

**Participant: Steve Courtier & Terrie Richards**

**Title: Port Manager, Port of Port Orford & City Administrator, City of Port Orford**

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**Location of interview: Port Orford**

Courtney: To get started, like I just mentioned, we're going to start with collecting some oral histories so I don't know if anybody has a preference about who wants to get started, who wants to go first... Steve, apparently you've been volunteered so if you could just tell me your name and your position and then how you got to Port Orford.

Steve: I'm Steve Courtier. I'm the Port Manager. I've been doing the Port Manager job for about two years. I'm retired Coast Guard of 22 years. My last unit was down in Brookings. I saw the job application. I applied and I got it. Um, I have an extensive background in nautical environments so that's why I thought it, this job would be a great fit.

C: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit more about what it's like to be the Port Manager? What does your day to day business look like? What sorts of issues are you working on?

S: Running all the port activities. Making sure maintenance is done. Keeping up with financials of the port. Uh, attending meetings. Trying to promote growth, new business, while maintaining our fiscal responsibilities to the public.

C: Okay, great. Do you have any memorable stories about being Port Manager? I know you've only been there for two years, but any days that stick out to you as memorable maybe for a good reason or a bad reason.

S: Mhm. October 24th, 2014. Uh, I had only been on the job for about four months and we had the storm of the century come through. We had 40 foot waves break on the dock. And, uh, completely devastated the infrastructure on our dock. We lost one of our tenants' buildings just went right over the side. Um, we sustained probably about \$3 million worth of damage at the port. Um, and it was, uh, a great initiation to Port Orford. Our port is very susceptible to southerly storms and that's what came in. It was a micro, micro cell storm that came in. And, uh, generated 40 foot waves that broke right on the dock. Wiped out everything. Luckily we had a little bit of time to prepare, so most of the fishermen had their boats tied down. They use aircraft tie-down straps, same principle. But the majority of the gear that was on the dock, a lot of housing facilities, buildings that were there were destroyed. The port office was about three and a half to four feet under water. We lost all of our furniture, um, a considerable amount of our historic records, financial records, stuff like that at the port, so... we've taken steps to hopefully prevent or deter the water next time it comes up on the dock, um, but, yeah that was quite an experience. After being here for four months it was, uh, welcome to Port Orford. \*Laughter.\*

C: Yeah, yeah. Sounds like it. Great. Anything else you want to share about your experience living or working here in the last two years?

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: I love it! It's the most, one of the most beautiful...I've been stationed in the Coast Guard up and down this whole entire coast. I've been in just about every single port and as far as beauty and aesthetics go this place is the best. I'm very fortunate to have this job, look out my window every day at that beautiful view of the ocean and the rocks and just thank my lucky stars that I have this job because it is wonderful.

C: Yeah. Absolutely. Awesome. Okay, Terrie. You're turn. Can you tell me what your name is, your position and then how you got to Port Orford?

Terrie: Terrie Richards. I'm the City Administrator, now City Recorder and Public Works Superintendent and, um, I was the City Administrator in Elgin, Oregon, northeast corner of the state, high desert, and, um, it was time probably just to, um, seek out a new town and so we found Port Orford and ended up here. They were looking. I was looking. And it just happened to work, so, um, my story, any story is not near what Steve, um, has experience with. Um, in Elgin the City Administrator there is elected. And the gentleman that had been in that position prior for twenty years was looking to retire. And, um, it just so happens I came along and, uh, he asked me if I would run for that position to replace him. And I did, and I won two elections. So, that's how I got into city administration and I did not seek it out. \*Laughter.\* So, um, I enjoy Port Orford. Uh, it's, it's a new experience, definitely, from being high desert to ocean. Uh, fortunately it is south coast. South Coast is way more, uh, would you say easier on weather? Than the north coast.

S: Absolutely.

T: Uh, it's all beautiful up and down the, but the south coast is, um...

S: Not as prone to the rain.

T: Not as prone to the rain, right, but, um, there's just something about Port Orford that just makes it special, makes you glad you're here, you know. It's, any citizen'll tell you that. They just love it here.

C: Yeah. Can you tell me more about your responsibilities at the city? Maybe if there's any particularly challenging issues you're working on in your role or anything like that.

