

Participant: Mr. Mark Cooper and Mrs. Nanci Cooper

Researcher: Ms. Deanna Caracciolo

Date: 6/27/2016

DC: So it is June 27th, 2016. My name is Deanna Caracciolo. We are in Newport and we are interviewing...could you both state your names for the record?

NC: Nanci Cooper

MC: Mark Cooper

DC: Fantastic. So to get this started, I kinda wanted to open up with how your involved with fishing. How you got to be that way, any cool stories. I'm very open to what you guys have.

MC: I'm 3rd generation fishermen. My two grandfathers didn't fish a lot, but they both fished. And my father started right out of...actually started in high school and had a boat when he graduated high school. Anyway, I started working with him when I was about 8 years old, fishing in the summer. Until I graduated from college at 22, and then I started running my own boat. Anyway, it just grew to what we have now. We started out as salmon trollers. And then dad got involved with crabbing. And when I first started all I did was salmon troll, and tuna fishing, crab, but the first year we were married was the second year I fished by myself, he got into shrimping. And then that was pretty lucrative, and that was like in 1973. So by '77 I got my first shrimp boat, in '79 we got our second shrimp boat, and then in '85 we got into midwater fishing, and fishing hake in the mid 80's. And we were fishing for the Soviets, and the Poles, and the Japanese. And then in '85 we got our third boat which was about 90ft long. And that's the boat we ended up going to Alaska with. And then I got...anyway we have got 3 boats not, and I had up to 4 at one time.

DC: Busy [chuckles]

NC: I don't know that we are as busy now as...well...as we used to be. So we have kind of...our 2 boys are married and pretty much the whole family is involved in business. I used to keep the books but the daughters in law do that now.

MC: One of my boy's fishes as a partner, and the other boy gets sea sick, but he his shore side support and manages 2 of the boats.

NC: So everybody is pretty involved.

DC: When you got into fishing did you expect your kids to carry it on?

MC: You know I didn't envision becoming a trawler and going to Alaska. I mean things just evolved as we went along. We were struggling as salmon trawlers because of the Bolt decision and stuff and that looked like to me like we needed to make a change and the shrimp fishery was just taking off in first the 70's, mid 70's. SO we went in that direction and we did that for 4 or 5 years, and that kinda fell on its face due to El Nino and stuff. The whiting fishery looked like the place to move to me because it was the largest resource. And it was a low value fish, but I figured that it was high volume and...so we moved that direction.

DC: What has been your favorite fishery?

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MC: Oh I don't know...it's like the stuff you start with. I like salmon trawling and tuna fishing. But it's all, you know, it's all interesting. And I... when I actually ran the boats we used to...until the licenses got so specific, we used to change fisheries 3-4 times a year. We'd move from crabbing to shrimping. We got into fishing for rockfish with [unsure] gear. And then I decided I wasn't going to switch back and forth. So I got rid of my crab gear and I just focused on trawling. So we didn't have the month a year, or 2 months a year to take care of the crab gear. Didn't have to get it ready. Didn't have to bring it in. So I decided we could just get in the trawl business and that involved into being a midwater trawler. And then when the boats got bigger we could carry all the gear we needed all the time. And then in the mid 80's we had the chance to go get on a joint venture for yellow fin sole in Alaska, so I didn't want to go so I hired a skipper and sent one of the boats to Alaska. And I stayed down here and at that time we had 3 boats so I took care of the maintenance on all of them. With help, you know. And I have skippers on all the boats and I became the alternate. Whenever anybody needed time off I went.

DC: Any least favorite fisheries?

MC: Uhm, no as long as we make a living out of them. They all get their interesting points and stuff. We get...I got involved in going to the council meetings and stuff and trying to watch what management was going to do. Trying to guess...I always said I wanted to go and know why I was put out of business if I was put out of business. [chuckles] Actually, management takes a lot of hits, but I kinda have the faith now that they are managing the fisheries well enough that I don't think we will overfish things. What might happen is it might be cyclic and it doesn't matter what management does they might disappear. Most of the fisheries we are only catching a couple percent of the resource. So you're not probably going to over fish it at that rate. But other things happen, actually. I mean, sardines disappeared when nobody was fishing them. And they reappeared...so...

DC: How about you? Since you were doing the book and everything. Did you have a least favorite or favorite?

NC: Oh...you know when things were going well they were all my favorite. And when they weren't I didn't like any of them. I can remember saying it would be so nice if we had a set amount of money that we would make every month. Which is not possible when your fishing. So we had some pretty stressful years. And that was not fun for me. [chuckles]

DC: Has that changed? It sounds like...

NC: It has. It's much better and it seems to go along a lot smoother now. And we are able to do more maintenance on the boats and do things that for a few years we weren't able to do.

DC: Why is that?

NC: because just of the fishing. There's more fish. We have just more opportunity I think.

DC: Sounds like there's been a lot of changes in general. You mentioned a couple things.

MC: Yeah.

DC: Can you go through some of the things you have seen change?

