



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: July 12, 2017

Petter and Sharon Ulrichsen ~ Oral History Interview

Fred Calabretta

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Petter and Sharon Ulrichsen, July 12, 2017

Background

Name of person interviewed: Petter Ulrichsen [PU] and Sharon Ulrichsen [SU]

Facts about this person:

Age Petter: 66
 Sex Male
 Occupation Owner, Harbor Hydraulics, Fairhaven
 Residence (Town where lives)
 Ethnic background (if known) Norwegian

Interviewer: Fred Calabretta [FC]

Transcriber: Millie Rahn [MR]

Interview location: Harbor Hydraulics, Fairhaven

Date of interview: July 12, 2017

Key Words

Norway, (Goat?) Marine Industries, Brooklyn, New York; Green Wharf, North Atlantic Diesel, Thompson Propeller, Scandia Propeller Services, New Bedford Vocational school, George (Fina?), dragging, scalloping, Bridgeport [machine], pumps, herring industry, Alabama, cylinders/cylinder repairs, hoses, winches, Tom Stephen Ulrichsen, Randy Martin (machinist), clam boat rowers, lobstering, offshore hauling block, highliners, Point Judith, Tompkins adapter, Gates engine adapter, Metro Supply Shuster's, General Supply, cranberry bogs, Pullmaster winch, [Rapidema?] hauling system

Abstract

Petter and his wife Sharon own Harbor Hydraulics in Fairhaven, which he started with his brother some years ago. Petter graduated from New Bedford Vocational school, worked fishing with his father-in-law for a while, then at Scandia propellers, and eventually opened his own shop doing both installations and the business end of the paperwork. Sharon does the computer work and their son works in the shop and doing installations on the boats. They talk about the actual process of the work they do—hydraulics, working on engines, winches, cylinders, and other services to both the fishing fleet and other industrial customers—and the changes they've seen both in the fishing industry over the years, and in the kinds of boats and how technology has changed and made their work more specialized. They also discuss their uncertainty about the future of the industry, both fishing and the need for the technical work they do with hydraulics and related machinery.

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[00:00] Introduction. Petter was born in Brooklyn, New York, where his father worked on Norwegian boats. Family moved to Massachusetts c. 1956 and his father continued working in the machine end of the industry. Talks about hydraulics coming onto fishing boats.

[05:06] Petter describes himself as a “working boss” and talks about his work, starting the company c. 1987. Says their company is the only one on the Fairhaven waterfront that does the kind of work they do.

[10:09] Talks about who customers are, working with local fleet, but also with the southern fleet working out of New Bedford. More about the business of Harbor Hydraulics, small staff, travel/installation versus working in the shop.

[15:03] Discusses suppliers, different products they make and/or work with.

[20:15] Discusses the technical processes of working on engines, pacing jobs, variety of the work they do on the boats themselves and in the shop.

[25:09] More about running the shop, different tasks, length of workday/work week.

[30:04] Petter and Sharon both talk about planning the work and the uncertainty of the future of the industry, difficulty getting younger workers who want to “get their hands dirty,” how their son can take his skills into other aspects of machine work in future, in necessary.

[35:19] More on thoughts about the future, changes in the industry, best parts of the job, realities of the financial aspects of the company and dealing with billing and customers.

[40:37] Further thoughts on changes over time on the waterfront, Petter having the waterfront in his blood, early experiences watching boat launches in Maine, and thoughts about slowing down and possible retirement.

[43:22] End of audio

[00:00]

Fred Calabretta: And I just have to read this introduction here. Today is July 12, 2017. This is an interview for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, funded by an Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress. As part of this project we're interviewing workers in the New Bedford/Fairhaven fishing industry to record their stories, document their skills and knowledge, and better understand their 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 Petter Ulrichsen at Harbor Hydraulics in Fairhaven. Did I pronounce your last name right?

Petter Ulrichsen: Correct.

FC: Okay. We just need you to give us your permission to record this.

PU: Yes. You've got my permission, yeah.