T: Um, Steve's and my role mirrors each other, you know. Mine is for the entire city. His is the, the dock area. And, but, yet we still mirror each other with our roles. Um, the fiscal responsibility to the citizens, you know. Um, making the right decisions, hopefully, that, um, benefit the entire city. It's the city as a whole that you have to take into consideration as the City Administrator. You can't, your personal wants and things like that, as well as the council, should be for the city as a whole, not my agenda. And, um, so, experiences here have been a little bit different. Um, councils here the chamber fills up with audience whereas before in Elgin they didn't quite fill up. \*Laughter.\* Um, I have visited other cit...other council chambers and they're really tiny. I mean there's no room for an audience basically and, and I'm thinking, "How does that work?" But, they do. Um, but, uh, my day to day is making sure that everything goes right. That the public works crews, the streets, water and sewer is taken care of properly so when you

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

turn on your water, you get clean water and, uh, when you flush your toilet it actually works, So, um...

C: Yeah. Do you have any memorable days in your role yet?

T: Um, pretty much the same day that he has is one of 'em. We didn't have any real issues. We had trees down, a few, but nothing like what, what Steve had to deal with and, you know, um... I think we were there to try to help, um, after. \*Laughter\*.

S: Yeah, the city provided excellent services to assist us getting back online. Um, with that extensive damage that we had from that storm, um, two days later we had our cranes operational and boats were out fishing. It was pretty amazing, especially with the extensive damage that was done from that. Public works came down and helped us with our sewage lift station, get it operational again. Coos Curry Electric was putting up power lines and restoring power to the dock so we can keep the commercial fleet running. It's pretty amazing.

T: It is.

S: We all came together and it was, it was very nice. It was, uh, it was a very unfortunate situation but it brought everybody together and uh, I think that's when we all got to really know each other, was, was from that point. It was kind of like a converging point that, uh, we all met and we came up with a game plan and we executed and it worked out great.

T: Working as a team. Don't matter where you're at in the city. He's, his...we, it's very important to work as a team. And wherever we can help, we do. And whatever they can do for us, uh, is the same. I mean, you know. So...

C: Great. Is there anything else that you want to add about living or working in Port Orford that you think is worth mentioning?

T: \*Sigh.\* Um... like I said, it's a great place to work and live. I have awesome employees, you know. We're not without our issues but, um, we get through them and everybody does their job the best they can. It is... it has been a little difficult without a Public Works Superintendent. You have to have that person, that one person that you deal with instead of each individual employee. It's just kind of nice to have that person. And I do have an employee that stepped up to the plate to take part of that on, you know. And, um, but uh, there isn't much I can say that...it's, like I said, it's a pretty, pretty awesome place to be. I agree with Steve. I don't have the view that he has, unfortunately. \*Laughter\*. You know, but if I want a view all I gotta do is go to Battle Rock. You know, we have, uh, over 100,000 thousand people a year stop in to Battle Rock Wayside. Um, and unfortunately most of it's for the restroom, but... \*Laughter.\* Travelers going up and down the coast. But, that is one of the most photographed sites there and I think it's mostly because in the north coast you don't have the, the rocks that break up your view of nothing but flat ocean, you know.

S: Well and the proximity of 101 I think to the ocean.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

T: Mhm.

S: Um, you know, when you leave Florence you don't see the ocean, you see rivers and little pieces of the ocean from a far distance, but you don't get up close and personal with the ocean until you actually hit here in Port Orford.

T: Yeah. Yeah.

S: So I think that's why a lot of people, you know after, if they're driving from the north touring, you know, after a couple hours of driving they're like, "Ooh, wow! Let's stop."

T: Right. "Oh, there's the ocean!" \*Laughter.\*

S: And it's a beautiful, beautiful scenic area.

