



NEW BEDFORD FISHING HERITAGE CENTER

Date of Interview: June 9, 2017

Tony Vieira ~ Oral History Interview

Fred Calabretta

Tony Vieira. Interview by Fred Calabretta. *Workers on the New Bedford Waterfront*. New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center. Date of interview: June 9, 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: Tony Vieira [TV]

Facts about this person:

Age	46
Sex	male
Occupation	owner of T & K Marine Electronics
Residence	unknown
Ethnic background	unknown

Interviewer: Fred Calabretta [FC]

Transcriber: Amy O'Donnell [AO]

Interview location: T & K Marine Electronics

Date of Interview: June 9, 2017

Key Words

marine electronics, vocational high school, radar, GPS, satellite communications, autopilots, VHF, circuit boards, fishing boat electronic equipment, technology changes, tracking systems, carpenters, Eastern rigs, foremast, plotters, customer service, authorized dealer of marine electronics

Abstract

Tony Vieira is a 46-year-old marine electronics specialist and the owner of T & K Marine Electronics in New Bedford, MA. He describes his work history in the marine electronics field, his company, and the work he does on a day-to-day basis. He also speaks about the changes in technology and the industry he has seen over the past twenty-five years.

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[00:00] Intro: Tony describes how he got started in the marine electronics field, his education and experience, and choices he made early in his career.

[5:00] Speaks about his mentor, Richmond Frost. Continues to talk a little more about his first jobs. Specifies what his company does and services they provide and the hours he usually works.

[10:00] Expresses his value of customer service. Describes the equipment he uses. Speaks about the technology changes he has seen in his career. Talks about the difficulty the weather can present to the job.

[15:00] Describes new installations. Speaks about what he provides to a new fishing vessel. Talks about the lack of young people in the field and changes he has seen in the fishing industry.

[20:00] Describes the troubleshooting process on the job. Speaks to the challenges of working on older boats. Talks about how he designs the systems for new boats. Speaks about how he tests equipment.

[25:00] Speaks about the changes in marine electronics technology he has seen. Describes how currently there is a cleaner working environment than in the past.

[30:00] Explains the responsibility he feels of making sure equipment is installed correctly and working. Describes risks to fishermen he feels if the job is not done well. Talks about his employees. Expresses his opinion that it is a good field for young people to get into.

[35:00] Describes his process of learning new technologies. Explains how he keeps up with changes. Gives advice to those interested in the field. Describes the physical challenges of the job and what he likes about his job.

[40:00] Speaks a little about the difficulties of scheduling jobs and describes the good relationships he has with his customers. Conclusion of interview.

[43:07] End of audio.

Fred Calabretta: Okay, I have to read this introduction so I'll start with this. Today is June 9, 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 shore side workers in the New Bedford/Fairhaven fishing industry to record their stories, document their skills and knowledge, and better understand their important role in the fishing industry. The recording and transcript will become part of the permanent collection at the Library of Congress. I'm Fred Calabretta and today I'm speaking with Tony Viera at T & K Marine Electronics in New Bedford. Okay and you give us your permission to record this story?

Tony Vieira: Yes.

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

TV: Sure. My full name is Tony- Anthony, Vieira. I was born October 21, 1971.

FC: Okay, and born in New Bedford?

TV: Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

FC: Okay. And grew up around here?

TV: Grew up around here, yes.

FC: Okay, and was your family, had your family been in this area for a long time?

TV: My father was born in New Bedford.

FC: Okay, yeah, yeah. And would they or was he involved in the industry at all?

TV: Um, not really. He was, he worked for Farino Fish.

FC: I guess just to start you know, how the business got going, how this business got going.

TV: Well I, it's a funny story right there. I was, I went to New Bedford Vocational High School, okay, and I did electronics there. And then my junior year, I came, at the beginning of my junior year I went on co-op. And I had two choices. Wait till I'm a senior and then go work for IBM in Boston and bring around, lug around a suitcase on wheels with computer boards and you just go to people's offices and you just swap them out, or try this electronics shop in New Bedford that they do electronics on the commercial fishing boats. Here I am.