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MC: Well, going back listening to my dad talk. When he first started salmon fishing there weren't seasons. You could fish year round. They didn't normally because the boats were smaller and they didn't fish in the winter time. But then as time went along, pretty soon management made the decision salmon season would open April and close October 23rd. Well they probably...my dad, that's when he thought the season was pretty much anyway. But they put a season on it, and then the Bolt decision came along that said you are going to give half the resources to the native people. So that cut way back on what a trawler can catch. And then they got limited entry and stuff. So you know, that changed the salmon fishery. And then there was also the advent of dory fishermen, where you could get into a boat for a few thousand dollars and a lot of work. Part time people came into the industry because...a lot of teachers and such, and well-workers who had time off in the summer time became salmon fishermen and impacted...you know, just cut the pie up in many more directions. There's only so many fish to catch and you get...I don't know what the fleet was but let's say there were 500 salmon trawlers, pretty soon there were 1000 salmon trawlers so the fishery wasn't as lucrative. So at that point, that's when I decided I was going to find a different fishery to go to. And that's when we got into shrimping and stuff. My dad, he started out, was just a salmon fishermen and about time I was in high school in the mid 60's, he decided he wanted to spend more time at home so he started buying crab gear. Well first off his brother wanted him to crab with him. His boat was too small to he came to my dad and said "well I'll buy the crab gear if you supply and boat, we become partners." So they did that for a couple years and that didn't work out. And pretty soon my dad had his own crab gear. And the string just kept getting...he started with a couple hundred and pretty soon he had 1000 pots and it was a full time job...I mean from December till...he would crab from December till June. And then he'd go salmon fishing for a little while, and then tuna would show up and he would do that. And then usually by October our season was pretty much well over. Figured he had enough money to make it through to December. There's not a lot to do for a salmon trawler or tuna boat in November. October/November. So that was the time to get the gear...do the boat maintenance and get the gear ready for the year. And that's how it was when I started. But then we got into shrimping which starts in April. So we would fish shrimp from April to October, end of October. And we had one month to get our crab gear ready and then we would start crabbing. And you'd crab right up to when it either fell off and it wasn't profitable, or you'd crab right up to a couple weeks before shrimp season and then you would rush to get home so you could get your shrimp gear on and go out shrimping. And we did that for 10 years.

NC: Mhmm, at least.

MC: And then in the meantime there I got into trawling. Which was a yearlong fishery. So...and I liked that better because you didn't have to be in a fishing fleet as much. You could fish by yourself. You could go find your own fish and your own little spot. So I liked that better than the shrimp fishery. And we did that for a while and then...I started roller fishing in 1980 while the Pacific Fisheries Management Council started in 1977. By 1983 they started putting trip limits on us and things started getting tighter. They put us on weekly trip limits in Oregon and Washington coast in '81 or '82. So we went...we spent 2 years in Bodega Bay because the trip limits were better down there. They had the same size limit but there wasn't...like here we have 1 a week, there it could be daily, or by delivery. So if you get catchment for 2 trips in 1 day you could do it. So we moved down there for a while, but pretty soon they changed the management so it was the same coast wide. And that's when we got into...mid 80's or '85, '86 is when we got to go whiting fishing. Well the first time...

NC: joint venture fishing.

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MC: Yeah, joint venture fishing was '81 or '82, but we fished for the Bulgarians but the Bulgarians got in trouble with our government because they didn't report right. And they're not in the joint venture but in their directed fishery so they were penalized so they left and never came back. So we lost our markets with them. It was 3 years later that we got a market with the Soviets, and then we got a market with a Polish company. Anyway we have 3 markets...we had markets for 3 boats at 1 time. It was the Soviets, the Pols and the Japanese.

DC: What was it like having international...

MC: It was pretty interesting. You know they have a different culture and a different way of doing things. There was a little bit of a communication problem, but we had...these boats had representatives from the joint venture company that were translators and stuff. But they weren't normally...normally they didn't have any fishing experience, so terminology was a problem at times. But most of the time it went fairly smooth. Once in a while there was a few problems. They want you to come over to discuss problems and then they would want to party and they would take you back to the boat at 5 or 6 in the morning and they about a half hour later they'd call you and say "when are we going to have our first fish?" After you've been up all night, the captain on the ship has gone to bed and puts his mate on the wheel and expects you to be catching fish. And there's only 3 of us.

NC: I think it was a really fun time

MC: It was still a trying time

NC: It was just fun. The boys were still little. We would travel up and down the coast and meet mark when he was in. It was just fun time. I really enjoyed it. We met a lot of different people. So it was excited.

MC: the first time we fished with the Bulgarians there was 5 catcher boats and 3 processors. Anyway at the end of the season they came to Astoria and had a port call with us and we all went to dinner. I can remember one of the officers asking Nanci if she was a Christian, and they didn't believe in Christianity. Or they didn't really know anything about it either. And he was curious about that. So it kinda showed the difference in the culture because Soviets and communist countries didn't believe in a lot of things we did.

NC: When you took Casey fishing with you that time, he had a toy. Did he trade it with the captain for his son? [directed at MC]

MC: Well the last night of the fishery we had the first mate and a couple of the deck crew came over to the boat for a dinner. Which was a treat for them because our food was quite a bit better than there food. I mean we had Coke and stuff and they didn't have a lot. The things that we think are necessities. [chuckles]

NC: Soft drinks and things

MC: They didn't have...anyway, my son had a little plastic truck and he gave it to the first mate for his...

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NC: Yeah. And did he give Casey something? I can't remember, I thought he did

MC: I can't remember. They had something they gave Casey but I can't remember what it was.

NC: But he remembers that from when he was little so that was kinda fun

MC: he was 8 or 8 years old. I think when we went into get fuel. Anyway the fishery ended in a couple days so I took Casey with us so he could ride. We were in Westport, so he could ride back to Newport. But it turned out that he gets seasick so he never became a fisherman. My youngest son became a fisherman. We didn't think he had any interest in it really.

NC: Mhmm, he's quite amazing. Quite an amazing fisherman. But it's fun

DC: That's fantastic. Sounds like you guys really made it work with having kids and being up and down the coast so much.

