...plus my father comes in as much as he can. My mother's retired and you know, she loves her job as being the babysitter. She loves watching my nieces. Absolutely adores seeing them every day, watching them grow, helping them with their homework, because before that she was a secretary here. So, when my sister decided that she wanted to work here full-time, that my mother worked with her, helped show her what she needed to do and then my mother retired and my sister continued on. And then my mother was able to watch my sister's children. So I used to bring my hyper dog over but he's a little too much for her plus all my guys love having the dog here and now she's the unofficial mascot.

FC: As far as the guys working on hydraulic or prop jobs that's all guys, but it sounds like you had some - girls do help out too, like your niece and....?

GG: Yeah. I want to make sure my nieces understands what a work ethic is. I was taught one very young so I want to pass that along. I feel like that's something that I can pass

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along to them. One day my niece asked me - she lost her...she had a cell phone and she lost it. I said, "Okay. No problem. I'll buy you a new cell phone but I want you to come to Scandia and file. Something simple. But at least this teaches you the value of a dollar." So no problem. She worked her hours. She actually did it in a faster time frame than I had arranged. So that kind of made me a little proud uncle because that was a little bit of me in there where she wanted - she had her goal and she wanted it for a certain day. So she made sure that she did everything in her power to get that done. And that's something I would have done. So, watching her do that, I see a little bit, a little part of the Gundersen in her. The hard working, the "I had my goal in mind. I know what I want." So it's amazing to watch the next generation because that's the fourth generation that has been in here and you know, they say the third generation is one of the toughest generations in a family business. It's kind of something that...I went to school for business so I've always heard these horror stories, I want to say. It almost makes me work that much harder to make sure that we're not, we don't fall under that. And watching my niece come in and, even if she doesn't want to do anything here, want to work in the business, just teaching her the value and teaching her work ethic. I feel like she can get that out of the shop. My sister, when she was younger, not too much younger but a few years ago, she would go out there and she would work on the props or she would try to help out where she can. She always liked to take pictures of her while she was getting dirty. So, she's also - she's also decided that she wants to take nursing school - nursing classes. She found a pretty simple transition from the hectic life of here versus the hectic life of a nursing student. You're always on your tip-toes. You're trying to do as much as you can, when you can and how you can. And you know, with some of the stuff we do here, we do get hurt. There've been times that she's had to play nurse. So, for her, bandaging up a scar, bandaging up a boo-boo...You know, we work on heavy stuff. We work on metals and we work with grinders and welders. Something's bound to happen sooner or later. We do our best to make sure that nothing happens, but every once in a while you're going to get a boo-boo. You're going to cut your finger or you know. It's just...just part of the job. So she...it's almost like training for her and she really appreciated, she really appreciates that. It was just...we enjoy and we try to offer up to do what you want to do, something that's going to stimulate you, because for us, we're gear heads. All my guys work on their cars, their bikes, their toys, build something and their friends come by. Stop in. So it's great. That's why I always refer to it as a community because there's people that come in and out. I don't know how many companies - that people that used to work for them - still come by and visit. I think in the past year, everybody that's ever worked here has been by to say hi, come in to say hello, see how we're doing, see if my father's still here working or if he retired. You know, they just want to catch up and want to see how either their friends are doing or how we're making out. And I think that's great because they're guys I haven't seen since I was a kid and they get to see me all grown up now and to them that's surprising.

FC: If you're sister's here or your niece's here, is it different around here? Do guys have to watch their language and stuff?

GG: No. No, because I don't want the girls to be censored. We understand that yes, they're swearing. Now, I don't...they go to school. They've heard these words before. Can they say them is the question? And that's an absolute no. We understand and actually with one of my guys here, that's kind of how we gauge where he is on a project. If he's frustrated with it, it's how many of those words come out. They're used to it and you know, we keep an open dialogue with them about, you know, certain times this is okay. Everyday language - maybe not okay. They understand right from wrong and good and bad and we try to stay on top of them for all that stuff. So, every once in a while they want to be that little tough kid and they you know, ah "poop." We think it's cute.