Tony Vieira interview, June 9, 2017

FC: Here you are. So we know what choice you made then.

TV: So you know what choice I made.

FC: Yep. So going out to the city and stuff just didn't --- yeah.

TV: And I was a kid, I would say, boy, this job's tough, this is awful, I can't --- here I am.

FC: And yep, here you are. And then how did the business grow? How did this operation grow?

TV: Well, there was one, see I started with one company when I was on co-op, and I didn't really care for that place, so then I went to another place for a year, and then he got divorced, and that business went out, and then I came in this very same spot where this was Tomtronics, and I worked for him for about thirteen years, thirteen and a half years or so, and he was a great man, but he passed away. The son took over, and it just wasn't the same. I worked for the son for about a year after, and not good. You know?

FC: Yeah. So then but then as far as starting T & K ---

TV: When I left Tomtronics, the year after my boss passed away, the son ran the place, I went to the same place where I started as a kid. And things didn't change. So I said, why am I doing this? You know? I was supposed to go in partnership, with that company, and I just kept getting strung along so I said, all done. You know? So here I am.

FC: So you decided to start your own ---

TV: Yes. It was kind of scary in the beginning, I actually made a crab trip on a boat, because things were slow, and it was in October, not the best time of weather, and you know just to make sure food was on the table. That was a big mistake. As soon as I left, everybody was calling me. And then people were getting mad at me. After that, it's been non-stop.

FC: You needed to be here to take care of business.

TV: Yes.

FC: Yeah, yeah. And so were you interested in electronics as a kid?

TV: Oh yes! I was probably eleven or twelve years old. I used to go around and seek TVs on the garbage pile, in front of people's houses and take them back, you know, fix things, I had TVs going, I'd make house calls you know, fix VCRs, you know?

FC: So something you always had an interest in---

TV: I was, always had interest in it.

FC: Had a knack for, I mean ---

TV: For some reason I kind of had a

[5:00] knack for it, it's almost like I'd done it in the past or something.

FC: Yeah.

TV: I enjoy my electronics.

FC: And um, how did you learn, I mean how did you ---

TV: Well, I went to a vocational high school for four years, so I had an electronics certificate, and then I did six years in the navy, and did ET as well, and on the job training.

FC: Yeah.

TV: Basically I was doing the job before I had my permit to drive, I was actually fifteen, just going on sixteen. And this will be my thirtieth year.

FC: Wow. Yeah, yeah. So was there anybody who really kind of you could single out as someone who really taught you some tricks and you know ---

TV: Oh yes. And that's a funny story too, because he became my father figure as well. Richmond Frost. He did all marine electronics all his life. He was in the army when he was younger and he taught me the ropes.

FC: It's helpful to have somebody like that. That's got the background, and ---

TV: Yeah. Yeah I was devastated when he passed away.

FC: Yeah, yeah. And probably for somebody like that I mean they can see that you have the interest ---

TV: Right. He always told me, he says, "Boy, man, you're good, you know? But let me show you things, you know?" And it was kind of funny, I remember the first day of work and my bench, there was a bench over here and a bench over here and he was like trying to hide things from me because in the beginning because he thought I was taking his job you know?

FC: Yeah, yeah.

TV: So.

FC: But it turned around.

TV: It turned around. Yeah, we became father and son. Believe me.

FC: Now, your wife is involved in the business too.

TV: Yes, that's the key. She does all the bookkeeping, and ordering, and whatnot. And billing.

FC: And uh, so are there advantages and challenges to working with your wife?

TV: Well---

FC: Or husband and wife, I shouldn't say just, you know I could ask her the same question---

TV: I can honestly say that she does a great job so it's no complaints there, you know? Because if she wasn't there I'd be in that office, until probably midnight.

FC: Yeah, and it's someone you know you can trust.

TV: It is somebody I know I can trust. So.

