



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: March 23, 2017

Lopes, James ~ Oral History Interview

Madeleine Hall-Arber

Lopes, James. Interview by Madeleine Hall-Arber. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. Date of interview: March 23, 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.

New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center
38 Bethel Street
P.O. Box 2052
New Bedford, MA 02741-2052

Background

Name of person interviewed: James Lopes [JL]

Facts about this person:

Age 56
Sex Male
Occupation Production Manager at Norpel
Residence (Town where lives)
Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Madeleine Hall-Arber [MHA]

Transcriber: Tracy Gillen [TG]

Interview location: Norpel, 4 Fish Island, New Bedford

Date of interview: March 23, 2017

Key Words

fillet room, wheelhouse, Night Riders, bycatch, monkfish, queer fish, fish house door, lobster, cod, haddock, skate wings, herring, mackerel, sword fishing, long lining, harpoon, Local 59, lumping, winch, redfish, RSW tank, quality control, HAACP plan, histamines

Abstract

James Lopes, fifty-six years old, has been involved in the fishing industry since he was a teenager. He began his career as a 'Night Rider,' then had his own business, Ocean Obsession, Ltd, and currently works for Norpel as a production manager. He discusses the rewards and challenges of working on the waterfront, a typical day at Norpel, the "cast of characters" he has worked with throughout the years, and the changes he has seen in the industry and the New Bedford area over the years.

Index

[0:00] Intro; James Lopes, born August 8, 1960 in New Bedford, works at Norpel as a production manager. He started his waterfront career in 1978 cleaning the fillet room at Sea View Fillet. Then he worked as a “Night Rider” when he would bid on fish pre-auction and then sell to local fish houses.

[5:21] Continued discussion of “Night Riders,” his business Ocean Obsession, Ltd, his work for Atlantic Gem, and as a production manager for Eastern Fisheries, and Atlantic Red Crab.

[10:28] Discusses how he ended up at Norpel, the fishing jobs that he had before, and the how the strikes affected the workers.

[14:31] Describes being a workaholic, being proud that he was able to raise 2 successful children. Discusses the rewarding parts of his current job and a challenging position he had as a plant manager for another company.

[20:24] Describes a typical day. Discusses the trial and error of making the process of grinding fish for pet food more efficient.

[25:02] Discusses how temporary workers fit in, the best and worst years for fishing, why he chose to work shoreside after being a fisherman, and the importance of active shore support.

[29:59] Describes changes in New Bedford that he has seen over the years related to the fishing industry’s ups and downs. Also discusses the physical challenges of the job, the lack of young people entering the industry and his views on immigration reform.

[35:32] Discusses the pay scale, quality control and safety features at work. Describes opportunities for socialization with waterfront friends. Explains that he would like people to know that fisherman sacrifice a lot to become successful.

[40:19] His ambition is to remain part of the waterfront as long as he can. Names a few people who are symbolic to him of what is good about New Bedford.

[45:00] Discusses how the two sides of the river are like a family. Explains some challenges of Night Riding, and fish and scallop prices.

[50:34] End of audio.

[0:00]

Madeleine Hall-Arber: I am going to say the introduction again.

James Lopes: Okay, it's James Lopes.

MHA: James Lopes, okay. And today is March 23, 2017. This is an interview for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, funded by the Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress. As part of this project we are interviewing shoreside workers in the New Bedford/Fairhaven fishing industry, to record their stories, document their skills and knowledge, and better understand their important role in the fishing industry. The recording and transcript will become part of the permanent collection at the Library of Congress. I am Madeleine Hall-Arber. And today I am speaking with James Lopes at Norpel and the time is now two o'clock. So, trying again. So, can you, introduce yourself again?

JL: Sure, my name is Jim Lopes and I work at Norpel as a production manager.

MHA: And can you tell me a little bit what a production management means?

JL: Production managing is... preparation, implementation of the product that flows through the building into a finished good.

MHA: Okay, and what is that major product here?

JL: It could either be frozen product, from the freezer or actually from a boat that goes into the system. We freeze it and package it at the company's requirements and ship it.