T: Yeah. Well, it's really funny. In my life in coming to Port Orford is... um, I was probably 7, 8 years old and my dad was doing construction in Gold Beach and so one of my sisters and I came and spent a week or two with my dad and, um, went to, uh, vacation bible school, climbed Battle Rock, you know, um, just enjoyed Port Orford and I just didn't think I'd ever be back around this direction. It's really kind of amazing that I spent that time here and then turn around and come back and now I'm the City Administrator. You know, Port Orford has so much potential. You know, um, trying to find the right type of growth that people can utilize, um, you know. We are an aging community. Um, median age last I checked was about 55. So, um, we're kind of a ...early retirement community. \*Laughter.\* You know, and, um, so the type of growth that fits the age is, is a challenge, you know. And you have people here that don't want growth. They want Port Orford to stay a small town, you know. Which I totally understand, but you have to have some type of growth, so...

C: Yeah. Actually that was a great transition into the research questions. The first was gonna be can you describe the community for me, so either demographics, which you already mentioned a little bit or the economy, the environment. Whatever you think really kind of really captures what this community is.

S: I think Terrie hit it right on the head. It's like, this is a very diverse community. Um, like she mentioned half the town wants and the other half does not want change. So there's this constant internal struggle to, to do something. Um, a lot of people have great ideas, building new facilities, new structures. But there's the other half of the people that don't want that change. They want to keep it exactly the way it is. And, uh, to be honest, it, it's, it's quite frustrating...um, but it's totally, uh, understandable, you, I mean. I understand. You move to a town because it has its, uh, desirables that you want. And you don't want that to change. But in the same turn, you want to be able to provide jobs. You want to be able to stimulate growth and, uh, bring new things to the community. So, I think on both ends of the, of the spectrum here Terrie and I are falling into the same, same battles. We really are because, uh, I'm trying to expand the port and do new things and people, "Yeah, let's do it!" And other people are like, "Nope, we don't want it to change. We want it to stay strictly the way it is." And it can get rather frustrating.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

T: Yeah, it is. It's, um, we haven't had, uh, pretty much any new building of any kind up until right now. \*Laughter.\* Right now we have a Dollar General coming to town. And, no, it's not a Dollar Store, it's a Dollar General. And that is the first new construction, commercial type construction, that has happened in this town for a very, very long time. And, um, there's, uh, what is it? Um, I don't know if it's an attitude? If it's just a general consensus that they don't want franchise. They want to be that unique little town that each restaurant is its own personality. It's not a franchise. It's not a Subway. It's, you know. The only reason why Dollar General is coming, I think, is two reasons. We only have one grocery store and, um, in all honesty my husband and I were quite shocked at the prices when we moved here. \*Laughter.\* And I think Dollar General will help, uh, you know when you have an aging community and the majority of them are on a, um, limited income, um, your grocery store needs to kind of fit that. But here it doesn't. And I think the Dollar General will, uh, make life a little easier for some of the limited income seniors. Um, finding the employees. Now that will probably bring some young families. We're kinda hoping. Um, we also have outside of the city limits, outside of our urban growth boundary we have a golf course coming in. And we're kinda hoping that that could bring some positive changes as well, you know. Um, up the road in Bandon there's Bandon Dunes and that grew, from what I understand, tremendously huge for a golf course. And, uh, people here are afraid of that. They don't want that happening here. Um, so, um, I'm just hoping that they'll bring, uh, even the smallest positive change. And hopefully a few jobs. It's my understanding that they're going to be livable wages there, you know. And probably, what are.. maybe 15 jobs? Possibly 20. Um, the Dollar General will bring approximately 10 jobs. And, um, also with, and this is a subject that's in our council right now is the subject of recreational marijuana and, um, all of the different types of jobs that could bring. \*Laughter.\* And then you have the, "Hey, we don't want to be a marijuana town." You know, we...yes, we will allow medical and recreational but they just really don't want to become "the town" that does all the marijuana stuff. \*Laughter.\* But, it, it, they do bring jobs, you know, if allowed, the different types. So, there you go. there's, I mean it's... it's, um...

S: I personally didn't know there was that much into it. I thought it was just, hey, grow some weed and you sell it. But it's, I mean you got people that make and sell the paraphanelia, people that grow the stuff, you know, I mean, and there's a lot that's involved. I had no idea that it was such a lucrative business. \*Laughter.\* I really didn't.