FC: Yeah, yeah. That's a big thing. I mean, it's not somebody that you take on and only know them for six months or something. So, well maybe a little bit about your work. If you could just kind of describe what you do, or how, and I know it's a lot of different stuff, but ---

TV: Well, basically, I repair and replace marine radars, GPSs, satellite communications, VHF's, sidebands, autopilots, um, everything, that has to do with a boat. So the technology has come up, very, you know, fast, when I started, I can honestly tell you in the beginning when I started you

could actually sit down and fix right down to the component level. Today, you've got these circuit boards that you just replace. Because there's so much laser technology soldering on there that you can't touch it, you'll damage it. And it's all microscopic components. There's soldering on the front side of the board, and the backside of the board, and in the middle.

FC: It's like so many things, it's like the TV repair industry is gone; you just get rid of it.

TV: Right. And that always amazed me you know, cause when I was playing with TVs, there was vacuum tubes still.

FC: Yeah.

TV: You know? And, it was you know, a lot different. A lot different. As far as sitting down and fixing something. Yes, there's still things you can sit down and fix, but very, very little.

FC: Yeah, yeah. What's sort of a typical day at work? What kind of hours, or schedule do you keep, or ---

TV: I usually try to keep my employees from eight to four-thirty. But sometimes we will go over, because a boat might be going fishing, so let's get the job done, so they can do their job.

FC: What about weekend? You have to do weekend work every once in awhile?

TV: Every once in awhile, Saturdays yes.

FC: And what's a typical day for you? Like if you weren't doing this right now, what would you be doing?

TV: Well, like I was doing before you got here I was putting stuff back, equipment,

[10:00] repaired equipment back on boats and going around to pick up more broken stuff. Or I'll fix it on the boat. Which ever comes first.

FC: Yeah. Is it, it seems like, I was thinking about it, it seems like it, it's sort of like a three part process, tell me if I'm wrong, but it's sort of the sales, installation, and then repair and – well service, is that---

TV: Service, yes.

FC: is that a big part of what you do?

TV: My biggest part of this company, the most important if you look at my, my business cards and whatnot, service comes first, okay? To me, service is everything.

FC: And that's what keeps the relationships, keeps people coming back?

TV: Right. Correct. You know? You treat the person fair, the customer fair, and just like you would want it done to yourself. You know? I mean, like if I go have my car fixed, or whatever, I expect the same, you know?

FC: So you really make that a priority, it's not just selling somebody a piece of equipment and then you're on your own ---

TV: I could give you a fine example, yesterday I went to a southern fishing boat from Virginia, and the owner says get me a new radio. You know, because that's what my guy said, he was going to go do down south, and I went there and it was just a bad microphone. I told him I said, for cheap money I can just replace the microphone and there's nothing wrong with the radio. He says, he shook my hand and says thank you. And I had the radio right in my hand, and I couldn't do it. I wouldn't have been able to sleep at night. Just to replace a radio because of a bad hundred dollar microphone.

FC: So there's a guy who will call you back, and will tell his buddies to call you.

TV: Exactly. So when they're up here, his whole fleet of boats, he told me I got them all, so ---

FC: Huh. And so in terms of, I mean, one standard question that we have here is tools and equipment, so, the stuff you use I mean is it standard electronics tech equipment? Or is it special, any specialized?

TV: No, the only thing that's really special is like watt meters for the single sidebands and the VHF radios, you know? But everything else is basically, you would sit down with a computer and TV or anything else like that.

FC: Yeah, yeah. And how has, you know I think you mentioned it early on, the main thing, but how has all this changed since you first started, what are the biggest changes?

TV: Technology. It is just, you know, it's really, there was a big revolution when I got in here and what was coming down the road.

FC: Yeah right at that time, it was just ---

TV: Because I was still working on dinosaurs, you know, and granted one thing about technology, I still have some radars I put on thirty years ago, okay, as a kid, and I still got them working today. I've put radars on, say ten years ago and twelve years ago I've taken those off already, and replaced them already, and that thirty year old radar is still on that boat. So there's a big difference in, you know they don't make things like they used to.

FC: Quality.

TV: Quality, and durability, so.

FC: That's interesting. Yeah. And so do you spend a lot of time on installations then if it's a ---

TV: At times, yes.