FC: Just to start --

PU: Fred, excuse me. My full name is John P. Around the waterfront everybody calls me Petter. If you need it official, John P. Ulrichsen. That's fine.

FC: In fact, that was my first question. That's good. And your date of birth?

PU: 10/16/50.

FC: And were you born...

PU: I was born in Brooklyn, New York. Yup. Being a young kid, I think maybe around six months old, my parents came over here to Massachusetts. My father was involved with working on the ship from Norway. He ended up doing some shipping and then he got business with Go Marine Industry in Brooklyn, New York, I think it was. And they came over here and they worked at a company called Green Wharf. It was tied in with North Atlantic Diesel. And eventually they came over to North Atlantic Diesel and there was my father and another gentleman. They bought out Warren Thompson, Thompson Propeller Company, and they started Scandia Propeller Service. When I graduated out of school, New Bedford Vocational, back in 1970, I went to work for Scandia Propeller Service learning the machine shop trade in the marine end and worked there for a while. Then I felt I needed a little time out of there. I went to work for my father-in-law, George Fina. He taught me things about dragging and the scalloping, since he was boat owner. And I stayed with him for a lot of years. Then I had the opportunity to jump back over to Scandia and did more machine shop work. Gunnar taught me the hydraulic end and like I say, I stayed there again for a while and then I had the opportunity to try to open up a shop with my brother, Tom Stephen. The two of us we started the business.

FC: What year was that?

PU: I believe that was in '87. 1987. I think he was with me for 10 years and then he needed a change. He moved away. He's up in Maine and here I am still at it with my son and my wife and three other employees on the floor.

FC: When you started the business, was it at this location?

PU: Yes, it was.

FC: So you've been here the whole time?

PU: I've been here all the time.

FC: What were you doing or sort of what was going on when you first were getting things going?

PU: Over here?

FC: Yeah.

PU: Well, we did have a little bit of knowledge of the hydraulics systems in the fishing industry. Basically, that's what we kept on doing. We have, in the shop we have lathes and a Bridgeport and we have different kinds of welding machines to help us instead of subbing things out if we need adjustment stands for our pumps and odds and ends if we need things bored out. We can do it in house here. We did small hydraulics systems and then as we had some customers from Scandia that really liked us and they followed me up here and we gave them the best service we could. The best knowledge we had and kept their boats going and then we met other people and some big hydraulics systems. When I say big, it was tied into the herring industry trawlers, you know, and things like that. They gave us a lot of work. They still do today. We take care a lot of customers in the fleet, but we also have a lot of customers I'll call it industrial, outside the working waterfront.

[05:06]

FC: What percentage of it roughly is --

PU: I'm going to say 80 percent, maybe 90 percent still in the fishing industry, but there's a percentage of industrial that we do. We go on the road. We've traveled to Alabama to take care of one of our customers. Actually, we got two jobs out of it. There's a majority that walk in with industrial hydraulics, you know. We do a lot of cylinder repairs here. It's amazing how many we do. We do motor repairs, pump repairs, valves, again cylinders. We got a big hose line which is the gates and we make hoses from quarter inch to two inch and two wire, four wire, and six wire. We're the only ones on the waterfront on this side that will do that kind of hose.

FC: So you're doing the, you're fabricating the gear and equipment here, but then you also do the installation?

PU: Yeah, we fabricate to a point of what we need, you know? Back in the olden days when the draggers and some of the scallopers were going, things have changed because a lot of the boats had power takeoffs with chains on the them and driving the mechanical winch, we'll call it. Then when the hydraulics started coming in, they do away with the chain and they had power takeoff with pumps and stuff and pumpers, pumps. That pumps the oil up to hydraulic motors under certain psi. Today all the new boats being built and a lot of ones that are being retrofitted at the time everybody's going hydraulic because it's safer also. You know?

FC: How have the hydraulics changed since you started?