MHA: So, where and when were you born?

JL: August 8, 1960 in New Bedford. Yes. Actually, I'm a triplet.

MHA: Really?

JL: Yes.

MHA: Well, I don't think I have ever met a triplet.

JL: Yes. (laughter)

MHA: So, your siblings, are they also still in New Bedford?

JL: Yes.

MHA: And are any of them in the fishing business?

JL: No. One brother works for Titleist, he's an IT technician. And actually my brother Paul, he just moved from Dartmouth to Boston, Quincy and he works for the Mass Department of Energy.

MHA: So, how did you end up at Norpel?

JL: It's a long story.

MHA: Okay, that's, I have all day.

JL: I started my waterfront career, I was a junior in high school in 1978. My first job down here was cleaning the fillet room for Sea View Fillet. And that was just like part time summer work. You know, when the cutters got done you'd have the clean up crew and I was, I did that a few times, three or four times during the course of the summer. After graduation, I didn't want to go to college; I liked working. So, I came down here and got a job with this gentleman called Robin Amaral and we were quote unquote, the Night Riders. Have you ever heard of the Night Riders? No? This is a real long story.

MHA: That's okay.

JL: Well, the Night Riders were, we used to sleep in trucks all night and when the boats came through the dike, the hurricane barrier, we would chase them down where they docked and we would bid on whatever they wanted to sell, pre-auction.

MHA: Huh.

JL: And it was very tiring, hard work. And we'd unload whatever they wanted to sell. Like there was like five or six, maybe seven Night Riders and we'd all go on into the wheelhouse and bid on what they wanted to sell. Lobster, monkfish, skate wings, cod, haddock, whatever they wanted to sell to us. It was, it started out mostly as monkfish and all the, the, they called it queer fish at the time. Anyway.

MHA: These were all bycatch, I presume?

JL: Yeah, bycatch and yeah, lobster and stuff like that. So. Some scallopers too with the fish and whatever they wanted to get rid of to the, to the Night Riders. There was, the big guys down here were you know, Breezy Amaral, I don't know if you've heard of him but. Eddie Aposta, The Pollock. It was a great time, I mean we worked hard but it was rewarding.

[5:21] MHA: And what did you do once you unloaded whatever they wanted to sell?

JL: We would sell them to the local fish houses.

MHA: I see. Huh.

JL: Yeah. See it was hard work because it was just you, a scale and a truck and you lifted all the totes yourself. It was...

MHA: Did you have, did you have an idea of who you were going to be able to sell what to before you went out?

JL: Yeah. Who we could buy from, I mean some boats would just sell to Robin's Seafood and some boats would sell to Carlos. And some boats would sell, you know. It was rarely you'd go to a boat and then he'd change his buyer but sometimes if the price was right they would. It was like a pre-auction auction, if you will.

MHA: I have never, I never heard about that.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: It's interesting.

JL: So that went on for around 'til '80, 1984, '83. And I had, I was in business for myself, it was called Ocean Obsession, Limited. And I had a partner. And we eventually ended up renting a fish house door and we just, instead of chasing boats, everything would be by radio. They'd call us on a certain channel. We'd come in. We'd unload. It became more scallopers and, but we still did a lot of fish. And then we would just resell the stuff, buy it off the boat and resell it for X amount of pounds over the auction price.

MHA: So that's what I was going to ask, I assume you were giving better prices than the auction and that's why they were.

JL: Yeah but it was more of a convenience factor for the local fish houses because it was already unloaded, packed and shipped to their door.

MHA: Interesting, yeah. So you got to know every species at some point.

JL: Oh yeah. Every species, every captain. every, you know, deckhand.

MHA: So what made you stop?

JL: The night riding stuff? Well, we sort of got into, when we got our own door, fish house door, we got more legitimate, you know, it was like we were cemented in one place and became corporate. We'd have like agreements with like Eastern Fisheries and some other big scallop houses that would, they would almost guarantee taking almost all the product we could get them. So that was good, you know. I lost the business in '93 when there was, scalloping was down to nothing.

