



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: March 31, 2017

Robert Hicks~ Oral History Interview

Laura Orleans

Robert Hicks. Interview by Laura Orleans. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. Date of interview: March 31, 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: Robert Hicks [RH]

Facts about this person:

Age	52
Sex	male
Occupation	Plant Manager, Crystal Ice Company
Residence	Seekonk, MA
Ethnic background	European-American

Interviewer: Laura Orleans [LO]

Transcriber: Amy [AO]

Interview location: New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center

Date of Interview: March 31, 2017

Key Words

Crystal Ice, plant manager, family business, block ice, crushed ice, fishing boats, tube ice, fish, efficiency, ice machines, tracks, tanks, blown ice, movie special effects, winter, New Bedford, New England, fishermen, Spanish, Portuguese

Abstract

Robert Hicks is a fifty-two year old Plant Manager of Crystal Ice in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He has been working at Crystal Ice since 1989, starting as a laborer and working his way up to Plant Manager. In this interview he describes his family history in the business, his early days at Crystal Ice, changes in the plant over the years, types of ice the plant makes, icing the fishing boats, other projects of Crystal Ice, and his favorite and least favorite parts of the job.

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[00:00] Intro: Bob Hicks describes his personal history of coming to work at Crystal Ice through his wife's family business. Describes his start as a laborer, doing carpentry work.

[05:00] Continues to talk about learning more of the business over time, gradually becoming plant manager. Speaks about the changes from block ice to tube ice. [10:00]

[15:00] Continues to talk about changes in types of ice over time. Describes the changes in plant schedule and move towards increased efficiency in the plant. Speaks about his work ethics, expectations of employees and his desire for a positive atmosphere at the plant.

[20:00] Describes the jobs employees do at the plant and a typical day.

[25:00] Talks about how what Crystal Ice does in the winter when demand for ice is low. Speaks about three recent movie sets they worked on supplying snow and ice for winter scenes.

[30:00] Continues to describe movie contracts. Also describes supplying ice for an extreme winter sports event at Fenway Park. Talks about his favorite part of his work: relationships on the waterfront.

[35:00] Talks about challenges of working with employees. Details where Crystal Ice supplies ice to outside New Bedford.

[40:00] Speaks about bi-lingual employees at Crystal Ice. Describes how much ice they supply and the demands of a busy day supplying ice to the boats. Also describes the relationships with fishermen that he enjoys.

[45:14] End of Audio

[00:00]

LO: Okay, today is March 31 in the year 2017. This is an interview for New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center funded by an Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress. As part of the 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 of the Library of Congress. I am Laura Orleans, and today I am speaking with Rob...

RH: Hicks.

LO: Hicks. And we are here at the Fishing Heritage Center, the time is approximately ten o'clock, and just for the record, do you give us permission to record your story?

RH: Yes.

LO: Excellent. So I know we just established your name, but if you would introduce yourself, name, and maybe when and where you were born.

RH: My name is Robert Hicks, I was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1965. And I am plant manager at Crystal Ice Company.

LO: And was that your very first job in the fishing industry?

RH: Yes.

LO: So did you come in as plant manager?

RH: No. I came in as a laborer. I came in as a carpenter actually, because I had carpenter skills; the ice plant was owned by my wife's grandfather.

LO: Oh, so you have a long family connection...

RH: Yes. He was one of, I believe, he was the original ice man in New England; he started cutting ice from the ponds: Chad Factory Pond, the Grist Mill Pond in Seekonk, and... He developed Crystal Ice Company... I don't know the date but he started it.

LO: And do you know his name?

RH: John Mellon.

LO: And did you actually know him?

RH: Yes. My wife and I have been together, with my wife since 1982. And I started at Crystal Ice in 1989.

LO: Okay, well, that's fascinating! That would be interesting to follow up on. I don't know if the family has old photographs or business records...

RH: Um well, yeah, Joe has a lot of old pictures and things.

LO: Yeah, because I know that the company... or I believe the company celebrated its hundredth anniversary recently, I might be wrong about that...

RH: Yeah, I'm not sure if it's that old...