PU: Basically, I'm going to say the hydraulics hasn't really changed too much, but what we're seeing is some of the way they control the control valves to operate winches. You're seeing more electrical. There's some electric circuits. Instead of having a bunch of hoses to another valve, it's all done by wire. I guess that's the going way, but there are some people that still need that feel for a control valve.

FC: That technology piece --

PU: Yeah, technology, sure.

FC: Like everything else, that's changed. When you started the business with your brother, did you have any employees or was it just the two of you?

PU: It was the two of us for a little while and then we added one guy and he's still with me, Randy Martin. I use him as an inside machinist. He's basically the shop guy. My son, when he started with us, he's an all-around man. He's on the boats, on the floor in the shop, he's a machinist also. I mean, it's a shop where you're not just going to be doing one thing. You do a lot of things. If you want to pick up the welder and start welding and learn welding and stuff, that's fine. A few guys in the shop have done and it's worked out well, including my son. Yeah.

FC: If there's a typical day, what would you be doing on a typical day like today?

PU: Today, let's see. Well, the guys on the floor are working on the rollers for a clam boat. They had a bunch of cylinders to do. This week has been busy. Even though it's only Wednesday, we pumped out a lot of cylinders, cylinders repairs. And there's miscellaneous odds and ends in the shop to do. For the fishing fleet end and also an industrial end. Yeah.

FC: Are you out of the office a lot doing installation?

PU: Yeah. I try to get up here and take care of my bills and my paperwork, mostly Saturdays. Then I try to go out on the floor and give everybody a hand. Whether it's on the boat or in the shop and stuff, so yeah. I'm a working boss.

[10:09]

FC: As far as working on the boats, is most of the business right here in New Bedford/Fairhaven?

PU: Yeah, most of it is, yeah. But there are times when we get a call and we go to go, you know? So, we'll go where the work is.

Sharon Ulrichsen: But there's also boats from out of the area that come to New Bedford and they fish in and out of New Bedford.

PU: Like the southern fleet? They come up certain times of year and they give us a jingle. "Hey, my boat's coming in. We have problems," so we go over there and meet them and we take care of them, you know?

FC: So, some of the work is repair, but most of it's gear, new equipment?

PU: Right. You take the parts off that you think is giving the boat the problem. Get them in the shop, open them up, and if it can't be repaired, then we replace it with new pumps or valves or motors, you know?

FC: If you're working with fishermen, they want it done that day.

PU: Well, they want it done as fast as they can, because they got crews on the boat and when they're not moving, they're not making any money. Service is a big part of our business here. We try to jump right on things. I have a good company up in New Hampshire I use a lot. That's where some of my pump work goes. If we can't fix it down here, it goes up there. We can drive there. That's what's nice and they treat us real good and it's a fast turn around, so that's what we like.

FC: It seems like with the kind of work, it must be some long days? I mean, if you got to get a job done or you have to work through a weekend --

PU: If we have to work Saturday, well, I can't recall working on a Sunday, you know, but we do sometimes work some long hours. But a little bit of that has changed due to the fact that the boats, they're not fishing as hard as they were previous years, you know?

SU: That's cut back on --

PU: On everybody. That's affected everybody. I mean, you still want to try to get them done and get them back out there again. So, they might say if we can go Tuesday, that would be good, you know? And we get them done and there they are sitting at the docks till Friday under different conditions. Maybe something else went wrong with something else, but service down here is we try to give everybody 110 percent.

FC: Are you doing more work for scallopers than ground fishing boats?

PU: We do a lot of work for the scallopers. Draggers, don't seem like we get too much of that work.

SU: We do a lot with the clam and the herring.

PU: Yeah, clamming and the herring industry we do quite a bit with.

SU: And lobstering too.

PU: Lobstering, yup.

FC: So, all of it, yeah.

PU: We do in the lobstering end, we do make what we call the harbor offshore hauling block. I don't know how many we've made, but we make them and we have them in galvanized or we make them in stainless steel. There's well, three, maybe three, four boats that's lobstering, we call them the highliners and they all have the stainless steel block on them. It seems like one guy buys one and the other guy sees it, oh, I got to have one. That's good because we make money that way, you know?