T: Yeah, processors, wholesalers, um, labs at research facilities. Those kind of things are, are part of the topic of the council right now. Do we allow them? We only have a small area that they are allowed in our town and this is, when you, if you were to have one of each of those in that area on the south end of town, you, uh, that doesn't leave much room for the kind of shops that you can your children into to buy a kite or a sand pail or something like that, you know, so, there's that struggle there for, even though it's a possible...how do I want to say it? Job filler? \*Laughter.\* Um, it has its downsides too if it's only allowed in a certain area and taking up that kind of space, I guess. So...

C: Yeah. Um, now we're gonna focus a little bit more on fishing. So, can you tell me about the role of fishing in the economy?

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: It's huge. Uh, especially here in Port Orford. We provide about 35 percent of the, the economy for this town. Um, so if the fishing industry goes down the town's gonna significantly suffer because of it. The fishermen are here with their children. Their children go to schools. Their families buy stuff in town, gas, groceries. So it's an intricate web, you know, that needs to be nurtured. And, uh, that's my role is to make sure that these guys are able to fish year round to provide that income and stability for the town. Uh, it never used to be so dependent on that. Before, before fishing ever came around it was a logging town. The timber industry was huge. And we used to have a natural deep-draft port, uh, prior to 1970 or '69. And, uh, we, we'd have 400 foot ships pull up to the dock and load up lumber and, uh, that wasn't uncommon. Um, the port started getting bigger. The Army Corps put in a jetty. Um, and at that time the, the jetty was... a contributing factor to why we shoal up now and we're very dependent on the Army Corps to keep us dredged out so...we no longer have that deep draft capability where we can bring 400 foot ships in. And the biggest we have now that come in are about 35 to 40 feet and uh they're pretty shallow draft and they're just local fishermen that go out to the Port Orford reef and, you know, fish for a multitude of things. Live fish, I had no idea when I first took this job that Port Orford was the largest supplier of live fish in this area. Huge. A lot of the fishermen go out. They catch bottom fish, lingcod, all sorts of different rock fish and they keep them alive on their boats, bring 'em back to the dock, put 'em in giant totes and they send 'em down to Oakland, California and distribute 'em to the, the Asian communities down there in their markets. Huge market for that. Um, crab. One of the biggest providers for our community. This, this community's really dependent on the crab and the seasons and how it uh, how it goes. Salmon's a huge industry as well. Um, so we got a, we've got a good, uh, influence on different fishes, fishing available to us. Crabbing, salmon, tuna, live rockfish and stuff like that. So, we have an urchin guy that uh.. does quite well collecting urchins from the ocean floor. He's got about 4, 5 people that work for him. He goes out diving and comes back with hundreds of pounds of urchins. Uh, so it's, it's a pretty, pretty different mix of, of what we bring back but the majority of the fish that is landed here in Port Orford is all live fish and it's put in giant totes and it's trucked down to Oakland, California.

C: Interesting. Can you tell me about the role of fishing in the culture or the way of life here? You mentioned a little bit about how fishermen are integrated into the community, but anything about fishing that kinda adds to what it means to live in Port Orford. You can just be the City Administrator here or a peson who lives here, you might be able to add to this to, the role of fishing...

T: I know that you can, um, drive down just about any street, uh, I think they're mostly on the east side of 101.

S: Mhm.

T: Most of the fishermen for some reason live on the east side of 101 and, um, you have one that lives and one a block down the street there's another one and maybe three blocks down on the other side of the street there's another one, you know. Um, I have not even a block away from me, um, crab pot storages. There's, uh, a gentleman stores his crab pots next to a fisherman. Um, and then going south, just on the other sie, is another large fishing family, you know. Um, they

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

are co-mingled in with the rest of the world here, you know. They, there's no, um... the death of the town I think if they said fishermen can't live within the city limits. \*Laughter.\*