LO: Some anniversary that was significant...

RH: I don't know the exact date...

LO: Yeah...

RH: I don't know the date...

LO: Okay. Um, so were there other people in your family that were involved in the fishing industry, your immediate family?

RH: No. My, my immediate family, no.

LO: But your wife's family?

RH: Yes. You know with just, we call him Gramps, you know with John. When I met her, he had already owned Crystal Ice Company, and I started working with Bobby and Joe, they're brothers, Christine, my wife's cousins, they're first cousins, they were in construction. And they went into... John wanted to get out of the business... so they, they were, their father owned an ice plant too, so they came to Crystal Ice because they wanted to get into it, because Gramps wanted to get out. And I stayed in the construction part. So, I was there for about a year and a half, and then they always told me if you ever want a job at Crystal Ice it's there for you. So a year and a half went by, and I decided to go to the ice plant.

LO: So tell me about, well do you remember your first day?

RH: No, no, I don't. (laughter) How long...

LO: Reaching back.

RH: That was 1989, so was that - that's 28 years, that, that's yeah... I can say that I remember starting...

LO: Or do you remember early...

RH: That I would, I would be fixing all the floor covers on the, what we call the tank floor where we make the three hundred pound blocks. They were all wooden covers that covered the blocks were, you know, they're forty-four inches high, but they were made under the floor, and the floor was all wooden boards to cover for insulation. I was repairing those constantly. But learning a little bit about the ice part of it as well.

LO: So that was in 1989, and you were basically employed as a carpenter for Crystal Ice, or as a laborer?

RH: Well, I was a laborer, yeah, and they used my carpenter skills to work on things.

LO: What were some of the other early jobs that they had you doing?

RH: Well, back then, well, pulling ice, that's what we call pulling ice, the block ice out of the floor. There was a process to making it, thawing it, storing it, um... but it was loading, we would load block ice trailers, we would load our own trucks because back then

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the fishermen loved crushed block ice because it was finer. So we were constantly loading our trucks with three hundred pound blocks. Plus we were loading trucks that had the metal containers to deliver ice to the fish houses. So I was doing a little bit of everything. And uh, slowly but surely, there was a gentleman by the name of George Fagundes, he was the foreman, and I started to slowly follow him, because he was getting ready to retire. And I just took over.

LO: And how did you learn each of the different skills that you had to learn?

RH: It was all, it was hands on, you know it was all hands on. When I started there, you know there were guys there that had been there for twenty plus years already. Um... You know, the Chase boys, they'd been around forever. You know I don't even know how many of them there were. Ernie was, was the shop steward, because it was a union company and he was head of the boats and he you know he organized the scheduling and all that, learned a lot from him, but these guys all had knowledge. And it was... watching and learning.

LO: So just out of curiosity, you mentioned shop steward and it was a union shop. When did that change?

RH: Oh I don't know, years ago. Years ago, yeah.

LO: Before 1989? Or after?

RH: Oh, it was after. Yeah.

LO: Just out of curiosity... Um, all right. So... what kinds of changes have you seen in the 18 years roughly that you've been with the company?

RH: With Crystal Ice? We've definitely become more efficient (laughs), we, back in 2006 we did a major overhaul of our ice equipment. Because we needed to, we were being forced to as far as uh, you know just becoming more efficient, and uh we went, it's all high tech equipment, it's computerized, we went from freon to ammonia as far as the refrigerant. It's just a better refrigerant, and we replaced twelve pieces of equipment, twelve ice makers with five. And they do the same, it's the same capability. And a lot more efficient.

LO: Talk to me about that shift from the crushed ice to what's used now, why did that happen?

RH: There are less boats out there now that want the block ice... up until 2006 I mean we would do a hundred ton of block ice a day... It was crazy. And, we, it was funny, they, we always seemed to have more boats on a Saturday that wanted block ice than we did during the week. And at one point, you know Joe got to the point where he was like, okay, we're going to stop doing block ice on Saturdays, because we had to bring so many guys in on a Saturday, and pay overtime, when we could be icing these boats during the week, they just wanted to wait till Saturday. So we stopped the Saturday thing. And...