FC: Yeah, word of mouth.

PU: We got one now being built for a boat over in Point Judith, I think it is. Yeah, that's a new customer. He's getting an offshore block from us. So, he saw it and he says yup, I need one. So, we'll make them, you know? Yeah.

FC: What about supplies and material? I mean, fittings and hose and stuff like that? Do you get it all locally?

PU: No, hydraulic adapters, we get it out of a big company called Tompkins. We use them. There's a few other places that we go to and get adapters also, but Tompkins, we've been using them since we've been in business and they sell a good adapter, you can get almost anything you need. Like I say, the Gates end is a good line. For the hose, we started out with Weatherhead. Weatherhead was basically, I'm not saying they went out of business, but the company changed, picked up the Gates line, and we stayed with them and we got the Gates line, and we've been real happy with the Gates.

[15:03]

We got the big machine in the shop to make the big hoses. Not all the time we're making two-inch hose, but we make a lot of inch and a half four wire and anything down, so it's a good piece of hose. Talking about suppliers, the suppliers around here, you got Metro Supply, you got Shuster's. We use them all. We try to push things around, you know, and keep everybody happy, you know?

FC: Yeah, yeah.

PU: It's hard because Metro, I'm not saying I grew up with them, but they started at Shuster's, and all them guys branched out on their own, so you try to keep everybody happy, throw a little business every direction you can. If you put all the business in one thing and all of a sudden, gee, I need to go down there, you know? I haven't seen you in 50 years, you know? Like that there. I don't think you'll get too much service out of them.

FC: It's good to keep the connections.

PU: Right, try to keep the connection going. Things like that, you know?

FC: Yeah. And help each other out.

PU: Sure. We got General Supply up there in the city. They're a big supplier of metal and brass and fasteners and different kind of things. We'd be lost without them if they decide to move, because there's no one in the city like them. And everybody around here probably feels the same way I do. They're grateful to have them, you know?

FC: Yeah. What about the family part of the business? What are the best things about family being involved? They're here, so you got to be careful what you say.

PU: [laughs] Right.

SU: I would say the dedication and the trust factor. Like our son, he kind of came down here as a 10-year-old boy, well, maybe not 10, but an 11-year-old sweeping the floor for his summer holiday and it just kind of got in his blood and that's it.

FC: Yeah. He's been around it since you were a kid. The other thing it seems like about family is you know you can trust each other, whereas if you hired someone in that you, you just don't know all the time.

SU: You don't know all the alternative motives.

PU: No, it's a good little operation here.

SU: But with the cutbacks in the fishing days for the scallopers, had it not been for the herring and the clam boats, I don't know if we would survive, to be perfectly honest.

FC: It seems like so many businesses have taken a hit because of the regulation changes.

PU: Yeah.

SU: In some ways, it's put the pressure off the fishermen that they don't have to go out, they still go out in January and February, but usually by the worst of the winter months they're already been out of their days. Some of them are done in September.

PU: Yeah, they fished their days up and that's it.

SU: Then when the boats aren't going out, the parts aren't breaking down.

PU: Yeah.

SU: So, I mean, it's just simple is that they're not working, we're not working. But luckily for us, we picked up the industrial trades and we do a lot with the clam boats and the herring boats, and then there's various factories that are involved with the fishing boats. Like there's I think two that I can think of, fish products, they made animal by-products, animal products out of the fish by-products. We get quite a bit of work from them, too, which is... I'm not saying it's a new industry, but it's making use of what used to be throw-away stuff.

FC: So, it really helps to have other stuff besides just the draggers and --

SU: Diversify, yeah. And we do a lot with even the little backyard farmer who has a John Deere backhoe and he needs his cylinders repaired. We've done work for funeral homes.

PU: Yeah.

FC: Oh really?

PU: Yeah.

SU: Assortment of different stuff.

PU: We have funeral home put in a hydraulic lifting table up in the embalming room.