MC: yeah, it's just...I mean I saw and grow up...I mean, whenever dad came in he would call and tell us where, at that time they used a marine operator, if they could get it to work. You know they would call this lady and they would dial it up on the phone, and everybody could hear your conversation. So dad would say "I'm going to be in..."

NC: Such in such at this time

MC: Such in such at this time" and usually it would be enough time that mom could gather us together. I can remember being off plan and I'd see the car coming and...

NC: "Get in" [laughing]

MC: You didn't know if she was just going to town to the grocery or if she's day "get in we're going to Coos Bay." "Oh! okay!" [chuckles] Get in the car and away we go

DC: Always have a go bag [chuckles]

NC: Yeah pretty much!

MC: Or she would have everything packed and away we would go. I mean Coos Bay, Eureka, Crescent City.

DC: Man, moms are great

MC: Yeah, Astoria. We would just go wherever the boat was going to go.

NC: yeah, it was fun

MC: And then we'd go stay with dad until...I mean a lot of times he was coming in because the weather was bad or it was the end of the trip and they needed to get provisions and stuff and he needed the car. I mean you could get by without it but mom would come down.

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NC: Or the laundry needed to be done

MC: Or the laundry always needed to be done

NC: Mhmm...that was fun [sarcasm]

MC: [chuckles]

DC: Don't miss that too much? [chuckles]

NC: I really don't because it used to be the tuna fishing cloths, or the...those were stinky. So yeah [chuckles]

DC: So what's the most challenging aspect of being a fishing family?

MC: Well, I think it's hard to be away and stuff a lot. I mean there's the monetary problems of trying to make bills; your boat payments or your insurance payments, and make sure the crews got enough money to live on. Those things are all part of the fears...wondering where we are going to catch the next fish. You know there's a lot of concerns. it's not easy for everybody. Some people seem to go [unsure], be able to catch fish in a toilet, other people have to really work at it.

NC: [chuckles]

MC: So I mean there's a lot of uncertainties. you don't know what the weathers going to be, you don't know what the price is going to be, you don't know a lot of things...you try to figure out what your going to do for the year but it's just a blind guess because, you know, you base it on the year before, or what you think the prices are doing. you look at things; a lot of times you don't know most of the answers. you don't know what's going to happen to the fuel price, you don't know what's going to happen to insurance. You don't know a lot. there's not a lot to base your decisions on

NC: You mostly know you're going to have a fishing season but that can also come to an abrupt end too with bycatch and..

MC: Yeah I mean...you couldn't catch...well the whiting got to be a real race the first...2000-2010 it got to be a real harsh race and then it got down to what had been a 5 or 6-month fishery, it got down to 30 years and stuff.

NC: To catch the quota

MC: yeah so if you broke down in those 30 days you were out of luck. And a lot of time, you know how you have expenses that you have got every year, new equipment, maintain what you have, a lot of time you spend all you have to get ready to go and hope you are going to make it again.

NC: Pretty much [chuckles]

DC: So where do you both see the industry going now?

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MC: You know I think, in my perspective, what we are doing being in live Q fishery and whiting being our main fishery, I think it's fairly stable because of management. Well, I mean, most of what's happening to us now is cyclic. They are actually getting fish stocks are rebuilding. Widows and canaries, you know several fish that were overfished are coming off that overfished status. The problem we are having now, a lot of the problem we are having now is due to the chocked species or the over overfished species that there rebounding and it's a catch 22. They, in our opinion, are growing faster than what the biologists think they are so we can't stay away from them. Wherever we go. And they all like the same thing, they feed on the same stuff, so it's pretty...I mean, you can kinda stay away from them but once in a while people have what they can lightning strikes and they catch the whole quota in a tow or something. So then you are out of the fishery or the fishery gets closed.

DC: yeah, that sounds like a lightning strike

NC: Mhmm

MC: Yeah. So I mean, hopefully things will continue to get better. but I think since 2000 things have improved lots. Since the IQ was put in place I think there's more stability. Prices are probably...well, now we have got...the price on whiting is down but it's also the biggest. We have got the most resource we have ever had. So I mean there's a reason. And white fish in general the price is down. You know Pollock price is down, and they're basically in the same market place. So it's...if one of them takes a dip, everything is going to respond with the other, you know, one or the other. But I think, you know, my whole life I have always hear "don't be a fisherman. "they have caught all the fish." 'There's no future in that" is what people say from the outside looking in. My dad said when he started that's what they told him in 1935. "Oh all the salmon are caught." But there will never be a salmon fishery again.

NC: I think with fishing; I was thinking about this today. We have been afforded to many opportunities to meet people, to be able to travel, and to do different things, because when the kids were little of fishing seasons, you know we were able to take them...we would take them out of school and do things when we could. But I just think that we have been very blessed and fortunate to be able to do so many things. So it's been great. It's been so much fun [chuckles]

MC: I look back on when I got out of high school thinking...well my parents go "you can be a fisherman but you have gotta go to college first, you have gotta have a college degree before you can come back and fish." Because you don't know what's going to happen with the fishing industry to you have gotta have something to make a livelihood out if you can't fish.

NC: yeah, and both the boys.

MC: Yeah, we did the same thing.

NC: With the kids, yeah. They didn't go to a 4-year college, but they each went to a trade type thing. So they have something else they can fall back on if they needed to.

DC: Did you encourage them to go into fishing, or discourage?

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MC: Just let them make their own decisions. Well it turned out that the one that wanted to fish gets sea sick.

NC: Gets sick

MC: So he couldn't, he can't do it. And the other boy, it was his decision after 4 years of school, or I guess it was about 4 years through he came to his mom and said "I wanna go fishing full time."

NC: Yeah

MC: And he had fished a little bit in summer. We gave him the worst jobs and...