LO: So to make sure that when you're gesturing, you're fine there, but just if you pull your hand up behind the wire it won't pull on...

RH: Yeah I talk with my hands, sorry.

LO: We all do, you're fine...

RH: So we eliminated block ice on Saturday, it was the best thing we ever did.

LO: Yes.

RH: Because it was...

LO: I'm interested in, they were getting ice on Saturday, because they'd get ice before they'd head out, right?

RH: Yes. Yes. And it seemed like they always waited. We wouldn't do anything, very little, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then one hundred ton on a Saturday. And it was just crazy. So we had to bring more guys in, to dump the block ice, more guys to load the trucks, and more guys to pull the ice out of the floor to get ready for the next week and replenish. So we got rid of that, and then Joe Swift, the owner, he did an experiment with these new ice machines, at his father's place in East Providence. They, that's a package ice. They do all package ice. They do some block ice too, but more package ice. So we went from fragmented ice, which was plate ice and jagged, to tube ice, which is, is a round tube of ice. And Joe

[10:00]

did an experiment with taking some of the fragmented machines out and putting these tube machines in. And it worked. So we did many experiments, we, we sent our trucks down there to

get ice from them, to blow on to boats here before we ever made the transition here because we didn't want, we were trying to eliminate some of the block ice at the same time because it's a lot more equipment, a lot more expense, you have crushers that you have to have upkeep on, if we could, if the fishermen would be content with the new tube ice then we were on the right path. So we would get ice, the tube ice from East Providence, and blow it onto the boats, just air. I want you... just try it, see how you like it. And it was mainly the draggers, because they wanted the fine block ice because it was easier on the fish so they say, because everybody has their own story, this guy doesn't like block ice, this guy loves it.

LO: And in the case of fish, the ice is actually making contact with the fish...

RH: Yes.

LO: Whereas with the scallops they're bagged, and...

RH: Correct. Right. And you know some of them, they like the block ice because they were seeing that it didn't damage the fish, it didn't bruise the fish, or cut the fish, it was more snow than anything, so we... they, the draggers they liked the tube ice so we made the leap and got rid of all the fragmented ice and brought in the tube machines and we do very little block ice now. There, I don't think there are, only every once in awhile we'll have a boat ask if they can have block ice. And sometimes, more times, it would be a swordfishing boat, they used, because they're used to that flake ice, I'm not... I can see how some ice would damage fish, some ice wouldn't. If the with the, the density of it, and you know if you're putting snow on something as opposed to one inch tubes of ice, there could be some bruising, or cutting, denting. So we made the switch. And it was the best thing we ever did.

LO: (laughs) Did it change the work force at all?

RH: It did.

LO: Because the people that you needed?

RH: It did. I can't, well I can't say that it changed the, we didn't go from like fifteen guys down to ten now because we have this equipment. You know, I can't say that... that did not happen. We didn't, we didn't eliminate work... workers because we put the new equipment in. We eliminated labor for our guys, which entitled us, you know, it allowed us to do other things with these guys because the old stuff was maintained, it had to be maintained every single day. There was always something going wrong. So with the new stuff, less moving parts, it's computerized, where guys can adapt to see how things are running with the computer...

LO: So that's a new skill set for your workers...

RH: Yes. Yes.

LO: How did people learn about the computer stuff? I would, I mean I just would think that it would be very different to be...

RH: It is. I mean when we put this in, I'm not computer savvy, I'm still not. When we put this in in 2006, I just looked at the whole system and said I'm never ever going to get this, this is crazy, because I'm so used to walking up to a machine, turning a switch, pushing a button, it starts up, you know, mechanical gauges and this... it's hands on. And you know understanding the process how the machine is supposed to work; I'm still learning. It's been in place for eleven years now, and there are still things that I don't know that, I'll see something and hey Joe, I saw this happen, and you know why, I didn't see that, you know, the computer, it's, it's still a learning process.

LO: So if the computer goes, has the computer ever gone haywire?