FC: No kidding? [laughs]

SU: And actually one time we did a job, it was Zeiterion Theatre, which we think what would we do there, but a chandelier needed to be cleaned.

PU: Lowered, so we had to a winch from Shuster's Corporation that actually got us the job. We supplied a winch, I think it was, it's been so long.

[20:15]

And we fastened it up in the timber framing up there and we lowered the chandelier down, got everything all cleaned up, someone else did that, then we hoisted it back up, put it on a big turn buckle up there and that was it, you know? Yeah.

FC: So it's being flexible and doing different stuff.

PU: Yup. Back in the way days there, they even gave me a big job in the big, big truck for the circus to roll the big tent up in, so I had to rework that. That was a different kind of job, you know?

SU: And there was another circus that came to town and one of little toy rides got broken and we had to supply --

PU: Hydraulic motor foam right away in and got them going. Everybody was happy. So, really, you know --

VOICE: The trash company we do a lot of work for.

PU: Oh yeah.

VOICE: Local trash company, we do a lot of work for.

PU: ABC and Freights and stuff like that. They give us a tremendous amount of work.

FC: How does it start? Like, if it's a system, whether it's on a boat or not on a boat, you need to start with the plans or a diagram or something?

PU: Well, if it's a winch circuit, we just, myself, I like to start right at either the main engine if it's going to be driven that way or if they got a hydraulic engine we call it. I like to start there. We get a plan in the engine room where things are going to go and we get them mounted and then we make our penetrations up through the deck to main winches and cargoes and things like that. And before you know it, we're putting hoses on and we're doing this and that. When we finally got a good day for a startup and testing and setting pressures and things like that. But I mean, I talk kind of fast like it gets done that quick, but I mean, it doesn't really. There's a lot of planning when you're down in the engine room. You try to put pieces somewhere where you can work on, have good access. I've been on some of the boats that are built down South and everything's jammed up. There's really no need to do that. I mean, you do the planning and stuff. You talked about technology earlier. In the early days, the pipes that, we used to just use a paste. Put it on there, tighten things up. You wouldn't get a leak, but over years that will dry out and then you'll get a leak, you know? Then we found a product that was better, called lock tight. It's made for hydraulics. It takes more heat, takes more pressure, and stuff like that. That was good. Last systems we put together, we put everything SEO in couplings. That's a coupling fitted with an O ring. The adapter goes on there. Just take it nice, tight, don't have to worry about a leak. So, yeah, everything's welded. Two passes are welded on it and we bend pipe, make it, try to instead of sharp 90s, you want to do nice sweet 90s and things like that that keep systems quieter, things run a little bit cooler. So, there's a lot of planning.

FC: Is it common to have more than one job going on at a time? Like if you're waiting for parts...

PU: Oh, yeah, because you might have a job on a boat doing an installation and then there's things going on in the shop where if you can take a little time away from job A and try to help

this guy on job B, maybe someone in the shop needs a little hand on job B because they don't quite understand it and then we have to come in and do it, you know? We're not a shop where we're going to try to have a bunch of jobs going on at once. This way here, we don't want to make enemies. We want to get a customer done and get them out fishing and get them running, you know? Yeah, but it's worked out well.

FC: If you're dealing with a winch or deck equipment of something, you're out in the weather. I mean, if you're working in winter, right?

PU: Yeah, well, like I mean, sometimes we have to do installations in the winter, you know? I mean, I wouldn't say it's that tough really, because it's like anything else, you get dressed for it and things might take a little bit longer because you're dealing with the elements and stuff like that, but eventually it gets done.

FC: And you're used to it?

[25:09]

PU: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

FC: You've had lots of practice. [laughs]

PU: Yeah.

FC: What kind of schedule do you usually keep? What time do you usually come in in the morning?

PU: We start here anywhere from, my son's here usually quarter after six, sometimes six.

SU: We're here at 10 of six.

PU: Yeah, you know, and we'll sit down and make a few notes of what's going on. The rest of the guys in the shop, I like to see them start at seven, 7:30, and we work till four o'clock.