S: Or even stopped fishing, you know. If there was uh, if there's a... an implementation of no more fishing out of Port Orford it would... this town would be severely affected by it. Absolutely. And, uh, it's a huge business here, you know. And it, it's a neat business. It's very different compared to if you're up on the Columbia River and watching the, you know, the big boats go out. It's, it's nothing like you see on Deadliest Catch, you know, where they're going in and bringing millions of dollars of King crab. It's all Dungeness crab, but they do quite well. Um, we got some pretty fertile grounds right out here. And the unique thing about Port Orford is it's the only dolly dock in the entire United States. One of only five in the entire world that actually lift boats, put 'em over and lower 'em down to the water. We're the only port that's not on a river. So we have open access to fresh salt water instead of being...think about every port that you know of up and down this coast. They're all on a river. Okay, so you have a lot of brackish water. So that's what makes this area truly unique to stimulate the live fish industry. Um, but yeah, one of only five dolly docks in the entire world. And we're the only one in the United States that does it this way. We have no dangerous bar to cross. As soon as you get down in the water you're in the open ocean. That's it. You go out and you're right there whereas all the other ports, Brookings, Gold Beach, Bandon, Charleston, so forth, they gotta cross that nasty bar, you know, and it gets pretty bad. Trust me, I know. I did Coast Guard for 22 years going on doing search and rescue for that so I know. And all up and down these ports. But it's a, it's a really unique situation. It really is. It's just...

T: And just recently some fishermen have lost their lives trying to cross bars like that and... to me, I'm not a fishermen and I don't go out. I have been out, but I don't go out on a regular basis. And if I had a choice, knowing that, having that information, I would probably travel to Port Orford to lower a boat, you know. Because I'm just not into taking my life into serious situations. But, um, I think that in itself, um, is knowledge I don't believe is out there. You know, I just don't believe that, that that, um, Port Orford has a lot of unique things about it, that being one of them, that just... I think needs to be said, you know.

S: Mhm. There's a neat history here. You know, this is one of the oldest town sites on the Oregon Coast.

T: Is.

S: Is the oldest townsite, yes.

T: Yes.

S: Excuse me.

T: And it is the furthest, how do they say that? We are the furthest point out, the city that, um... uh, I'm sorry. I can't remember how they say that. But we are the furthest out, closest, furthest out on the ocean. If you look at the...

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: Oh, the most westerly extreme?

T: Yes.

S: Yeah.

T: The most westerly town.

S: Yeah.

T: Thank you! Um, so, um, yeah, there's, there's several unique things, you know. We had our own Coast Guard station. What year was that? 70s?

S: Yeah. Early 70s is when they shut it down. There used to be a lifeboat station here. Have you been to it?

C: No, not here.

T: Up on the heads.

S: Yeah, if you just go up Coast Guard, Coast Guard hill. Yeah, it's beautiful. It's a museum now and shows the history of it and how it used to be, but... Yeah that shut down in the early 70s.

T: Mhm. Uh, it, the, like I say, the logging. Port Orford cedar. I mean there's a cedar tree named after Port Orford. Not, you know, no mills around here. Let's see there's one south of us that mills the Port Orford cedar. Um...

S: Just before you get into Gold Beach.

T: Mhm.

S: Mhm.

T: It's just a small, looks, appears to be just like a two, three man...

S: Yeah, it's a little mom and pop shop. It's not a big industrial facility. The... I mean the biggest mill that we have would either be up in Coos Bay or down in Brookings. They got a plywood mill and then, uh, I can't remember the name of the other place right when you're heading into town there, but...

T: We had, um, wow. Port Orford had, how many mills? Um, there was, gosh, I want to say anywheres from seven to eight mills, possibly more. I could be exaggerating, I don't know. Uh, Buffington Park. Buffington Memorial Park over here is, um, an old mill site. And when it, when the logging went down they just took the whole mill out and the family dedicated it to a park and... Uh, so, there's not, well there's the mill pond that's still there. But, uh, the only thing I can find that's left from there is this big ol' concrete square that sticks up out of the ground. You



## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

know, not sure what it was for. That's all you can find left of it. But, um, you know, right in the center of town there was this huge mill. \*Laughter.\*

S: That's pretty neat looking at the old black and white photos where you see all the mills. Like where people live now, their houses.

T: Mhm. My house used to be. As a matter of fact I believe one of those, if not both of those pictures over there...

S: Have the mills?

T: Might still show the mill. Some really cool aerials.

S: Yep.

T: So...

S: But, yeah. To say the least, the fishermen do, do provide an intricate part here in the economy of the town and... it's, uh, it's a necessity to keep them fishing. Absolutely.