RH: A few times, a few times, and it just, it doesn't allow us to run, that's all. But we have our high tech IT guy that you know, multiple, multiple guys, the system itself has its own group of computer guys that okay if we have an issue, okay, there are

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different people to call with different issues. It's a learning process, I have new guys now, that we've hired in the last few months that are starting to learn it, so, it's a hands on, it's not like okay you go in the book and you read the book and you take it out there, it's a hands on type of position over there; with any position over there.

LO: So do you do much of the training if there's a new person?

RH: I try to do as much as I can. You know I, I do have guys that will teach the new guys the basics, and as they are doing that I will keep a close eye on it, and not that I know everything, I've been, I've been doing the computer, you know stuff for twenty-eight years but just the know-how. I give them just like the guys when I first started were giving me there twenty and thirty years of experience to me, I'm giving it to these guys.

LO: And what's important for you to convey? I'm sure that there's like, practical stuff, but maybe there's also...

RH: There is, there is. I hold high standards for my employees, you know I don't, my father was from Tennessee, he was born and raised in Tennessee. He had to quit school at, in eighth grade, because he had to work on the farm, to support his family. And he, I don't know, his genes got passed on to me, where... I'm a worker. You know, I'm a worker, you know, and I don't like, I try to convey that to these guys, my expectations, and... I don't know, I don't know. I'm a different breed. Because I see a lot, I have a lot, I've had a lot of people come and go at Crystal Ice. And, some guys have it, and some guys they don't.

LO: So what does it take? What do you look for?

RH: I look for someone with positive personality. Someone that can get along with, work well with other people, somebody who wants to learn. They don't have to be a rocket scientist, they

just have to... they're easy to teach. And... they're easy to teach what my expectations are. And I, I like to have a positive group of employees that can work with each other at any given time and be asked by another employee to do this or do that and just do it because that's what needs to be done, no he's not your boss, but it just needs to be done. And some, some people don't, some people don't like that today. I mean, I'm the boss, and I have guys who whistling out the window at me like I'm like a dog to get my attention because they need a truck moved forward because they're loading it, and it just needs, and I'm, I'm, I'm out there and they see me and they whistle, okay, he's not my boss, but I know it needs to be done, I'm going to go and do it because there are a lot of people out there that will be disgruntled employees and not, I don't have to do that because he's not my boss.

LO: How many work at Crystal Ice?

RH: We have thirteen employees right now. That's the most I've had in awhile.

LO: And what's, would you say that you've got a pretty good work culture that way?

RH: I do. I do. I do right now. I have a good bunch of guys. I, we have I think six new guys that we've brought in the last couple months, yeah, yeah.

LO: Anything you do, I mean this is kind of off topic, but it's a fun question, or maybe not you, but is there anything that people do when a new person comes in to kind of you know, kid them a little bit?

RH: Um...

LO: Any teasing, or...

RH: No, no... yeah, no...

LO: I hear about it on the boats...

RH: No, no, yeah, they probably have their own rituals, but no uh...

LO: Nothing like that.

RH: Nothing like that. You know, I try to create a positive atmosphere, you know my wife will make... I had this time around I had four or five guys starting within a couple weeks of each other and they're still learning so it's kind of a little nerve wracking for David

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and myself you know to, they need to get... they need to get it the right way. You know. My wife will... make lunch, make lunch for everybody. And they appreciate that. You know, some guys you know don't care, but the guys that I have now, you know they appreciate that. You

know, thanks, thanks for lunch, Joe's great, he'll, he'll send out for pizzas every now and then, you know we try to create a positive atmosphere.

LO: Do people mostly work in groups or in teams?

RH: We try, we try to do group things together, because we can tackle this- and get this done so we can move on to something else. As far as the ice part of it goes, I have three or four guys that, that can you know learn how, you know that, that run the ice equipment and the ice bins know how to blow ice onto the boats and take care of trucks and stuff. And then I have you, half a dozen guys that know how to man the trucks whether its blowing ice down at the piers or bringing ice to the fish houses, and that's sometime when a busy day, everybody's scattered. I might have three guys on, on blower trucks, and maybe three guys delivering ice to fish houses, and I got three guys pushing buttons, which we call pushing buttons, that's blowing ice on boats. That's, that's a Crystal Ice term.