FC: And I imagine everyone's always in a hurry, you know they ---

TV: Oh yeah. Yesterday, I needed it yesterday, kind of thing. And the biggest thing is Mother Nature. Mother Nature's got to be nice to us as well. You know in the past, we had rain three days in a row, and of course everything they needed to be done was outside. So that kind of fouls things up.

FC: Yeah, yeah. How much time do you think you're actually spending on boats? A big chunk of your time?

TV: The percentage of time? Percentage?

FC: Yeah.

TV: Oh eighty-five percent. Yep.

FC: So that's a lot of what you do. And is mostly right here in New Bedford/Fairhaven?

TV: Yeah, it's mostly in New Bedford/Fairhaven. Sometimes I go to P-town [Provincetown] or I go to Rhode Island, you know, long drives. And P-town is a long drive. I've been, I've been, I've done new boats, which most of them, I've done a few over here at the shipyard, brand new builds,

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which they just started doing not too long ago. I've been down to Florida, I've been down to Louisiana, I've been down to Alabama. Brand new vessels, you know? And you do everything-all electronics. Two of everything, two radars, two VHF's, sounding machines, you name it, we got it. Satellite TV, some boats.

FC: So do most of the newer boats have backups for everything?

TV: Yes. Yeah.

FC: It's a safe way to go.

TV: Yeah, yeah. You've got to have two of everything. You know some boats like three.

FC: And where do you get most of the hardware that you need? Do you get it locally?

TV: Equipment?

FC: Yeah, equipment.

TV: No, no. I'm an authorized dealer with Furuno, Simrad, Navico, Simrad, and all the big companies. Si-Tex, basically, you know all over the place.

FC: So you just deal with them directly.

TV: I deal with them directly. And when I go out of town like that I have everything drop shipped to the boat yard, shipyard. I go there and open up boxes like Christmas time, and work long hours.

FC: And hope they got everything right.

TV: Yeah, it usually takes five days, long, five long days for me to do a brand new boat from start to finish.

FC: And would you be working alone mostly?

TV: Yes. The electricians there, they help run the wires at times if they have nothing to do.

FC: And you don't mind working alone?

TV: I'd rather, to be honest with you. You know? But I'm at a point now where I'm taking more employees in and I'm trying to teach them, you know, the job. There's nobody young in this business anymore. I'm still the one with diapers on. And I'll be forty-six this year. So.

FC: I've been hearing from a lot of people that just seems like it's all over the industry, they can't, whether it's the Fairhaven shipyard, or who, Reidar's, or whoever it is they can't get young people who are interested.

TV: Nope, not at all.

RC: Who are willing to learn.

TV: You know I had, you know I had a couple of young guys, you know. One guy lasted a day, you know? This is not for me, you know?

FC: It just seems like, people, it seems like there's a lot of opportunity for people who did, the way you did, vocational school, learned and you know ---

TV: It's wide open, I can tell you right now. It gets busier and busier every year.

FC: And roughly what percentage of your work is fishing vessels?

TV: Fishing vessels? The percentage? Ninety-five percent.

FC: And, it must have taken some kind of a hit over the past ten or twelve years with regulation changes, ground fishing especially ---

TV: I can tell you one thing, with the ground fishing, with fish alone, yes. But thank goodness there's scallopers. And they get some good money, what they're doing, you know? And if that takes a hit, because, I can remember back in the mid-eighties, people were losing their boats, the scallopers because they were getting nothing for money and all the ground fish boats were making all the money. Today it's the opposite.

FC: Yeah, it's changed.

TV: It's a hundred and eighty degree turn. So now if they scallopers get hit, then yes. That would be a problem.

FC: Yeah, so what happens? So now what's going on with the politics and regulations and all that, has an effect on ---

TV: Has an effect on, oh yeah. It starts at the top and rolls downhill. No doubt.

FC: So if, like just for an example, if a fisherman calls you this morning and he says he needs a new radar unit, a new radar installation, what would, what would the process be, how long would it take that to happen?