C: Yeah. Have you seen a lot of family-based fishing businesses or is it something else? Is it family-based or....?

S: A little bit of both. Yeah, there's, there's uh, a couple families. Several generations of people. You know, Dad, Grandpa and the kids all fishin' different boats. Um, and then there's your individualist guy that just comes here and goes, "Well, I like Port Orford. I'm gonna buy a boat and fish." You know, so it's a, it's a huge swing.

C: Have you noticed any changes in those family-based businesses or heard about any changes?

S: Other than the people just getting older and getting out of the business. Yeah, it's tough trying to, trying to get the younger generation interested in fishing. Um, there are a lot of new rules and regulations that weren't there back in the day. Um, a lot stricter guidelines as far as how much, what type of fish. Um, so it makes it difficult and the permitting fees are very expensive, you know. To go buy a crabbing permit, I mean that's hundreds of thousands of dollars. You know, and for a younger person to just start off with, you know, trying to fish, that's, that's, that's hard. That's a lot of money. And, uh, it's, you gotta have a permit for every different industry you do. You just can't go out and buy a fishing license and go out and fish whatever you want. If you want to target crab you gotta have a crabbing permit. If you want to target salmon you gotta have a salmon permit. Bottom fish, I mean it... and so on. So, uh, US Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, uh, they've implemented, NOAA, NMFS, they've all implemented some pretty stringent requirements for these guys and it makes it real difficult for 'em to, to make a living. They do, um, but it's tough. It's a lot of money.

C: Yeah.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: They're struggling as well.

C: Yeah. I was gonna ask what you see here in terms of the age of fishermen. So you mentioned there are some young people that might be taking over from older family members but those other people that you said might just bring a boat, or come here and buy a boat, what do you see in terms of the age of fishermen generally?

S: There's no rhyme or reason for it. It's a fully gamut. It's younger kids, you know. We've got, I mean they're early 20s all the way into their 60s.

T: I have, uh, two...three. Three of my public works crew used to work on the fishing boats. Don't ask me why they got out. I have not heard that story. \*Laughter.\* But, uh, see, somehow, some way you're connected with fishing here.

S: The president of my commission is, uh, a fishermen. The guy that I replaced, uh, the old port manager, he was a commercial fisherman for 30 years. You know, that's, I mean, he was driving down 101 in his VW bus and his bus broke down and he broke down here in Port Orford and he loved it. Went to work on one of the fishing boats and he ended up loving it. And that's what he wanted to do. And he fished outta her for 30 years. And then took over as the port manager for 10, 12 years. And, uh, yeah. So, I mean it's, there's a lot of retired, um, fishing captains, deckhands, everything that live in this area. The fishing off of Port Orford is pretty phenomenal. Uh, a lot of people that leave Bandon or Gold Beach don't want to drive their boats all the way up here to Port Orford so it's kind of, uh, isolated in that aspect. Um, there's not a lot of heavy fishing activity on the reef out here so it's able to sustain the fishermen that we do have. But, uh, a lot of the, a lot of people know. They'll come out from the I-5 corridor and launch 'cause they know that the fishing out here off the Port Orford reef is phenomenal. You know.

C: Yeah. You've already touched on this a little bit, but I'm wondering if you expand on why young people do want to get involved in the fishing industry, from your experience, what you've seen or heard.

S: The love of the ocean. And the business. I mean, I grew up as a kid, I loved fishing. Um, I don't think I would ever want to be a commercial fisherman. Um, but that's why my love for the ocean, I grew up surfing in southern California my whole entire life. I was around the ocean my whole life. I grew up with it in my backyard. And, uh, the next logical step was to join the Coast Guard. \*Laughter.\* So I go out and drive boats on it, you know. It was fantastic. Uh, and especially after doing that job I didn't want to be a commercial fishermen 'cause those guys, they have it tough. They go out, um, when that ocean is nasty they still have to go out and catch fish to provide for their family. You know, they don't have that luxury of sitting at home in their nice warm house if it's a crappy day out. They gotta go out and endure these harsh elements to catch fish to provide for their family. And, uh, they earn their money, that's for sure. They work hard to do what they do. And I hate bringing up this analogy but just watch the guys, what they go through, on that show Deadliest Catch. It's tough. You're out there in the nastiest of conditions. The wind blowing, the seas, I mean it's, it's a tough job. And my hat goes off to them. They're, they work their butts off to, to do what they do.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