LO: So tell me about terms?

RH: That's a Crystal Ice term, pushing buttons.

LO: I asked Dave if he could think of any.

RH: I need a guy that learns how to push buttons...

LO: Now I've got you on the spot...

RH: Yeah, I'm trying to think of you know, they 'll just flow out of my mouth in conversation but I can't think of any, you know, I need a tank floor guy... People don't know, you know, what's a tank floor? You know a tank floor is where we make the block ice, because we make the block ice in tanks, and we call it the tank floor.

LO: And are the tanks submerged in the floor?

RH: Yes. There's like a crawl space, there's a four foot crawl space, and there's a forty-eight inch can, and then the floor is on top. So for you to get to the tank floor you walk in from ground level and you walk up a set of stairs, so, and the tanks are underneath. So, I don't know what other terminology...

LO: So tell me a little bit about a typical day if there is such a thing, let's say a typical busy day?

RH: A typical busy day. Ok. We could have um, I might have to pull back- when I started we would pull ten tanks a day. Ten tanks consisting of seventy-eight blocks in a tank. You know we worked from 7:00 to 10:00, we had two shifts, because we were doing so much block ice.

LO: 7:00 am to 10:00...

RH: 10:00 pm. Yes. We would have a couple guys come in and work actually it was 3:00 to 11:00, they would come and work 3:00 to 11:00 so it was 7:00 to 11:00. We would pull nine or ten tanks a day. Today, it you know, you might pull three, an extremely busy day you might have to pull three. We downsized. We used to have eighteen tanks. We have six now. Because there's not much call for block ice. So we might, I might have a couple guys you know, operating the cranes, pulling the block ice, pulling the tanks, a couple guys loading the trucks in the storage, and if, if we're doing a hundred carts to the fish houses, I probably have three trucks going with three drivers, just delivering coming back loading up, going to the fish houses, dropping them off, and then we have blower trucks also, that blow ice; they could all be going at the same time, and then we have three hoses hanging out between the two buildings, we could possibly be loading three boats at the same time behind the plant. So. Yeah it can get very hectic. You know, that's, that's a busy day. That would be a four or five hundred ton day that we would sell. Um, (snaps) and it goes like that. It goes that fast. (laughs)

LO: What do you, do you like a busy day?

RH: I do, I do. And guys like it, you know. They like, you know, unfortunately we don't have a lot of those, in the winter time, you know we I try to keep as busy, they work hard all summer, um, come the winter time there's always something to do,

[25:00]

and keep guys busy, I very seldom do I have to lay anyone off.

LO: How do you keep them busy in the winter? Are there things that you do in the winter that you don't do in the summer?

RH: Yeah well this winter, this winter we took, I don't know if we took four of our trucks, five of our trucks, and we pulled one in the garage, at a time, we washed it, compounded it, waxed it, they painted the wheels, it, to make it look as good as it could for being twelve years old. And we replaced the truck bed on one of them, but you know it's stuff like that, that keeps, you know we keep them busy. We want our trucks to look nice, can't do it in the summertime. You're lucky if you can wash them, you know because it just, a three hundred ton day is a busy day. Fifteen, twenty years ago we'd be selling seven hundred ton.

LO: So with that drop off in demand I guess, have you diversified in terms of who you're supplying ice to?

RH: Well, we have gotten into the movie scenes, which is pretty, it's pretty cool, pretty interesting, we're on our third movie right now with Paramount Pictures. Two years ago we did uh, *The Finest Hours*, I don't know if you've heard, it's a coast guard movie.

LO: I have. So tell me, tell me... (laughing) how are you involved in the movies?