FC: Yeah they can get away with that.

GG: Yeah, yup.

Johann Gundersen: [in background] If I may interrupt, to about maybe ten, twelve years old we were

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playing basketball...we weren't playing a game. We were, you know, just laying the ball up and...

GG: Yeah. Was I like six years old, seven years old?

JG: Yeah, six, seven years old. One of the college kids got blocked very badly, embarrassingly by another player and he came up swearing and a couple of times down the court later, he came over to me and said, "I'm sorry. I apologize. I lost it. I hate to swear in front of a little kid like that." He pipes up with, "Oh that's okay. I've heard my mother use those words."

GG: [laughs]

FC: [laughs] Yeah, he's heard worse.

GG: [laughs] Yeah.

FC: That's funny.

JG: Your mother but not your father though.

GG: I don't think I've ever heard you swear. I've heard of you swearing once.

JG: There's almost no point.

GG: You have too big of a vocabulary for that.

FC: [laughs] So does everyone get along pretty well?

GG: It's like brothers. Yeah. Most of the time, actually the majority of the time, we do get along. But, you know, you're with people for fifty hours a day - I mean fifty hours a week - so, we can get on each others' nerves but I find that it's very brotherly here. That it's never too bad. It's always - they see the bigger picture and you know, that's great because they made sure that they trained me a certain way that I wasn't going to be kind of a hard boss. I took my father's way of being a boss and he's laid back about it. You know, I try to - we try to be as respectable as possible because we're all people too and we have lives and we have stuff that we got to do. My guys are very good about verbalizing what they want, what they need to help them. My job is to make sure that I can supply that.

FC: So that communication's important then?

GG: Big time. Big time. Yup.

FC: Do you think this is a good type of work for a young person to get into?

GG: I...absolutely. That's something that we're missing at the moment is the next generation in this...in this field. There are guys like myself and Tor Bendiksen who I grew up with and there's Jens, who we're kind of the next generation. We're in our thirties, forties creeping up on us faster than we want to admit and we understand that we're the up and coming generation. But where's the generation we fall back to? Where's the people that we want to usher into the new generation. And that's something we find that it's harder to find people that want to work hard. Like the kids. This is when I realized I was starting to get a little older than I wanted to admit was when I said, "Kids now-a-days, they don't have the work ethic." So, we are trying to find that purple unicorn, that kid that wants to work, that wants to learn because we offer him a career, we offer him a life. We - this isn't just a job, a summer job - this is something I will train you guys and I will train the next generation. And I will invest into them so that they can invest into the company. That...like I said, we're looking for the next generation and we just haven't found the right people yet because with the way how busy things are getting and how growth is happening that I want to train the right people so that I can have years of them learning from my guys who really know their stuff. My guys are great at all the knowledge that they've retained and all the stuff that they learned and how to fix stuff. I need to get the next generation in to learn as much of that as possible. Otherwise that relies more and more on me. Where maybe I don't see something that these guys would see. So that's the next progression is that we are trying to get younger in and I think that it's tough since it's...we don't have the community of the younger people who are coming in saying "I want to work." And as soon as we do find them, they get taken quick. Like they - everybody is looking for that one, two, three people that's going to - the younger people that really want to work and really, you know, they're going to work as hard as they can because they want to do this stuff. It's a great career. We really get involved with some wonderful things and different projects that will really make you think and work hard. So for us, we want to make sure we got the right people involved. Even if they don't have a weld - if they don't know how to weld or they don't know - we can train them in that. But you can't train work ethic. That's the

toughest thing to find. We're looking for the right combination because to do this job, not everybody's going to want to do this job and can do this job, so we need to find the right people to do the job. I mean, work ethic will really help with that.

[55:13:07] End of audio