NC: he's just good at it. I mean, he's very successful.

DC: And he is currently running one of your boats you said?

MC: Yeah he is a partner in one of the boats.

DC: And then your other son who gets sea sick, what did he end up going into?

MC: he's got a couple businesses. He has a dump truck with a transfer trailer so he does paving and stuff. And then he has a pressure washing business where he washes heavy equipment, delivery trucks and stuff.

NC: yeah, so he is really busy. In the winter he goes to the valley and does fertilizer, hauls fertilizer

MC: And then his other job is he is supposed to be shore side support for the boats. So I'm not supposed to get calls anymore. If somebody needs a part, or if they need a crew member they are supposed to call him first. So he has to field all those calls, and then if he can't or doesn't have time or whatever then he calls me.

NC: yeah

MC: But it works out better for him. I've gotten too old. I don't know the people that are crewmembers ages and they are like his age, they went to school with them. he knows the network on how to find them and stuff [chuckles]

NC: Yeah, I think the network part, they know a lot of people and so...they can do prescreening because they know so many people [chuckles]

DC: Do you all go fishing recreationally anymore?

MC: Yeah

DC: And your one son that gets sick just has a lot of stock in Dramamine? [chuckles]

NC: Yeah [chuckles]

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MC: he went with me this last weekend but he doesn't normally go in the ocean at all. He tried 5 years ago, he tried to go crabbing and he just couldn't keep anything down.

NC: He just gets so sick, it's awful. It is the worst. I tried to go out a couple of times and it was like - no. I said I'd rather have the flu than be sea sick.

MC: there are a few people I know that are sea sick all the time and can overcome it, but they probably aren't as sick as some people get. I mean there's people you see that just can't even get out of bed. They will throw up and...[chuckles] They just lay there...

NC: In misery

MC: In misery so...

NC: until you cross the bar and then you know you're okay.

MC: Although some of them get better when they find out your coming in [chuckles] My sister used to do that. She's fine when they salmon fish but they went tuna fishing and she got sick. But as soon as she found out they were going home...

NC: She felt better

MC: He felt better [chuckles] and then she found a job in a doctor's office so [chuckles]

DC: So what attracts young people to fishing these days?

MC: Oh I think that the same thing that has for years. I think it's an adventure for some, but it's also better money they can make at most jobs unless they are highly skilled. You know the jobs that were available in the 60's aren't here anymore. We don't have natural resource jobs that are as good...I mean there's not that many logging jobs anymore, there's no mills. I mean the jobs at the mills have disappeared down to...even the paper mill turns out as much paper as it used to but has a third the workers it used to have. So those kind of jobs, coming from people without real skills, have disappeared.

NC: See and I think the lifestyle. It's not ideal for everyone, and I was fortunate enough that Mark was not gone for 3 or 4 months. I didn't have to deal with that. He only did that like 1 time. but I think sometimes the lifestyle is attractive. but if you're at the stay at home wife with the small children then you have to have the support system and you have to be a really strong person. Because it's difficult.

MC: part of it is it pays good enough that people see it as something to do for a few years. And then some of them get hooked. I mean some of them hate it and only do it for the money for a short period of time. Other people turns into the way of life and they get used to having the money and they have a hard....

NC: it's hard to do anything else.

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MC: And they do it until...

NC: It's the freedom

MC: Yeah. A lot of the crew that we have on the bigger boats now only work half the time. they got enough people that we have twice as many people that we need so they get scheduled time on and off and they work 50% of the time

NC: And they get payed the whole time.

MC: they get half the wages all the time.

NC: And that's what they decided to do.

MC: And in November and December you have to work every day that we need somebody because that's when we do our maintenance. but we don't say that they have to come every day, if they say my families coming, my mom's coming to town, I would life a few days off, they get a few days off.

DC: That must be so much more convenient for family life

MC: Yeah, but you know, they are taking pay cuts to do it. but there's still enough to live a normal lifestyle.

DC: And previously it was, you just worked on a boat and there were no shifts?

MC: Well...I've always tried to rotate a little bit. We were like...if we needed 2 people on the boat we would have 3 people and try and take every third trip off or something. The bad part about this whole situation is...somebody will quit on you and then somebody has to go and do a double shift because somebody didn't keep up their part of the bargain. So it's not perfect but...

DC: But it seems to help

MC: yeah. Most of the guys like it.

DC: What about becoming a fisherman? What about barriers? Is it easy to just...

MC: I don't know that it's easy, I think...to become a crewmember you usually have to know somebody or be at the right place at the right time who is willing to take somebody without experience. but there's a barrier to becoming a boat owner because it's expensive. Like most people that work wages their whole life can't afford to go fishing because they are hundreds or thousands or millions of dollars some of them. To get started is hard. I got started, I had my dad's help, but there was also a program by the government was trying...trying to Americanize the fleet so there was some financial [unsure] given. I mean it was just low interest loans and stuff. But see that's all pretty well went away. The only way you can finance a boat now is privet...privet concern. There's no government help at all. And there was tax incentives and they pretty well disappeared.

DC: What about the regulations? Like the permits and things...

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MC: Well, you know, the permits have become a large expense. the permits are maybe worth more than the vessels. So I mean, it has doubled the cost of getting into a fishery. I mean the boats used to be the main expense. Now it's the licenses and maybe buying quota, or leasing the quota, is the major expense. If you have to have to have it. So it makes it a lot tougher

DC: So is it possible these days to just decide to become a fisherman?