MHA: Right.

JL: And I went to work for a, it was... it went out of business, Jesus. It's on my resume.

MHA: It doesn't have to be exact. Give me an idea of...

JL: Atlantic Gem.

MHA: Okay.

JL: They were a huge scallop company. They had companies in Virginia and Louisiana and the west coast. Six months after that I, they closed their doors so I was unemployed for a little while. Ended up going to Eastern Fisheries for a couple of years as a production manager and boat unloader. I've been like, I've done everything down here really. After that I went into crab, worked for Atlantic Red Crab.

MHA: Right.

JL: For a couple years, two to three years and then I ended up here.

MHA: So, when you were working for on the Red Crab, were you doing the same thing? Production Manager?

JL: Yep and unloading, yep, the same thing. We would butcher the crab and bring it to their other plant where they cooked it and froze it, packaged it. Yeah, it was. They have some big boats there. When them Red Crab boats come in they'll have 60-80,000 pounds red crab. Yeah, that was, that was good.

[10:28] MHA: So, what appealed to you about coming here?

JL: Actually I was almost going to take a job at New England Crab in Boston and the Monday before I was supposed to start... The Friday before I was supposed to start that Monday in Boston I got a call from Brady, the owner here and he was, he heard that I was a good production guy and so he interviewed me that Friday and shot me an offer and so I took this offer instead of driving all the way to Boston. And you know.

MHA: Good move.

JL: Yeah. And I was, I never did herring or mackerel before so it's new to me and you know I can say I've done it all down here, you know what I mean? So, yeah and I like all the, I like the action, you know? That's, that's what drew me to the waterfront in the first place. There's always action, there's, it's a cast a characters down here. It's like a cartoon strip, you know what I mean? So, yeah, it's been a long, I mean I've been down here since 1978. So, how many years is that? More than, most of my life. Put it that way, you know.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: And I've been, I was a fisherman too, in between having time off, being laid off or whatever I went scalloping and I went sword fishing.

MHA: Oh, really?

JL: Yeah, sword fished in 1982 for a summer.

MHA: Longline?

JL: Yeah, longline and harpoon. Yeah. I still have some pictures of that.

MHA: So, you must have some stories about when you were Night Riding and when you were fishing. So, you are welcome to share anything. Any of the characters that you met along the way.

JL: There's a lot of characters. I mean. [laughs] A lot. And there's ups and downs here that I've been through. And lost a lot of friends through drug abuse and suicide.

MHA: That's hard.

JL: Hard, yeah. Because they were... When you unload the same guys all the time. You start to get to know them and you become real good friends. You grew up on the waterfront with them. So, yeah, it's...

MHA: So, were you, it sounds like you were here when they had the strikes.

JL: When they had the strikes, yup. yup, absolutely. We would try to duck the strikes and make agreements. If the boats did leave, we'd unload them in Newport, unload them in Fall River, in trucks you know, to keep the fish houses going around here. We weren't liked that much but it was, you know, we were trying to survive also.

MHA: Yep. Well, not this project, a different project we are working on for the Heritage Center we are going to be focused more on labor relations, so I may come back and ask you some more specific questions about that.

JL: Yeah, it was kind of bad because when they had, actually when they had the other strike, when they got rid of local 59 for the boats and the the actual owners got control of mostly everything. The fisherman lost their health insurance, they lost their pension. They lost almost everything. Because with 59, even though everyone hated them, at least they had health insurance and a pension. Now they don't have anything.

[14:31] MHA: Yep. So do you still keep contact with some of the people that were fishing?

JL: Oh yeah. Most of my friends are all captains. They went from deckhands to captains. It is good to see, you know. And a lot of them aren't around anymore.

MHA: And I hear that's starting again, the whole, the problem with drugs.

JL: Oh yeah it wiped out a lot of a lot of a lot of scallopers. You know, getting back to the old part of the Night Riding. After that I was, when we owned my own business, when I owned it, I used to buy off the auction, right here, the old chalkboard auction. Yeah, there was a cast a characters down there. When I worked with that guy Robin, I'd work all night and then during the day, I'd go over to the auction house and pick up a job, lumping or in the fish house. I was, still am a workaholic, you know.