TV: Well, normally, if they are talking about a new radar they kind of give me a heads up on that. But if the radar is beyond repair and the boat wants to go fishing today, I go down there and see what I can do just to get it going and squeeze a little more life out of it. Or, they really, really want a new radar, then and there, it usually takes anywhere between five and a half, to

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seven and a half hours, start to finish, removing the old unit completely and putting in the new unit completely, testing it, adjusting it, and aligning the heading, to make sure things are right on the screen. What's the point of having a new radar if the buoys not in the right place? So. Yeah, so we try to accommodate our customers.

FC: And for stuff like that you stock enough equipment that you can ---

TV: I stock enough, yes. I usually have smaller radar in stock, I have a bigger power radar in stock, tracking systems, that way Uncle Sam can watch everybody. I always have one or two of those in stock because they go bad as well. And that unit if it goes bad they can't even move from the dock without it.

FC: They've got to have a working tracking unit or they're staying in port.

TV: And the painters, they usually help us out at times you know, because they like to cut paint cables and cut grind cables by mistake, they'll paint over it. And then water goes down it. Now you've got to replace the cable, and once you replace the cable, now the unit's bad because water has shorted out the tracking device. So, not fun. And those happen at the last, wrong moments as well.

FC: So you must spend a chunk of time troubleshooting too, I mean somebody's got a problem and they don't know what the problem is.

TV: Right, right. Well what I try to do is I go around and I troubleshoot and I have an apprentice with me right now, and she follows me around and she sees how I'm troubleshooting

things, and how to resolve the problem. And that's the whole key. How to determine the problem and resolve the problem.

FC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it's a little bit of detective work from ---

TV: Right and believe me, this job every day is different. Just when you thought you'd seen it all, it keeps coming.

FC: And if you're working on older boats, is that more of a headache, or more of a challenge, I guess?

TV: Well yeah, it's more of a challenge. When I do a brand new build at the shipyard, I go down there sometimes just for a day, I'll fly out just for a day, and see, talk to the carpenters and how I want the wire raceways, you know. Where I'm going to put my wires and because otherwise, they'll just build it like a house and put up the ceiling and they'll be gone forever. Course things fail, cables get wet, you are constantly taking down you know something so you can get to the wires. So I make sure there's raceways for screws, not nails! To take down the boards, so it's easy to replace that cable and put it back up. It's good for everybody. Good for me, good for the customer, he's not paying a million dollars for me to be a carpenter and remove all his electronics off the ceiling. It's good for everybody, and then the boat can get the, you know, I can get done faster and the boat can go fishing. So I design the mast part, I design the raceways, how the wires get inside ---

FC: So you can get at stuff later on.

TV: So I can get at stuff later on, where these ---

FC: But what about if it's, if it's, you know, if you didn't have a chance to do that on a boat, and there's problems. Are you the person that has to pull things apart too, to get at the problem?

TV: Yep! If it's really bad, say it's all one piece, paneling or whatever on the ceiling, I have to get a carpenter there, and then he's, he makes entranceways for me after the fact.

FC: You have like certain contractor you use or something? People you call?

TV: It all depends, what boat I'm on, what company boat I'm on, they have their own carpenter and then I usually call the company boss and say, "Hey, I need a carpenter down here." You know?

FC: So when you started out were you working on more wooden boats than you are now?

TV: Oh yeah, there was still quite a few wooden boats. There was a lot of Eastern rigs. You know? That's with the wheelhouse on the back of the boat. Yeah, there was plenty of those.

FC: Was it, with the steel boats, is it, is it easier or harder to kind of get at the systems and do the installations?

TV: It's harder. I would say, you know? Because the wheelhouse, they really have tall masts. Sometimes they have VHF antenna on the foremast, and that was kind of tricky, and that was the tallest thing on the boat. But the

[25:00]

older boats, they were quite simple.

FC: It seems like an interesting field because of, you know, one thing that you said about the change in technology, you know, it's just like TVs and everything else, every three years there's some kind of upgrade.

TV: Oh yeah.

FC: New bells and whistles.