MC: Well your talking about graying of the fleet, what I see is people, there are some deals being made where people have long time employees that they sell a percentage of, a low percentage of the boat. And then they just step their way up to where they end up. When you get to own 25 or 30% of a boat, you probably can get help from a bank. Because then they look at you like you have 30% of the money down. But you know, nobody is going to give you 100% financing. It's never been that way. You have always had to have 15-30% to put down to get started. So it's...there's not a whole lot of people that have gotten into boats that haven't come from fishing families, there's a few, there's a few. But there's not a lot...in this area.

DC: Do you think it's more of a Newport centered phenomenon?

MC: No it's coast wide from what I can tell. I mean, I know people up and down the coast and it's pretty much that way everywhere. There's a few people that have worked from the deck into the wheel house, and then they get ownership, but not...it's not a high percentage anyway. 10 or 15%. There's more family type businesses then there are...

DC: What about deck hands then? Have the ages of deck hands changed at all?

MC: Yeah...uhm...I'm encouraged 10 years ago most of the deck hands were 35 to 40. And now we are getting deck hands that are again in their 20's

DC: Really?

MC: Yeah but most of our crew members...well we have got some really young ones

NC: In their mid-30's

MC: Yeah we have got some really young ones. The shrimp boat has got 2 kids that are Hispanic that are...I don't know if they are 21 yet.

NC: yeah, I don't think so

MC: And then the other boats, the guys have worked...are all 30-40.

NC: Yeah. Several of them have fished king crab in Alaska and they are reaching an age where...

MC: They can't do that

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NC: They don't want to do that anymore because it's hard on them. So they are transitioning to other fisheries that aren't quite as hard on their poor bodies.

DC: Yeah that sounds pretty tough

NC: Yeah. And you know it's great because they have got the experience and they know what it's all about...being gone and being...so it's worked out really well for us.

MC: But there's getting to be younger fishermen

NC: Yeah there are

MC: There's quite a few...well...like my sons 37...38. There's...20% of the fleet is made up of guys that age or more.

DC: What do you think is driving that?

MC: Well it's good money. A lot of mer... the next generation down. A lot of those kids though they were going to do other things, now they are running boats [chuckles] You know some of them went to school and didn't do well, others did and anyway decided that they liked the life.

NC: I think the kids grow up, you know, you grow up in a family, a fishing family and you see...I still go back to the opportunities that it affords you. The kids watch that and they see that and they think about being, perhaps in an office, or being on the ocean with a schedule of sorts, but not a real set schedule. And I think its attractive to them, because that's how they have grown up. So it's hard to envision the other.

DC: So it sounds like freedom?

NC: I think so, I think so.

MC: Mhmm

NC: I think that's part of it.

DC: I'm curious, what do you both think about this rationalization and the quota system and all that stuff. I'm hearing mixed signals

MC: Yeah

NC: Oh I'm sure

MC: You know I was...I worked really hard to get it in place. I don't think it's perfect, but I think that being one of the original owners, it's given us a net worth that we would have never had, and I think it gives stability, and I think in the long run it's a good thing. I mean we were having such a problem as an industry with discards. We don't have...people aren't beating us p over...we don't have discards at the rate we used to have. We used to have a 30-40% discard rate. We are under 5 now. A lot of fisheries

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were down under 1. There aren't fisheries in the world that fish with those kind of discards. Everybody has got higher discards...I mean hook and line people tell you how great they are, they have higher discard rates than that. They don't want to admit it but they have it. I mean the first time they put observers on long liners in Alaska, they were shut down the first 3 months they fished. And they said "we don't have discards, we don't need observers." They got observers on the boats and guess what?... So I mean...So I think there's a lot of positive things that come out of rationalization. We have full accountability. I don't know if they are getting that much better information for management, but they are getting more information. They got a lot more...they believe what they are getting now a lot more than they did before. Just because there's people watching all the time, you know there's an observer on the trawlers.

NC: Well and I think the fleet as a whole has made a huge effort to cut down on...

MC: Well we are leaving some fish in the water now because we can't fish in areas that they live because, because we don't own enough fish...you know the choke species to fish there. So you have got to leave certain areas alone now

NC: Well you have also, I mean in net development too. It's like excluders, and all kinds of ...I call them safety things, so that you don't...

MC: Well excluders are real helpful on certain fisheries. Other fisheries they don't do near to what...like we do really good on halibut and the cod fisheries. The excluders were really well there. But the excluder doesn't work so well when you are trying to catch a flat fish and get rid of the halibut because that don't work because flat fish go out the same hole that halibut does. And the excluders exclude a little bit of the salmon but not near enough. You know they probably maybe 20 or 30% of the salmon, and you may be giving away 15% of your target species at the same time. But they help, there's been work done all the time. People are actually putting cameras, real time video cameras on their nets to see what they are catching while they are catching it. So if you see the wrong thing going in, you can quit fishing and get your net out of there. Instead of just towing along for your hour and a half and picking up and seeing what you've got. Now people are looking, getting the equipment to look at what they are catching while they are catching.

DC: So innovative.

NC: Mhmm

MC: What the electronics did before was just told us there was some kind of fish sign going in the net. Now you can visually see what it is. But it comes with a high cost. The camera system is about 150,000 dollars. So it's about the most expensive electronics that most people have on their boats.

DC: But it ends up saving them money right? Or in most cases?

MC: Uhm...we don't have one yet so I don't know [chuckles] I think so. You know since it looks like it's going to help, I think most people eventually...

NC: Your talking the Pacific

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MC: Well, we are thinking about putting...shrimpers have got them this year. The shrimpers that have got them are doing way better than the shrimpers that don't have. They can tell when they are catching. And before shrimp fishing was just a blind fishery. You'd tow a little and pick up and see what you had. If you didn't have anything you would move in or out or up or down. Now with the cameral they can see when they are going in the net and when they quit going in the net they know they need to try and go back the other way. Or they have gotta change depths or do something. They aren't blind all the time stumbling along.