MHA: So did you have to join the union to do that?

JL: No, the union was kind of getting cracked by then, you know. But if you lumped the boat you'd have to pay your union dues, they take it out of your check, so. Even though you weren't in the union, you could still work but they would just take the dues out.

MHA: I see.

JL: Yeah. Actually, a couple of weeks ago I was lumped, the Herra 2, I was running the winch for the, they needed a guy, they called me up. It's was a Sunday and I said yeah, I'll go. I'll make \$200, you know. They take taxes out but that's okay.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: So I'm still like that, it's just in me, you know.

MHA: Yeah, you just like to stay busy it sounds like.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. I have two, I'm married for 27 years and I have two children that are grown. My son's an engineer. Went to RPI. Yeah. He's an engineer for Gore-Tek in Delaware and my daughter is a nurse at Rhode Island Hospital. She's in the chemo ward. Yeah.

MHA: Takes a lot of strength.

JL: Yeah, you know, it feels rewarding because even though I've been through all this, these trials and tribulations as you call it, of the waterfront, I've managed to raise a good family and have great kids. And they've got a bright future. That's the best rewarding part of it, you know. Because I had a lot of struggles down here. More than I can mention, but.

MHA: Because of personalities?

JL: Yeah.

MHA: Things of that nature?

JL: Well, I kind of got bumped out of my, having my own business from the wrong people. Yeah. So.

MHA: So, what is your, what's the favorite part of your job here?

JL: Working with the people. Working with the guys on the floor. I try to lighten it up. Try to make it like enjoyable for the, I know it's hard work, but if you kind of ease the pain a little bit. They, Yeah, we've got good camaraderie here, you know. Yeah. Everyone does their job. We kind of laugh all the time but we get the job done.

MHA: Good. And how was, were any of the other companies that you worked for, particularly good or particularly bad? You don't have to tell me which company. But was there, but how was your experience in the other jobs?

JL: I'd have to say it was [phone rings] Sorry. Walgreens. [laughter] It was, it was good. I learned from every place that I worked from down here and they also learned a lot from me. I'd have to say, one place, where I was like the plant manager, but the plant supervisor was just a bad egg and he would undermine my, you know, and then I would have to end up covering up his mistakes. It was frustrating.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: It was very frustrating. He was into drugs and stuff. He had the owner buffaloed. And it's kind of frustrating because I'm trying to climb the ladder also, but he kept pulling the ladder out from me. You know what I mean?

MHA: Yeah. That's disconcerting.

JL: Yeah, it is, it's like. Put it this way, they got rid of the wrong guy. But the other guy didn't last much longer after I left. Because I couldn't cover, he had no one to cover his mistakes.

MHA: Yup. Yeah. I wonder if the people who finally got rid of him, if they realized?

JL: I think they did.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: Good.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: That's the best revenge.

JL: Yes.

[20:24] MHA: And you landed on your feet.

JL: Yes, very much so. I love working here. I mean it's a great job. Especially when the boats land with, you'll have a couple boats and there'll be a million, a million and half pounds of mackerel and herring, or, and we'll just keep working and it works very well. I mean, if you ever have a chance to see this plant work when we have a boat, it, it's amazing.

MHA: Sounds like it.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: I've, when I first started getting interested in the herring, I think that there were a couple of boats that were contracted to unload here and I got to see one of the boats. It didn't, they weren't unloading at the time so I didn't get to see the actual process but I did see what the boat, the details of the boat that was, the tanks that are RSW tanks and everything. That was really fascinating. So, let's see. I was going to ask you. Maybe you can explain to me a typical day here.

JL: Here?

MHA: Yeah.