FC: Take a lunch break?

PU: Oh, yeah, there's lunch breaks, 12 to 12:30, half hour. In the morning, there's a 15-minute break and sometimes they just take a break as they need it in the afternoon.

FC: You said you have one guy who's been with you for quite a while?

PU: Yeah, Randy Martin. Been here, I'm going to say he's probably been here, well --

SU: Probably about 25 years.

PU: Yeah, I was going to say 25.

SU: We had many that have come and gone.

PU: Yeah.

FC: I was going to say, one thing I've been hearing a lot is that it's tough to get young people interested and stuff like that.

SU: Randy came from the cranberry bogs.

PU: Yeah, he was --

SU: He was a machinist.

PU: He was a machinist out of Old Colony in Rochester. He said he was second in his class. It's been so long I don't really remember him coming in.

SU: I wasn't working here at the time, but I seem to recall he kept coming here and he wanted to work here. Why? I don't know. And then eventually we hired him and he's been here ever since.

PU: He's a very good man. A very good man, yup. He's a good machinist, he's a good welder, yup. He knows his things, you know? And he knows how I want things done, so that's nice, you know? He's good with people.

SU: He's in the shop all the time. Everyone else is basically in and out all day long.

FC: If somebody needs something, like say, a winch or something, is it usually they start with a phone call or somebody comes in?

PU: Yeah. They'll call us and all right, I don't have any distributorships. Some places do. But most popular winch on the waterfront today is the Pullmaster and they're made in Canada. That's a real, real good winch. It's multiple sizes. The scallopers use the 12-footer cargoes and the main deck winches are 30. If a customer came to me and says hey, I need a set up, you know? I'll sit down and talk to them and you're going to have hydraulic engine? Yup. All right. Best off they have two pumps. Two double pumps. That way you can run the main winch and a cargo at the same time. People like that. Then we get the order going and get parts in and when there's enough stuff to start working on the boat, we'll start working on the boat, you know? We make sure, like I say, I like to work at the engine room and work my way up, yup. That's meaning also hydraulic tank. Sometimes we have to make a tank. Sometimes tanks are made into a fuel tank or we've put them right down in the bilge, right on top of the hydraulic engine, and stuff like that, which is good too.

FC: How long would a job like that take if everything goes...

PU: A full installation on a scalloper today probably would take you I want to say maybe, if you have everything, a month and a half to two months, probably. Yeah.

FC: It's a big job.

PU: Yeah, it is a big job. Yup. A lot of components. Every boat has a haul-back station. Oh, yeah, yeah, right, yeah.

VOICE: Good to meet you.

FC: Nice to meet you.

PU: Good luck with your appointment. Every boat has a haul-back station, you know. So, they can run from the pilothouse and there's guys on deck that can run the cargoes on deck and stuff like that, so that's extra work. We like to build a nice console in the shop here and then fit it in over on the boat.

FC: If you're doing some kind of installation, like say something like a winch, how involved is the boat owner or the crew? Are you working with them at all?

PU: Not really. A boat owner might come down, see how we're making out, but overall, he's not really getting his hands dirty.

[30:04]

He's just looking over and making sure that he likes where things are. Yeah.

FC: Would you say years ago, though, maybe or when you were just starting that a lot of the fishermen did more of their own work? Or some stuff at least, I guess?

PU: Maybe some stuff. Maybe, you know?

SU: The fishing industry has also changed. I'm going to speak up. Years ago it was basically, not basically but a majority of the boats was all owner-operated.

PU: Owner-operated, sure.

SU: And you didn't really have many what we call like a fleet. It would be the owner and he'd be going down there because you didn't really have as much technology that one man could kind of do a lot, because it was simpler machinery.

FC: Yeah, so he could fix his engine or make his own net.

PU: Right.

FC: Or whatever.

SU: Exactly. Not as much technology. Now, it kind of, you have more specialized fields. Now, many, I mean, we have a few men that own more than 10 boats. Some more than 20.