DC: So what targeted you or motivated you to be, what sounds like a front runner in the whole quota...

MC: Well just started to sound to me like you could find out around the world when that happened, it was advantageous because they usually got more money for their fish, discards went down, ownership, which is probably a dirty word...but property rights. All those things were attractive to me, and you know the people in the next generation, it's going to be harder for them because they will have to pay for those property rights, but then they are still going to have them when they get ready to sell. They are going to be worth as much or more than when they started, and they will probably appreciate in price. You know it depends on the whole entire economy of course. Because in Alaska the halibut fishery, it hasn't worked that way. I don't know if you have heard this but, they went...like they started out thinking that 7 times the dock side price was a fair price. It got to be 15 to 1. Unfortunately, the government stepped in and loaned some young people the money to borrow at 100% and then the price for fish dropped, and the quotas dropped. So they payed for 5000 pounds of fish, now they have got 3000 pounds of fish so life is tough. And that's the gamble you take with the resource. You don't know what the resource is going to do for sure.

DC: What did you think about it?

NC: Well to me it was like getting that monthly paycheck. In my mind that's how I could see it. Okay we have these fish so there will be, if they can be caught, this amount of money. So to me it was more like an assurance. Even though you don't know if you're going to catch them. It was a mind thing.

MC: It's easier to plan for because you know you have a certain amount of fish. And you can take a guess at to how many of those fish you're going to catch. I mean, there's still a lot of balance in our portfolio. When the black cod are gone we are done fishing. So you've gotta try and fish for black cod and make a profitable trip, but not catch too many of those so you finish your fishery. And you're trying to catch the fish that are not as easy to catch. I mean you've got a lot more...like dover sole we have got 100,000 pounds of sable fish, and we've got 900,000 pounds of dover sole, but we catch them about 50/50 [chuckles] So we are always working on trying to figure how to catch more dover because that's where the increase is able to come from cause that's the fish that we don't normally catch. So we work at that.

DC: Yeah. So I was just curious because I hear all over the map wit that and I've only just started.

NC: Yeah it's pretty much from one end to the other

MC: And we are at the end where we are getting the most benefits so...

NC: So of course we are going to like it. Yeah

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MC: I mean you talk to the guy I pay to run my boat and he will tell you he doesn't like it that well maybe. Although he will tell you his income is good [chuckles] But he doesn't see...he just given up on buying a boat or whatever. He is just going to work for somebody the rest of his life he figures and he's 40. But he makes a good salary and he manages his money right he will be fine anyway

NC: Oh yeah. Yeah, he should have no problem. Plus, he doesn't have...not owning a boat.

MC: He doesn't have all the bills?

NC: [chuckles] you know there's a trade off

MC: A lot for time the guys that work on the boats have a lot more take home pay than the people that own the boat.

NC: Yeah. He will have his paycheck and he won't have the headaches.

MC: And he won't have bills or nothing, no money or funds to cover

NC: Right, or the...you know, dealing with the people who work for you, or the boat, and the repairs and all that.

MC: As the operator he still has to deal with that because he is dealing with it on an everyday basis.

NC: But financially he doesn't have to deal with it.

MC: Yeah. But when he wants to go fishing at 2 o'clock in the morning and someone doesn't come to work, it's on his head as well

NC: Yeah

DC: There's headaches to both sides

NC: Yeah

MC: Yeah, that's the management level [chuckles] You've got problems to take care of

DC: Anyway, back to aging. I go on little tangents myself. So you were saying that most of the owners are pretty set in ownership, right? So that would mean that they are aging along but staying owners. And then the deck hands it sounds like they are getting younger...?

NC: they are younger to us [laughs]

MC: That's could be what the problem is [chuckles] I think that we are having...there's enough new people coming as deck hands that the age is either going to stay the same or get lower. I mean the deck hands get to a certain age that they can't do the work anymore so they cull themselves out. They try and find a different job, or they try and get into the wheel house. Anyway, I think that crews themselves

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are probably maintaining their age or getting a little younger. Owners are getting older, but there's a few younger owners that are being afforded the chance to buy in. There's creative financing opportunities being made for them. Because I was thinking it over...I mean you die, somebody has gotta take over the business. The guy that maybe started it can only run it for so long and then he is going to either poor health or he's going to lose, he's going to want to do other things in his lifetime. So he is going to have to find someone, somehow, someone, I don't know, get some value in the business and the one way to do that is to take somebody under your arm and get him to buy in a low...buy 1%, 2% and each year they buy a couple percent until they buy enough to buy the whole thing or if you are willing to finance. You know give them the whole thing with some kind of a payment plan.

NC: Which still affords you to maintain the lifestyle that you have lived

MC: Yeah, and make the income, or make more income than you did before. You are still taking a risk that they are going to keep things upright. Not flop on their face financially. I see all those different scenarios being worked out in the fleet. Or people are buying and getting help from fish canneries and those kind of things like they always have. But once you get up to owning 25% of the boat, then you can finance with a loaning institution no problem.

DC: So what about to Newport as a whole. So this is kinda of a different structure then it has been in the past. Do you think it will impact the community as a whole?