JL: A typical day here. Well, I'm an early bird so I'd probably get here like between 5:00 and 5:30 and pretty much, put the lights on, unlock the doors, come upstairs. We're in the auction network, so I'll watch the fish auction. Once in a while if we need samples, I'll buy. If, we're just waiting for the price of fish to come down a little bit, to buy something, you know. But, after that I would pretty much wait for the guys to come in. If there was fish to pick up like tomorrow, I've got to pick up some fish at Pier Fish for us to freeze for them, so I'll just jump in the truck like quarter of six, go over there, get the truck loaded, come back here and then the guys would be sort of pedaling in, literally, and they'll have the fish, you know, I'll have the fish here already they won't have to wait for it, they can get right to work. We'll freeze the fish; box it for the Pier Fish.

MHA: So, when you're doing that, when you get the fish, say from Pier Fish, for example, and do you have to check it for quality and things like that or do you just assume that?

JL: Right now, we're just doing bait for them. It's just, we're freezing lobster bait for them so it's not a real. But it is good quality. It's caught from them and froze right here. So it's, I mean it's good bait. Oh, we do grinding here too for a pet food company, so we grind all kind of fish together, redfish, monkfish. We have different blends that they want to do.

MHA: That's so interesting.

JL: Yeah, that keeps us busy also.

MHA: Yeah. Yeah, Eoin had mentioned that, I think it was just this last year you brought in the grinders?

JL: Yep, yep, we did, you know, 8 to 10 million pounds I think.

MHA: Really. Was it complicated?

JL: Getting to know how to do it, it was complicated. It was a lot of trial and error. It was very complicated in the beginning. Right now I think we've got it down pretty good and it's more efficient and we can actually grind like probably 15 to 16,000 pounds an hour, so it's good.

MHA: So, was it just the physical process was complicated?

JL: Yeah.

MHA: Getting it set up and getting it...

JL: Yeah, yeah. Machines breaking down and just how do we do this quicker. Yeah, it was definitely trial and error.

MHA: And then training.

JL: Training yeah, training the guys, getting the formulas right for the company that wants it. Yeah. It keeps you definitely busy, keeps you interested, keeps you thinking about how can we do this better the next time. It's like every day you want to get it done better and better, you know.

[25:02] MHA: How about when it is really busy and you have to bring in temporary workers? How do they fit into the...

JL: Quite well because Sebastian and Jamie, they pretty much know most of the people and they'll keep tabs on them, They'll walk around all night and all day because we run 24 hours. It's pretty good. You know, there are some people that'll work an hour and say this is not for them and that's okay.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: Yeah. But it's pretty good. It's like, it's just like a machine. It just keeps running until we run out of fish.

MHA: So, over the years, you've noticed the industry going up and down. Can you talk a little bit about that? What the best years were? What the worst years were?

JL: Yeah, well the best years were of course when there was a lot of scallops and a lot of fish around. We were busy all the time; we were making good money. And then the early 90s was just horrible and that's when I lost my business and had to change my lifestyle. But, you know, it's adapt and overcome you know. It's, my wife's a good one for that. She'll say, we can't afford this anymore, let's just cut this and that, and thank God for her or I wouldn't be here. Yeah, and like now, I mean, the scallopers are really reaping the benefits of a good, sound,

system that they have. You know, because if you just take restrictions off, they'll just clean the ocean out.

MHA: Yeah. So, you, you mentioned that you went sword fishing and did you say scalloping as well? Did you do ground fishing?

JL: No, I didn't. I didn't, didn't do ground fishing.

MHA: But neither of those made you want to stay at sea?

JL: No, because I always, I always had a job offer coming my way on shore. You know, so, and I had small children so I kind of wanted to stay around. If I could make decent amount of money, I would rather just stay home and...

MHA: Family life.

JL: Yeah, that and still be a part of, like, I felt like a fisherman like everyone else, you know.

MHA: Maybe you can talk a little bit about that. People would sometimes, when they would talk about the fishing industry, they think strictly of the fishermen and the boats. They don't really think about the shoreside. Can you just talk a little bit about the process and why it's important to have an active shore support.