TV: You know, it, it's amazing you know, because I, like the autopilot systems; the autopilot is a unit that steers the boat. You put in the heading that you want, and the boat goes to it. And with today's technology, satellite compass, okay, and autopilot, I could steer a boat right out through this hurricane barrier with it on and bring me straight through it, no problem, within one degree.

FC: Yeah, it's amazing.

TV: So --- you know, if an autopilot's got a hundred eighty and I'm all done testing the autopilot system, and I know things are working properly, I show the guys how to do a U-turn, a one hundred eighty degree U-turn, doing 180 say, I tell a U-turn, make sure the starboard side, nobody on my starboard side, the boat will turn a hundred eighty degrees directly to North. So, and then boom, lock right on.

FC: And so the autopilot unit must be linked to the GPS?

TV: To the, yes. They're basically a solid compasses like with their, inside their antennas like two or three GPS antennas in there, and a gyro. Basically it's getting position in between the two

or three satellites depending on what system you have, and it's seeing how far of a distance from this antenna to this antenna. And what heading it is on. And then you've got the actual heading on the gyro system. And it's all communicating with each other and calculating the true heading. So.

FC: When the old timers see some of this stuff, they must, shake their heads!

TV: Aw man! Oh yeah and then the plotters today, I mean, when I first started autopilots back in my day, I used to have put mechanics' clothes on, because everything was chain driven, number one, and usually there was a big motor assembly underneath on, inside the wheelhouse, underneath the helm, and the motor had a chain going to the wheel. Sprockets. You know you had to grease them up, and changes brushes, and, it was awful. You know? I hated autopilots when I was a kid. My boss Tom he told me, you got to like these pilots, you got to learn more about them. I can't stand them... Someday, he says, and he was right.

FC: So, that's interesting because the work must be- is it a lot cleaner than it used to be?

TV: Oh yes. Yeah. It's a lot cleaner than it used to be.

FC: You're not dealing, you're not with up to your elbows in grease ---

TV: No.

FC: Chains, and ---

TV: I can remember you know, being a young man and the low man on the totem pole as well, I always had the good jobs, you know?

FC: Yeah.

TV: So, I can remember this one fishing vessel, Shamrock, they used to tie up at Noratlantic, in Fairhaven, which is now Warren's Place, Warren Alexander's, and he, I can remember the old time skipper saying my sounding machine, it needs a new transducer. Well it's a wooden vessels my boss says, you can put a transducer in the bilge in the engine room, because we'll shoot right through as long as the transducer stays wet. If it's out of the bilge water, then it will heat up and burn out. But it will see the bottom of the ocean through the wood. So there I go, climbing underneath the main engine, and then I'm in this yucky bilge water crap, you know? With who knows what's in there? And you know taking right angle brackets and mounting this transducer to hold it down, so it could see through the bottom of the boat. So, yes. It's much cleaner.

FC: It's a lot different than changing out a circuit board or something ---

TV: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

FC: Do the fisherman stay on top of the, what's going on with the technology and the constant upgrades, and do they, do they want the latest thing? Or do they try to get mileage out of the older one?

TV: I'm starting to see the third generation since I've started, okay? Of course the young guys, they just were mates and becoming captains and they want all the latest and greatest. And then you got the in between guys that try to stay up with the latest and greatest,

[30:00]

and then you got the old school, which stays with the old school stuff and it is the most difficult thing to teach an old dog new tricks. You know? I'm getting there too, so. But um, and they are like, I, for instance, I got this one plotter that I keep patching up, and it's probably about twenty-five years old now. Video plotter. It was just the first video plotter just after the paper plotters where it used to have a mechanical arm and used to draw lines on a piece of, a sheet of paper and that was their work. You know? And then the video plotter came out and then everybody had to have one, and some people, they still got to have that on board. I have one customer that has the old video plotter. They will not part with it.

FC: Hmm. And do you have, do you run into guys who really, really have trouble with the technology? I mean they really just don't have a head for it or something?

TV: Yeah, I do. I do. I try to help them out as much as I can, you know, and some of the stuff they only use very little of its limitations, but it's doing the job that they need to do. Some people tell me that some of the older skippers as long as I can just push a button I'm all set. If I can just turn it on, and shut it off I'm all set. You know?