PU: Yeah.

SU: Obviously, one man, you only can do so much in a day.

FC: It's like cars, too. I mean, you used to be able to open the hood and replace something or do something. Now it's all computers and sensors.

PU: Exactly.

SU: Now with less fishing time, say if one man owned two boats, he has kind of like one crew to go on both boats. Like one boat's done fishing for the year and then he uses those men on a second boat. So, things have changed a lot. Yeah, back in the day a lot of boat owners/captains would do a lot of their maintenance work.

FC: It's a lot more complicated in a lot of ways, or specialized.

SU: Exactly.

FC: Where people like you have got the skills to deal with a certain piece of it. What's the worst things or toughest things about the business?

PU: Well, sometimes it's collections. That's pretty tough. Right off the bat, the insurance and health cost. Very, very big, you know? Let's see.

SU: I also think what else is kind of tough is you really don't know what the future is.

PU: Yeah, that's true.

SU: Which it's like in any industry, but a year ago we jumped up a whole man because you had the work and you kind of say like oh yeah, we can actually do it. But sometimes it's hard knowing like, should you hire an extra man? Like, the what if? And with all the regulations cut back, you don't really know from time to time what's going to happen.

FC: It's hard to plan.

SU: Exactly.

PU: It is.

FC: With your son involved, it must make you worry even more about the future.

SU: Well, to be perfectly honest, that worried me when he said he wanted to come in, because I knew there would be enough work for my husband to finish out his career that we could survive. But with someone thinking like oh, what do you do for the next 40 years? It's pretty grim. But my only, how I feel he'll be okay is there's so few men, young people, coming in that want to get their hands dirty.

PU: Yeah.

SU: That he already has enough of a reputation that if we weren't here, some of the fleet company, someone with a few boats, would pick him up because he's young and he's been already on the waterfront for 10 plus years; that he would be able to adapt whether it's working for, I'm saying Steamship, they're a big union job that you can get work out of, but just with the regular boat owner that he's lucky enough. What you do with the other men? I don't know because he's the most resourceful because well, he started with you doing the hydraulics --

PU: Yeah.

SU: Whereas our other man down there that's been there 30 years, he never leaves the shop. He's just old school. Not knocking it, but he's the old school, I'll make you anything out of a piece of steel.

[35:19]

PU: Yeah. We need him in the shop when we're gone.

SU: Yeah, and he is very happy, very content. He doesn't want to go out. He doesn't want to learn, mass produce a hundred widgets at a time. And then our other two guys are fairly new. They don't have the knowledge that our son does, because he's already been doing it like 12 plus years.

FC: So he knows the work and he's willing to do the work?

PU: Oh yeah.

SU: Exactly. Yup. Whereas our other two guys, just, they're not there yet.

PU: No.

SU: There's really quite a bit of handholding.

PU: Yeah.

SU: And you've taken him out, like I said, he started off sweeping the floor, but then maybe the next summer he got to do something else. He used to bring home little motors and tell him, open this up in the garage and he would tinker with that. But a lot of the young people that come here

looking for jobs, they kind of want my job, being on the computer and not getting their hands dirty. They just don't want to be on the field.

PU: Yeah.

SU: And another thing, when we've been hiring people, some people don't like to work when it's raining out or snowing out. They want to be --

PU: Inside.

SU: Comfy job.

PU: You know?

SU: Whereas our job here, if it's raining and icy and snowing, we still got to work outside.

FC: If somebody needs something. Needs a repair or need something.

PU: Exactly.

FC: And he's a customer, you got to be there.

PU: Sure.

SU: Yup. I mean, they're out in all elements so we have to do, I mean, they probably think we're little pansies at times too, but we're not really that bad.

PU: No.

SU: Yeah, it's scary having somebody young coming into this. That's why there's not a lot of people in it. A lot of young people aren't coming into it.

PU: Even crews on the boat. You're not really finding young, young guys.

SU: No.