JL: Oh, it's definitely important. I mean, it's part of the chain, you know. It's like they get the raw material and they have to bring it somewhere where it gets processed and sold, so it's all, and then you have the people that supply the ice, supply the grub, supply the gear. It goes on and on. It's not just a one-sided operation. It takes Crystal Ice, it takes Blue Fleet Welding. It takes, you know everyone; it takes the laundromat, the local laundromat, because all the fishermen want to bring their clothes there. So it trickles through the whole... Yeah. And the bars, absolutely, right? So, it's good, because I mean, the fishermen spend most of their money like locally I hope. You know, a lot of them do.

MHA: So, have you seen changes in the city itself from when say, from before when the fishing was good and then the downturn in the nineties and then now it's coming back up with the scallops? Have, do you see the effect of that on New Bedford?

JL: Yeah, because you've got, when you've get toward the down swing the only thing they were selling downtown was plywood to board the windows. It was like a ghost town down there. And you could see, as, as everything came back. I mean downtown's beautiful now. I mean. Not that I'm just saying it's because of the scallopers but...

[29:59] MHA: Has to help.

JL: It has to help and there's been restaurants like Mike's restaurant in Fairhaven. Danny, who owns these boats here, Venture, he owns that and the guys from Northern Wind own that EJs restaurant in Fairhaven, and a lot of, you know Lars that owns all these Fleet Fisheries, he owns

Fathoms and he owns The Ice Chest. Yeah, and Albert that owned High Grade he owns the, it's on Pier Three,

MHA: The Whale?

JL: Yeah, The Black Whale and he owns Carmine's Restaurant so the money is, it's reinvesting in New Bedford. A lot of it.

MHA: That's fascinating.

JL: Yeah, and you can see downtown, it's, it's compared to the way it was. It's a good feeling.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: Yeah. The Whaling Museum and the little cafes popping up like Tia Maria's; it's beautiful.

MHA: Have you had a chance yet to go to the Heritage Center?

JL: I haven't and I've been wanting to do that. I just haven't.

MHA: Yeah. It's open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sundays. So, bring your wife.

JL: Yeah. Oh yeah.

MHA: And show it off a little bit. It's free right now.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: And we do have special events too, some. In fact, I think, in a couple weeks there's going to be a couple of fishermen, one's a lobsterman from Maine. They're both getting on now but they're really fun. They really have a good sense of humor so look for that. So, what do you think is the hardest part of your job?

JL: The hardest part. It's almost like instinct now so, I've been doing it so long so, sometimes, it's just, the aches and pains at night. You know the body's, the spirit is willing but the body says no. But, I mean I think this is what keeps me young at heart. I'm 56 now and I can work just as hard as a 25-year old, you know.

MHA: Well, which brings up another question. Do you see many young people coming into the industry either here specifically or along the whole industry?

JL: Not a whole lot. Because I think nowadays, education is, I mean, parents are trying to push their kids to education. That's where the money is. But there's money down here also. I mean you've got to have the willingness to do it.

MHA: So if somebody was just starting out, if they were first coming to New Bedford, would you encourage them to try to find work in the industry?

JL: It would have to depend on the type of person, you know? You have to kind of be made for this. It's, like I said, you have to be very ambitious and you have to have the willingness to work hard.

MHA: Now I know that the plant has quite a few immigrants...

JL: Mm-hmm.

MHA: ...that work, and a lot of the plants do now. Are you finding, is that a major change over the time that you've been in the industry?

JL: Oh yeah. When I first came around in like the late 70s it was all Portuguese; the cutters were all Portuguese or they were Cape Verdean. And it's slowly evolved into the Guatemalans or Puerto Rican or, yeah. But, great workers.

MHA: And, I don't know how to ask this but, with the change in politics, do you have any fears for the waterfront?

JL: Um...

MHA: Immigration policies specifically.

JL: Oh, that yeah, Yeah, I do. I think they should have a pathway to citizenship if they've been working down here and have a good record of not being in trouble and worked hard and kept a job for X amount of years. They should, there should be a way out for them. I mean if they're trouble-makers then they need to go back, but.