MC: Yes. Definitely. I mean, the whole structure has changed. I'm just talk about troll fishery, since it was kinda the back bone of the pants. I mean that's how they used to pay their overhead was with the trawl industry, and then they made good money off of crabs and some of these seasonal things. But they could keep the core of their people with the trawl industry there. but we wanted to have...there were 7 filet lines in Newport at one time. I think there's maybe, honestly 1 filet line, and we have some different head and gutting thing. Like 3 or 4 of those lines. And there was like probably 30 shrimp machines at 1 time, now there's like 10 or something and they are more efficient. But you know the workforce has shrunk and it's changed from being local people to being immigrants that are coming into the area and taking on these jobs. Just the way the plants have operated has changed considerably in the last 30 to 40 years cause it was all local people. Now it's mainly...the workers are mainly immigrants. The management is local people still, but they are starting to retire so I don't know what's going to happen there exactly. SO that part has changed. You know when you talk about sort port business and stuff, the fleet 40 years ago, we were building boats and stuff. We haven't build may boats in the last 10 years. There hasn't been any...well there's been 2 new boats and they went into the shrimp fishery. But there hasn't been a new boat in the trawl fishery for a long time. There's been some conversions where people took boats out of the fishery and put newer boat in. I think...we are talking about meeting on time, what's the newest boat in the fleet. And I think we came up with maybe it was built in 1995. And we used to think about that was 20 or 30 years old was

NC: Was old

MC: Was old. Now all the boats are 40 -50 years old. You know they are well maintained. They are maintained but we can't afford to build a new boat. So how long will the steel walls last? We don't know. I mean some agencies say that in 15/20 years they are worn out, well I could tell you that that's not true [chuckles] Because all the boats are over 20 years old and our safety records are still good and not having major problems

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DC: Well a lot of these boats besides being well maintained are constantly getting re-fitted aren't they?

MC: Right like the boat I have the [unsure] bottom 1985. there isn't a system on it that hasn't been replaced. Main engines, auxiliaries, refrigeration, we are on the second generation refrigeration on the boat. There isn't a piece of, other than maybe some kind of Mickey Mouse radio or something, all the electronics are...well...

NC: I don't think there's any old ones in there

MC: 205 we dint have any electronics on the boat.

NC: Is that when Chris started running the boat?

MC: Yeah. Everything is video screens where what we used to have paper machines. Everything is run on a video screen now. Electronics might not even be the box anymore. It's just screens and we have cables running to them.

DC: Sounds like there's more of the aging of the boats than there is the people themselves chuckles]

MC: Yeah

DC: So what would it be like if you sold all 3 boats? How would that change your family dynamic?

NC: See, he delighted. That doesn't delight me [chuckles]

MC: Well it would be hard for my kids because they would have to find different employment. But I would hope that we could live on the proceeds quite well

NC: [chuckles] Yeah we should be able to

MC: Anyway, but that's why we aren't selling out. Because of the kids.

DC: Do you think it would be an easy sell? Gone. done. Who would you sell to?

MC: There have been several boats that have been in my class that have sold. Most of them...half went to Trident. The others have went to larger families, fishing families, in the Seattle area. None of them stayed here locally.

NC: None stayed here

MC: But the guys that...looks like big money to us. It all came out of Seattle or Alaska.

DC: Has it become more common to sell?

MC: Well you know with the...

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NC: Aging...

MC: Aging of the owners, yeah. I shouldn't say that all of them went away. There's been a couple families, there's one family where the son bought the father...the son had 1 boat and the father had 2 and now the son has all 3 boats. So it isn't all major corporations but most...there's a few family type deals where the younger generations bought the older generation out.

DC: So what would happen if most of the boats in Newport sold? Would they not be here anymore?

MC: Half of them would have left, half of them remained. Even though the ones to corporations have bought, they try to keep it here in their area. But they're kinda struggling. I don't know what's going to happen for sure.

DC: What do you mean struggling?

MC: Well, they are finding out that the individual owners did better than the cooperation can do [chuckles]

DC: Oh, whys that?

MC: Well it's your dollar. I mean...

NC: Yeah.

MC: They had lots of money, and they spent a lot on the boats, and then sometimes when they got the boat it wasn't what they thought it should be. So they spent millions of dollars on them, and then the income didn't increase.

NC: Well I think...I think not being involved in the day to day, don't you think? operations of your...

MC: Yeah

NC: own...

MC: Part of it is they were used to having a different class boat, a largest class boat. So they took these boats that were smaller and tried to apply the larger class mentality to the smaller class boat. And then it hasn't worked out yet in my opinion. But we will see. They have only been at it a couple of years.

DC: So last question, but do you think that there is a tipping point in Newport? Where it could get to a point where either the aging or the selling out could really impact not just fishing families but also the culture surrounding Newport?

MC: I think that the makeup of the fleet, we are on the upper size. There's a whole bunch, 70% of the fleet is smaller than we are. And individual owned boats and stuff, and there's a lot of trading ad stuff on those boats. And it's not as much money. That probably won't change as much, I mean what you don't know is we just had I don't know how many years of records of crab seasons, shrimp seasons, so if those guys aren't healthy now than they are never going to get healthy.

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NC: Yeah that's true, that's true.

MC: So right now they are real solid.

DC: That's good to know

MC: But you never know what's going to happen cyclically. We don't know why the crab season was the best, you know. They had 4 seasons where all that were 30-40 million pounds of crab a year when the lows are like 3 million. In 1970 we had some 3 and 4 million pound seasons. Without near the effort. The crabs went away. I mean there's theories of what happened, we don't, some people blame it on the Soviets fishing. I wouldn't blame it to so much on that. I would blame it on their wasn't enough fishing the whiting and they were eating all the larvae. SO you know stuff like that can happen again. And how do people get through those when they are used...a lot of them get a champagne appetite and pretty soon your gonna have a beer budget. How fast do you adapt to that? It depends on if you are going to make it or not.