RH: Well, we have to create winter scenery for them. And this *The Finest Hours*, was based on a true story, out of Chatham, whose, I read the book, when I knew we signed the contract. And it

was, it was, it's an awesome story. And so... the special effects guys that work with Disney called us up and said we want to meet with you guys because here's what we have going on, and Joe and I met with them in Quincy, and it just went from there. And we pumped in, this was all around the waterfront in Chatham, right at the, down at the Chatham pier, and it was a week long project, and it was like 650 ton of ice I think we blew in over that course of a week, and... To be on scene, you know I was, I stayed back here, because we had to make a mix, we had to mix the tube ice with the block ice, so we had to crush it, blow it into our trucks. I don't want to give all our secrets away, because we can't afford to lose this part of the business but we had to make a mixture that would pack and then we would truck it to Chatham and blow it where ever they would needed it. You know we were making curbs, you know street, like a snow plow went by. We coated the fish pier, blew some, we covered an entire beach down there. Because it was happening in the winter, and they needed snow, and we made it. And uh, it was awesome, all of our guys took so much pride in doing it, and and we, you know Joe and I rotated everyone. Now we have certain guys that can do certain things. Some guys can do others. But we fit them in so that each guy was able to get to Chatham and be a part of what was happening down there. And they loved it. They loved it. It was, that was, that happened, we did that in Dec... right in the middle of winter. Which was a huge boost for us, because you don't sell too much ice in the winter. And then that same year, we did the movie *Joy*, with, that was with Robert DeNiro, Bradley Cooper, and Jennifer Lawrence. And Jennifer Lawrence invented a mop. It's a very good movie. You know. So we created winter scenery for them. And right now we're in the process of doing... This won't come out till after so I'm good, because we're not supposed to talk about it, but it *Daddy's Home*, with Will Farrell, and Mark Wahlberg, well they're filming *Daddy's Home 2* right now. We've been doing that since... we've been doing that for a few weeks now.

LO: That's so fun! So do you get to actually meet the stars?

RH: I did this time. I met Will Farrell on this one. Not, not Mark Wahlberg, he wasn't too pleasant. But never saw the,

[30:00]

from *Joy* you know security is so tight. But actually, we weren't able to meet them, but we could see them even in Chatham, we could see them, even in Chatham. You know being on the scene... but yeah. I met Will Farrell on this one and it's, it's pretty awesome, because you know here I am, a nobody from Seekonk, I live in Seekonk, and I work in a little, I work for an ice company in the city of New Bedford which is a tiny dot on the map when you look at it and you think about Disney and Paramount Pictures and, you know dealing with the special effects guys that have done the *Transformer* movies, just, it was very intimidating in the very beginning. But now it's a, it's great, you know, it's great, to think that we're a part of something that's probably world-wide these movies will be seen, and we're up there.

LO: Well and in fact I suppose if you think about it your work with the fish is worldwide in the sense that it's... right?

RH: True, yeah, yeah.

LO: Going all over the world, being...

RH: Yeah.

LO: I had not heard the movie piece, I had heard that you guys were involved in the extreme sporting events in Fenway Park or something?

RH: Yes, yes. The...

RH: Yeah we did that too, silly me.

LO: When was that?

RH: That was the Big Air at Fenway. That was two years ago. And that was snowboarding and freestyle ski jumping. And competitors from all over the world came to that. And we blew in four hundred ton of ice on that ramp. Which they needed more but they had their snow makers and there's certain things that they couldn't do that we could do because we had the equipment. And so yeah that was pretty cool, and to see that, that was on TV as well. But yeah that was, that was, a nice little winter thing. Winter contract that helped Crystal Ice Company get through the winter. So yeah, it was...

LO: So bringing you back to the more not mundane, but you know, more ordinary stuff, tell me what's your favorite thing about your work.

RH: My favorite thing about my work... I'm going to sound conceited. (laughter) I just said the other day, my favorite thing about my work is knowing that I can run Crystal Ice Company and it runs very smoothly. But, you know, it's dealing with the fishermen, talking with them, there are some really great guys that you could have a conversation with forever. You know they go out of their way to say hello to me, I might be walking across the parking lot and they're on the boat, and they're doing gear work and I'll hear "Hey Rob!" and I'll look and it'll be Chris from the Huntress or Dennis, and you know it's just nice, it's nice to be recognized by them, and to, to form that relationship with them it's good. It's good.