[35:32] MHA: So, let's see. Since you're in, I guess a managerial position, right? Do you guys get paid, the managers, do they get paid weekly or monthly?

JL: Yeah, weekly.

MHA: And for the workers on the line, are there, is there a hierarchy in terms of who gets paid more?

JL: Yeah, yeah, there's certain guys that are foremen and certain guys that run different parts of the plant. Like you got to run all these RSW tanks so there'd be the tank men, they get paid a little more because they got to run, they got to know what valves to shut and what valves to open.

MHA: Fairly important.

JL: Yeah, very important.

MHA: And how about the safety, are, is there somebody designated for keeping an eye on? I know that there are little temperature things.

JL: Yeah. The QC, quality control. Yeah, there's myself and Brendan will do that. Yeah, we have to take a temperature, what, two fish every ton, you know. And the tons go flying through here quickly.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: And they have to be the right temperature, you know.

MHA: And that's part of a HAACP plan?

JL: Right, yeah,

MHA: Yeah.

JL: Because mackerel and herring have histamines so it's got to be under thirty degrees or... Really it's forty but we hold it to thirty-eight. Just to be, yeah.

MHA: Just to be safe?

JL: Yeah

MHA: Yeah. And are there alarms for anything? I think somebody was mentioning ammonia can form?

JL: Right. Yeah, there's alarms that would notify us. There's actually a windsock out there. See it? Tells you which way the winds blowing. So, if there's an emergency you go, you know.

MHA: Up, yeah?

JL: Instead of upwind you go downwind. Don't go downwind, you go upwind.

MHA: Yeah. Interesting. And do you know, you said you keep, you do keep, you socialize still with some of the people you grew up with on the waterfront. Are there any associations? I know that most people are no longer unionized but are there other associations? Social groups or anything that unites some of the people on the waterfront?

JL: Probably the Working Waterfront, when they have that festival, you see a lot of your friends walking around and stuff like that. Or they have the United Way Outing on Pier 3. They have the lobster bake or whatever it is. A lot of people go to that.

MHA: Now, if you were going to be designing an exhibit for a museum that was talking about your business, either what you do here or what you've done in the past, what would you like to make sure that people know?

JL: That's a good question. Probably that a fisherman isn't, like they have a bad name somewhere, you know, that, that it's, that's not true. It's a fisherman is a hard worker, he's a family man, he's the breadwinner of the house, you know what I mean? He's, he sacrifices a great deal to become successful.

[40:19] MHA: So, what is your ambition now that you've been here for a while. Do you see yourself staying here or do you feel like there's something that you haven't achieved yet that you still want to achieve?

JL: I just, I'm just part of this waterfront and, you know, I've been here for so long and I just want to stay here as long as I can and be part of the waterfront. The waterfront, some people like it, some people don't, but that's okay, you know? It goes with every job. If you've been down, if you've been here as long as I have.

MHA: When you think back over the years that you've been involved, is there any single person that stands out as kind of a favorite character or somebody who you think of as being a symbol of what's good about New Bedford?

JL: Hmmm. That's a tough one. It would probably have to be one of my favorite people, Roy Enoksen from Eastern. And I saw how he grew from the Sea Trek, an old wooden boat, to what he has today. It's kind of like, wow, you know? He always had the ambition to get bigger and bigger and bigger. Yeah.

MHA: I don't really know him; I've met him a few times. I've, I've talked more often to his sister.

JL: Right, okay.

MHA: She writes poetry, which is kind of cool. So, one of the things at the festival they've had in the past, are the narrative stage and people would come and talk about their experiences in the industry and then from time to time they'll have fisher poets and they even had some guys come from Seattle, who were poets. Fishermen and poets. That was interesting.

JL: Actually, another person who, actually it's a couple, Gail and Arnie Isaksen from Fairhaven. I mean good people, always re-investing in the community, high school, you know. They're making Fairhaven, I mean, beautiful. Gail is definitely a great person.

MHA: Yeah. And I couldn't believe how she, I don't know if she's still doing it but for a long time she was doing the whaling boats.