FC: Yeah. Keep it simple.

TV: Keep it simple. On. Off.

FC: Yeah, yeah. Do you ever, do you ever feel any pressure, like when you think about, maybe most of what you're talking about is navigation gear, or a lot of it is navigation gear, and the sort of safety factor, and if somebody is out in the fog or at night, that equipment's got to work or they could get into serious trouble.

TV: That's right. That's why, when I go on a vessel, I treat that vessel, that becomes my boat, okay? I'm the one that's going to take that boat out. In my mind, okay? So that's where our service comes into play. I will make certain that every aspect of that piece of equipment is all set when we're done. Because I know how important it is to be out there and lose something. It's happened to me in the Navy. Big ship radar goes down and they say, you have to have that up. NOW. You know? So yes, pressure. That's how I learned.

FC: So it's like if it was your own boat, you wouldn't cut corners ---

TV: I would never, never cut corners. Because I never go back for the same thing.

FC: Yeah, so you must have a lot of repeat customers, or a lot of long term ---

TV: Yup, some of my customers I've known for thirty years. Most of them.

FC: That's a good recommendation to be able to tell people, too.

TV: It's just, you know I take everything seriously, let's put it that way.

FC: Yeah, yeah. Let's see. So in terms of the business again, how many employees do you have now, or?

TV: Including me and my wife?

FC: Um hmm.

TV: Four. I have another one, young gentleman coming in the beginning of July.

FC: And are the other two technicians, or ---

TV: Yeah, um, my, Joe- he's been with me almost four years now. And then Carly, she just started in December.

FC: So and do you think this is a good type of, a good business for young people to get into?

TV: Absolutely. Absolutely.

FC: And why is that?

TV: Because there's nobody else doing it. And what I like to see the most is, you know, a young person that's really likes their job, not here just to get a paycheck. And then someday, that person can take over the business.

FC: So you feel like there's good, good opportunity in this field ---

TV: Oh yes.

FC: Is it, going back a little bit, is it hard to keep up with the technology race, I mean it's just changing constantly and ---

TV: Yeah, I, you know, every time, I guess I could say I'm an old school person. I get the jitters. I get anxiety when there's stuff comes out and there's all kinds of button pushing and this and that. But, you read about it, and then the equipment comes in, then you go out and

[35:00]

actually do it, it's not so bad. But yes, I do get anxiety when I see what this thing can do and all of this set ups, and- but once you do it, then you do the next one it's second nature already.

FC: And, and how do you learn, I mean, do you have to get the manuals, or the documentation --
-

TV: Yes. You know, basically you know back in the day when I started, 1987, they used to have like Furuno, that's a big manufacturer of the radars and whatnot. And they used to come down here and set up shop in a hotel or whatever and have a seminar and show and troubleshoot help, troubleshoot new stuff. There's very hardly any of that today. You know? Sometimes they have webinars where they do it over the computer you know, which is all right. But all that stuff today is basically you learn. You take that book, and you read it, and you go from there.

FC: Is a lot of that stuff online?

TV: Yes.

FC: So do you find yourself doing, having to do a lot of sitting in front of a computer screen too?

TV: Yeah, but to be honest with you I hardly do. You know? I will read the book and figure it out myself first. And for that one percent that I can't? That's when I get on the hotline to the company and I talk to a technical person and then we'll get to it.

FC: But if you needed it you could probably find like parts diagrams, and specs, and all that stuff online ---

TV: Online, yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. And then as far as being, I can get all that anyhow because I am an authorized dealer and I can get into the internet on their website as a dealer, and see a lot more than anybody else would. So.

FC: Do you get on the phone every once in awhile, with the ---

TV: Once in a blue moon, if I'm really stumped.

FC: So mostly it's just ---

TV: Mostly it's by doing.

FC: Yeah. Yeah. And you've done it enough so that even if it's a little bit different or the newest version, it's still --

TV: Right. Exactly. You know? In today's world, the problem usually is the software. They're always coming out with new software. You go on there to update it. And you have to set it back up again. Update it again, set it back up again. Usually the bugs are in the software.