LO: I get the sense that the waterfront community is kind of a special place.

RH: It is, yeah, it is. It is.

LO: Characters

RH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LO: But a lot of loyalty, a lot of relationships that go back a long time.

RH: Pat Kavanagh from, you know, one, going back to his father. His father was running the boats when I first started there and he had a very good relationship with Joe and Joe's grandfather

and it just kind of carried on with Pat now, and it's just a really good relationship. Because you know any time they pull in the parking lot, you know it's, you have a conversation with them, it's not just a, you know two ships passing in the night, you know, it's not just like hey how you doing and that's it, you keep going, it's a nice conversation.

LO: Do you have a least favorite aspect to your work?

RH: A least favorite aspect... is, it's dealing with employees, that's it. To be totally honest with you. Going back to, some guys not being able to get along, he's not my boss or he's... That's, that's not what I'm there for,

[35:00]

I don't want to be a babysitter, I will be a counsellor if I have to, and I have done that many, many times, I do that, you know I... If, if they have issues I want them to bring them to me because I want to run a... positive environment. And you know if somebody's not happy, then I want to know what the issues are, and, and I do my best to try to solve them because I want them to come to work, I want them to want to come to work...

LO: Do you think, it's interesting to me that both you and Dave worked your way up so that you're now more of a management role, I'm guessing that's kind of typical in the fishing industry, and I guess it makes for a better relationship and for better managers. You know what all of those jobs are, you know, what goes into them.

RH: Yep, and you know... Yeah, I don't know there's a, I don't know if there's any guys that... Well I guess my position will be available when I decide to retire but I do have a couple guys there that have been there for like you know for eight years and they see, you know, how things run every year, and things change all the time. So, if the time comes you know, the longevity part of it makes it easier for you to get to that level for sure. Not that we have that stepladder to climb, but if the position is available then you know...

LO: I'm just trying to think what I haven't covered. Are there things that you wanted to talk about that we haven't touched on?

RH: No, you know it.... I've been there a long time, you know I'm not going anywhere, unless the fishing industry does and hopefully it doesn't...

LO: I was interested besides the movies and that sort of thing to find out that you deliver ice all over New England really.

RH: We go into Connecticut, we do fishing boats in Connecticut, we go to Rhode Island down to Point Judith, we... Boston, all over the Cape, we do Scituate, Plymouth, um....

LO: And was that always the case? Or were there smaller ice plants that...

RH: Well, there were still...

LO: Didn't last?

RH: Still there's an ice plant in Point Judith, but they can you know when squid season is cranking, they can't make enough. So we're sending trucks there. Last year was a good year for us going into Point Judith, we were sometimes doing four truckloads a day. Yeah, it was nice.

LO: And when you truck that ice, is it block ice that you crush? Or...

RH: No, no, this is, it's the tube ice. Yeah it's the tube ice... and... so Connecticut, they have their own ice makers, they can't you know, they can't keep up.

LO: And where in Connecticut?

RH: New London.

LO: Is there much of a fishing industry in New London?

RH: Yeah, New London Seafood...

LO: Uh huh!

RH: There are a few guys down there, Gary, I don't know their last names, I know their first names, but its New London Seafood, we blow ice into his bins, you know, he takes care of the boats, or we'll just blow it right on a boat.

LO: What about the islands? The Vineyard, and Nantucket, Nantucket doesn't have much...

RH: Yeah, no, no, we don't send any ice out there.

LO: They must have something local...

RH: Yeah, they have... well those boats they'll steam into New Bedford and get ice, but you know, I mean, there's Nancy's Ice which is out on Martha's Vineyard I believe, but that's like a package ice that's like a cash and carry kind of thing I think. But those boats, the boats that tie up at Martha's Vineyard they'll come in and get ice right here at the dock.

LO: Anybody at Crystal Ice who speaks Portuguese or Spanish?

RH: Yep, Dennis who's in the picture downstairs, he's Portuguese, he speaks Portuguese, and I have a few guys that speak Spanish...

LO: Yeah, I was just thinking you know who's in the fishing industry with...