PU: Two reasons. The guys who are on the boats, they're not leaving yet. They're not ready to leave. They make their money, their good money. Even though they've had some bad years, but now they're making decent money. A young guy tries to get over here on a boat and stuff like that, he doesn't have a chance.

SU: The whole fleet is getting older.

PU: Yeah.

FC: It's the same think, I know, and we did some work with the Stonington fishing fleet. It's a lot smaller, but a lot of those guys, the fishermen have doing it for three or four generations. And all their kids, almost all the kids, are doing something else. They're just not interested in it. Or they're worried about it.

SU: But also, probably when they were younger, things were difficult and now it's better, but there was quite a few lean years. But it also sort of gets in your blood that you kind of like that independence of going out, working outside.

FC: What's the best thing about the job for you?

PU: Best thing about the job?

FC: What do you like about it?

PU: Over the years I met a lot of fantastic people. Really, really good people. Actually, I like what we do. It's always a learning curve. There's always a learning curve, you know?

SU: Satisfaction of sometimes helping somebody like in a real jam.

PU: Yeah.

SU: And they're very, very happy. Some of them aren't, but there are few customers of ours who, they're young, starting out. Their whole lifehood is I got to get this part fixed, because they got to go out and make their mortgage, feed their family, and some of them are very, very, very happy that we do the next step to get them out.

PU: Yeah.

FC: Yeah, it makes a big difference for them.

PU: It does. It does.

SU: And then, we carry people to a certain extent. Most of our billing is all done after the fact. Pretty much 30, you know, sometimes people take longer. Some people don't really have the money, but they come in and say next week I should be able to pay my bill. Kind of like the old-fashioned way.

FC: So you work with them?

SU: Yes.

PU: Work with them, oh yeah. Exactly. Yup.

FC: That's a big thing.

PU: It is.

SU: It is, yeah.

FC: A lot of places today, it's like you go to the doctor, they want you to pay when you walk in the door.

SU: But you know, but it also comes back to we're a small company. Like our vendors give us net 30. And he is on the job working and all these slips he has to do the paperwork, but he's got his other job to do first. Do you know what I mean? So, it's like a --

PU: That's why I say Saturdays are billing day for me.

SU: But sometimes the part is done and I can't really say to the customer you can't have it till next week or in two weeks till he gets around to doing the bill.

[40:37]

Not gets around, but till the bill gets done. But sometimes if it's an unknown customer, a new customer, or a shady reputation, we have to get it done right away, whether we call our customers, our vendors, and say hey, I need such and such a part price and we do it up. But, most of our customers all pay by check.

FC: Well I should let you get back to work.

PU: No, it's, another thing, too, we have a line over in Norway. It's the Rapidema. It's a gill-netting piece of equipment. Again, it's in the fishing industry, you know, and there's a few people around that they either like it or they don't like it. A lot of people like it and we give them good service and stuff like that. We stock different parts for rollers and stuff like that, so that helps us along too.

FC: Is it like a hauling system?

PU: It's a hauling system. Just for the gill net. Yup.

FC: That's another specialized thing that you do that you offer?

PU: Yup.

FC: Covering a lot of ground.

PU: It's okay, you know? We've seen a lot of changes in the years since back in the '70s and up to now. It's amazing, you know?

FC: It's with everything. That's great.

PU: Gone from wooden boats to big steel scallopers and stuff like that, you know? I remember as a kid growing up, we used to go to some of the launchings up in [unintelligible]'s shipyard up in Maine. It was the best time in my life. Seeing the new boat. Thing sliding down into the water. It was a great time, even though I was only a kid, you know?

FC: So that, the waterfront, and all of that has kind of really been in your blood since you were a kid?

PU: Oh yeah. Sure has. Yup. I don't know. I'm trying to retire or slow down, but I don't know what I'm going to do. Slow down a little, but, yup. I'm 67 in October. Just keep going. That's all.

FC: Yeah. Well, as long as you like what you do and business is going okay. That's great.

[43:22] End of audio