JL: Yes, I used to see her. I see her once a while and she'll be walking up Fort Street. I don't know if she still has that dog but she loved that dog. Yep. She's got the restaurants there and I mean, she's just made Fairhaven, I mean, so much better.

[45:00] MHA: So, is there a lot of interaction between the two sides, from Fairhaven and the New Bedford side?

JL: Yeah, yeah, there is, definitely. We're all like a family. It's just across the river. That's what everyone says, you know.

MHA: And you're right here, on the bridge. You're kind of bridging the two sides.

JL: I've finally, made it halfway between both.

MHA: Right. Well, is there anything that you can think of that I haven't asked you that I should have?

JL: No, not off the top of my head.

MHA: Okay, I know that you've, you know, because of your history and so on, I'm sure that there are a lot of things that I should be asking you about, you know, what you've done in the past. That, the whole business about the Night Riders, that's the first time I ever heard about that so that was...

JL: Oh, ask around. You'll have some good stories.

MHA: Yeah, yeah, that's great. I really appreciate it.

JL: I mean it was just me, I was, what 17, 18? I knew how to drive a stick shift but it was like, go take the truck and back into this boat and start unloading it, you know, covered in fish. Covered in fish. You'd have a hanging scale, it was, looked like a clock with a basket and they would just dump the baskets into that. You'd take the ice out and then dump it into a, actually we were just on the edge from getting... We were still with wooden boxes, then we'd get the plastic totes.

MHA: Right.

JL: So the wooden boxes, you really busted it.

MHA: Yeah, yeah, lot of hard work.

JL: Ah, hard work.

MHA: It made you strong.

JL: Oh yeah. Mentally and physically.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: The endurance of it, you know. Working long hours, no sleep.

MHA: So, how did you keep... In those days it was before we all had cell phones and everything. How did you keep track of the prices so that you knew what to be offering and...

JL: You'd, the old auction house.

MHA: Okay. But you were before the auction, right?

JL: Yeah, well, I would, we would unload before the auction but we would have to go by the auction price.

MHA: I see.

JL: The average or whatever, so, if you made a nickel a pound that was, you know, that was good.

MHA: Yeah.

JL: If you have volume, it was good, you know.

MHA: What do you think about prices now? Do you keep track of...

JL: Yeah, I keep track of it. Every morning I go and watch, I watch the auction on the computer. It's crazy. I don't know how people afford these scallops. I really don't. I mean fish is, it seems like it never changes. In the winter it will go up and in the summer it will level off.

MHA: Yeah. In fact it's surprising to me how little fish prices have changed.

JL: Yeah, over the years.

MHA: At least at this level.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: Not in the grocery store.

JL: Right. Oh, it's crazy. Crazy, yeah, it is.

MHA: Because I, when I first started learning about the fishing business I was a grad student and I'd go on the boats out of Provincetown and so they were, I learned about sort of the vocabulary.

JL: Yeah.

MHA: And the struggles that people were having with fish prices even at that time, you know, and fuel costs always going up and all the other things.

JL: Yeah, that was a tough time when fuel was like \$4 a gallon and \$3.80 a gallon, and the boats weren't catching much.

MHA: Yeah. Better at least for the scallopers; not so much for the draggers, around here anyway. Do you, are most of your friends on scallop boats?

JL: Yeah, a good part of them, yeah.

MHA: That's good.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. I said, Gee, can I get 2 scallops? You guys are getting cheaper as you make more money. So, he'll give like 5 pounds. I go, thank you. You're still my friend.

MHA: Good. Well, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me and tell me a little bit.

JL: My pleasure. There's more to tell but I'm kind of shy.

MHA: Well, I'm always willing to listen.

JL: Yeah, well dig up some more Night Riding stuff. Actually, your boy Carlos is, he was part of the Night Riders.

MHA: Oh, was he?

JL: Yeah, oh yeah. It was a cast of characters.

MHA: He's a character.

JL: Oh yeah. Yikes.

MHA: Well, I think I'll turn this off now but what I'm curious about, just off the record.

[50:34] End of audio