RH: Yeah, nope and Mario who works in the office, he's the office manager. He speaks Portuguese so there are times where a captain will come in and ask me in Portuguese and I'd be like, okay Mario, you know, can you come out here for a minute please? And, and, or it could be

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anybody, I might grab Lorenzo because somebody's trying to talk to me in Spanish and you know I wish I knew it, you know I wish I knew it. My two kids are going to school for it, you know one of them in minoring in Spanish and I'm so glad that she is but they can speak it fluently, and I can't. But it wasn't, you didn't have to, back then. And now it just, it's just that much more helpful. So yeah, I have some translators amongst us at Crystal.

LO: And about how many boats do you guys supply? Do you know that?

RH: No, no I don't.

LO: Do you know how many tons you do a year? Just...

(crosstalk)

RH: Yeah I don't know the exact number on that. Or even a close number.

LO: You said a busy day now...

RH: A busy day would be between, you know a good day if we hit four hundred ton, you know that's great, if we hit three hundred ton, hey that's good, you know we can make a little over five hundred ton a day. But a three hundred ton day is something to smile about, it's a good day, and now it's you know three hundred ton, it just hap... you know it's just... we've got, we went through it, the equipment is more efficient. Our guys are more knowledgeable and to sell three hundred or four hundred ton a day at the end of the day we're like wow, we didn't even know that because everything went so smooth.

LO: Well that's a good feeling...

RH: Yeah, it is. It is. That's a good thing about my job too. At the end of the day and say, okay everything went great today...

LO: And I would expect that it must be satisfying when you have either a super busy day and you get it all done, you meet everybody's...

RH: Right, right.

LO: Or if there's some kind of, if there's ever been an unusual problem situation where you had to do something on the fly and you were able to...

RH: Yeah, I mean it happens all the time. You know, you know we have a breakdowns, or we... or it could be guys calling up at the last minute, saying hey Rob I need ice today. I have to go today. And it's like okay well I'm booked right now... I can't get it till the end of the day. I'll take it whenever you can give it to me. So now I have to find one of my guys who's willing to stay late. Because you know at the end of a busy day everybody wants to go home at the end of the day, so I'll ask one of the guys if they want to stay late and ice a boat, and... You know I get one guy who will say I'll do it, no problem, and we'll load it up and he'll get his ice and it might be after hours but he's got his ice and he's got his ice and happy because he's going out with everybody else, and you know, it's a good feeling....

LO: So you see the boats as they're about to go out, whereas the fuel guys see the boats more when they come back...

RH: Yes, yeah, yep yep. We see them, we see them, they get their ice, some of them go back and tie up because they're not going to go out that day, and some head right through the dyke...

LO: You must hear some interesting stories I would think...

RH: Yeah I probably do, I can't think of anything, I probably do, but when I tell you I have conversations with the captains, or the mates or whatever, it's about everyday life, it's about how's your kids doing, because they remember and I remember you had a kid going to Northeastern or whatever, and you know okay, your daughter's playing softball, how's she doing? You know it's personable... You know but then again how are the, what are the regulations now, because I can't keep up with them all, you know they, they know. Okay how many days do you guys have? Because you know it's like we're going to have a busy year, or is it just kind of going to kind of be steady, slow and steady, you know because I try to get that information so I can prepare for the upcoming season. So, but... stories?

(crosstalk)

RH: Yeah , yeah, they'll tell you it firsthand.

LO: Yeah, you know I'm interested in the relationship that you all who work on the shore side, you know you must have, you have to go to the first point of contact or the last point of contact, and you see them as they are out...

RH: It's good, you know it's a good relationship.

LO: Well thank you, I really appreciate you taking some time...

RH: I hope it helped... and I hope it's...

LO: Absolutely.

RH: And I hope it's good for you...

LO: Yeah, absolutely. Anything to add, parting words?

RH: I just uh, no, I'm...

LO: You're good.

RH: I'm not a very big talker...

LO: You're fine. (laughs) You're fine. All right I'm going to shut off our recorder.

[45:14] End of audio