FC: Yeah, yeah. It's like cars, you know, you think --

TV: Same thing.

FC: You think, or you think you need an overhaul or something and you find out it's just a sensor ---

TV: A sensor.

FC: An eight dollar sensor.

TV: Yep. Same idea.

FC: So if someone was new to the business, just starting out what advice would you give them?

TV: Pay attention. Pay attention and be careful.

FC: Yeah. They got to be interested, or ---

TV: You know this job is very you know, demanding on your body? I mean I've, you know, boats have to go fishing, it doesn't matter if it's ninety degrees, or minus ten. I've been on masts when it's been blowing snow sideways, Northeaster, and I'm on the tippety top of the mast, hanging on for dear life with one hand and I got boat tracks in the other, trying to mount the antenna.

FC: Yeah, Yeah.

TV: It is very challenging.

FC: Is the weather the main challenge?

TV: Just the job alone can be, you know? Sometimes ---

FC: What are the other ---

TV: You got to be, you know, you have to be in gymnastics to get on these boats. Oh, it's like the other day. I go to the shipyard, and I'm going to this boat to a job, third boat out. I have another boat to take care of in the same place, you know, same yard. He's on the other side, behind him, third boat out. You know? So it's very demanding.

FC: Yeah. Yeah.

TV: Physically.

FC: That's interesting, so it's kind of a combination of the technical knowledge and all that stuff and then the physical part too.

TV: This is no white lab coat job. I can tell you that. Sitting down is very rare. This is probably the most I've sat all week.

FC: Really? Yeah. Yeah. What do you like most about it?

TV: The excitement of getting that fixed. Getting it done. And seeing the customer smile and then throw the lines.

[40:00] And he's going fishing. He's heading south. That's the most exciting part of the job.

FC: Just walking away and knowing that it's --

TV: Knowing that it's all set and they're going to go make their money and pay their bill.

FC: Yeah. I mean, do you, I asked you before about pressure, do you think about it like when I mean that's how these guys make a living, that if they can't get their boat out it could affect their family, it's---

TV: Oh yeah, I that's why I take it serious. I try to train my customers, per se, to give me a head's up notice, you know, especially when they're days at sea that if you got anything broken, let me know now and I can take care of it over the period that they're tied up. Because sometimes I have a lot of boats that call me up, and say "Oh geez, Tony I forgot to call you, and my days are starting tomorrow and I'm going fishing tomorrow and my radar is out." So I had you know like four or five months to take care of something when I could have taken care of doing that but now I have to do it within that day or the next day. So.

FC: Do you get a lot of that? Or kind of last minute ---

TV: Not anymore. Not much. Not much. They're starting to catch on.

FC: Yeah. They must figure out after awhile ---

TV: And then I have some boats that I've put a stop to what was, they would say, "I'm going fishing tonight." And then I see the boat there three days later. And then I see them and I say "Each day that you're tied up I'm going to charge you extra when I do the bill." You know, it's a joke. And they stopped doing that. "When you tell me you're going fishing Wednesday, I will be there before Wednesday to take care of your problem." You don't have to lie to me. To try to get me there sooner, you know?

FC: Yeah because you might have somebody who really is going the next day.

TV: That day, you know? So, it's hard at times, to weed out the, and put who is first.

FC: But you feel like you have a pretty good relationship with most of these guys?

TV: Yes. Yeah. Most of them yes. Absolutely.

FC: There's always a few characters.

TV: There's always a few that try to rattle your cage. You just rattle back and smile. Customer is always right. So.

FC: Yeah, yeah. Well is there- all this talk about work, I let you do some, but is there anything else that we didn't cover that you'd like to add here, or?

TV: No, no. The only thing I can say is I just wish younger people you know, would like to get their hands dirty and, and dive right in, you know? It's just, somebody's got to do it some day.

FC: Yeah, keep it going.

TV: My body's getting tired.

FC: Yeah. Well, that's great.

[43:07] End of audio