NC: I don't see, because of tradition and families, I mean we know several families, I don't see that core group of people leaving fishing. Unless there's something that would come along better. But you have these generations of kids that are interested in fishing. I mean there's some really young kids that go fishing with their dads. I just don't see that changing. Because people are just used to that and I'm not a big person that likes change. I have had to adapt obviously, but I think it's just comfortable, and people know it, and I think they like it. So I just don't see a lot of it changing, but that's just me.

DC: That's good to know

MC: But even the corporations, you know, Pacific Seafood's, has bought a lot of boats, they still pay their crew and their skippers good wages. They have already figured it out that if they don't pay those guys good money then they aren't going to get the production out of the boats. So you know I've...ownership might change but some of the...I think that the value for the workers are still going to be there. It's a lot like, look at ranching in eastern Oregon where everybody used to own their own ranch. Now corporations own a lot of it. It's changed. But there's still some work there [chuckles] I don't know if there's as much as there used to be but...But fishing boats still takes...we have always worked them on pretty minimal size crews. I don't see that...anybody figuring out how to fish with less people. I don't see that happening. We are already doing it [chuckles] You know that part we are already...instead of having, like we have a 6 man crew where it takes 3 and we are sharing. It might go to 3 because they might need all the wages to make family wage job. Where now we can work, we have got 6 family wage jobs, it might go to 3.

DC: So interesting. So that's my last formal question, but I want to make sure I don't miss anything. So did I miss anything that you think I should know, cool stories? I'm open to anything.

MC: I could tell you stories all day. But no, I don't think you've missed much. Definitely we are high on the fisheries. Don't get me wrong, I know there are problems, but through management I think that they are getting solved slowly. And my disappointment with IFQ is that we haven't been able to...have you heard of anybody use the term "trailing amendments?"

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DC: I haven't

MC: Anyway, trailing amendments are things that we couldn't make decisions on before...you know we couldn't come to an agreement on how to do certain things so we let it fly. Well since then we were promised that we were going to work on these problems but we haven't had 1...1 or 2 trailing amendments have actually been solved. So some of the things that we knew were weak going in haven't been taken care of and here we are coming up on the 5-year review. Some of the issues are like - they either promised or we felt that the rock fish conservation zone, there wouldn't be a need for it after IFQ because we have to take care of our bycatch yourself. If you don't have the bycatch you can't fish. So why have rock fish conservation zone? If your guy wants to take a chance and fish in there and he catches too many of the rock fish that he has then he stops fishing. So to the individual you thing, but we haven't gotten that regulation changed. And there's other things that are artifacts of the old management system that are still in place that we haven't gotten taken care of yet. But hopefully we will. Things kinda disappoint you sometimes because a lot of the NMFS employees are being hired by other people so the work force, they say "well we don't have enough help." And then every time I turn around they say "oh so in so just went to work for the National Halibut Commission." or they changed jobs and they went over here so not working on those problems [chuckles] So now you have to have a new person come along and try and get them educated.

[MC and NC talking]

MC: Anyway so that's where my disappointment has come, we haven't been able to really work on some of the things that are still problems. One thing that happened last year, one of the boats caught a lightning strike of canaries [Canary Rock Fish] and you could only catch 9,000 pounds a year if you could buy and sell them, but you couldn't have any more than 9,000 pounds. The caught 45,000 pounds of canaries in 1 tow. Anyway it didn't shut the fishery down until the middle of December and then they probably panicked on that because we never reach how many the whole fleet could catch. I mean you have a whole fleet catch and then you have an individual catch. Anyway so this boat can't fish this year in the shore side fishery because they have gotta pay those fish back and they are only getting...they can only do it at 9,000 pounds a year. So that's 5 years that they are out of the fishery unless they figure out how to solve this problem. Anyway it's turning out that canaries are coming off the overfished list and we are probably going to have 5 or 6 times increase of what we are going to have. So they are probably only going to be out of the fishery for 1 year. But there's another boat this year that caught their POP, your allowed 16,500 pounds of POP. Well they got 16,800 pounds and they caught 14 of it in 1 tow. So they can't fish shore side for the rest of the year. You know, so I mean, some of these inequities have gotta be solved. SO okay, you can't fish the rest of the year. I mean that's a pretty stiff penalty but also pretty do-able, but somebody that had a fishery and you're going to tell them that they can't fish for 5 years or 6 years. And there's not only the problem, you could use the fish they give you each year and it doesn't cost you anything, but it costs you not to fish. Well if you can go out and buy the fish from a guy, and canaries go for a buck and a half per pound, and if you need 45,000, that's 45 grand. 60 grand that you have gotta cough up to go fishing. If you can find him. If you can find somebody that wasn't to sell them, and a lot of times people don't want to sell anything until they get to the last week of the year because they can see that they are not going to need it. Then they will sell it. You know, so you might be out of the fishery until the end of December and then you buy your way out and then you are able to fish next year. But you know, they have got like 7 months before the end of the year. We have got 2 fisheries, those two boats were both in the off shore fishery, anyway they allowed them to fish offshore whiting fishery. And then they both got fishing in the Bearing Sea. Like I traded, one guy was my

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brother in law, I traded him whiting for Pollock and so he is going to go to Alaska and fish the Pollock since he can't fish here. So there's a silver lining there too because there are options...I'm pretty sure there's [unsure] but there's alternatives for you so you can work some problems out.

DC: Seems so complicated

NC: It's very complicated.

MC: Well this IFQ system is the most complicated one in the world because there's so many species in it.

NC: I just sorta quit [chuckles] because it was just more than I can...I thought yeah Mark knows. So I just sorta gave up on that.

[End 1:09:14.0]