C: Yeah. So, there's some research that's been done primarily out of Alaska that's looking at aging in the commercial fishing industry and they've found some evidence that the average age of fishermen is getting older and part of that's because it's harder for young people to get involved. And so not to say that this is happening in Port Orford, that's what we're trying to find out, is if this is happening in Oregon and if it, what that looks like, but, um, if that were the case, maybe like in a more hypothetical sense and it was harder for young people to get in the industry or work their way up what do you think the impact would be here over time if you see an aging workforce in the fishing industry?

S: The decline of the fishing industry.

C: Yeah.

S: Absolutely. It directly correlates to that. Um, like I said with all the implementation of new laws, uh, and the fishing regulations it makes it really tough unless you're born into a family of fishermen to get started on it. Not saying you can't do it. But it's, it's tough to get going.

T: I think this is something that somebody would really have to want to do if they're starting out new because of the cost that you mentioned. Um, there's not too many people in this world that I know of that could just say, "I'm changing my career today and I'm gonna go be a fisherman" and can afford it unless he's been working toward it.

S: Mhm. You'd have to buy a boat with the permit for the specific fisheries that you're targeting. Um, or just be lucky enough to be born into it. Like there's a guy, like I said he's in his younger 20s that's down on the dock. He was born into the family of fishermen. Um, he got his boat and he goes out, works his butt off for a couple months, and, uh, uses that money and travels all over the world to go surfing 'cause that's what he loves to do. He works his butt off though when he does, when he's fishing he's fishing hard. He's out there everyday, doesn't matter what the environment is, how nautical it is out there, he's going out, he's gonna catch his money because that's, that's what he loves doing. But he had the privilege of being born into that industry. He didn't just come right off the street and say, "Hey, I wanna go fishing." You know, it's tough. Boats aren't cheap, permits aren't cheap, fuel, everything, I mean you think of everything that's involved and it's spendy. Real spendy.

T: And it's a different... correct me if I'm wrong here. I have a paycheck that I know is coming every month as long as I do my job, I have this paycheck that's coming every month. Uh, fishing and realtors, to me, are gutsy because depending on your catch, I mean what if it's not a good day? You know. Um, can you guarantee your family a paycheck every month? You know. Can it be a good paycheck or is it not a great pay... Selling houses is the same thing. I mean, you know...

S: The market going up and down. You never know.

T: You gotta sell something to be able to making something and if you can't catch it you can't sell it. \*Laughter.\* So, you know, depending on the weather, I mean, uh, from what I understand, um, see I have, one of my, uh, staff just recently retired. Her husband's a fishermen. And, you

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

know, she'd come in to work and, "Well, Steve's not going out today." You know, "It's too rough. You know they can't go out on it." It's like, "Hmm, you can't go to work today?" You know. And it's, your paycheck depends on working however many days you can. It's just that and knowing to me is unnerving. \*Laughter.\* It's just...

S: All the planets have to align just right. You gotta have good weather, you gotta make sure the bite's on, I mean there's just so many different things that could go wrong, you know. You could throw your crab pots down and come back the next day to check 'em and there could be nothing in 'em. Like, ugh, well I thought this was a good spot, maybe they moved, so, you know, and then they gotta go and they gotta scout around and find out where the, where the biomass is to, to drop their pots and catch 'em. And then when they pull the crab up they gotta make sure that they're right size. Are they all juveniles? Are they all females? You know, 'cause they only can catch the males. So, it's, there's a lot involved. And then what happens when. uh, you got all your pots out and some other boat goes through your string and cuts your lines and you lose your pot? You know. There goes a thousand bucks worth of gear with your pot and your line and buoys and everything else that's attached to it, so... \*Laughter.\* It's a tough job. It really is. I just was talking to one of my guys this morning when we were having breakfast and he said he had been out the last three days trying to catch salmon and he hadn't even got a hit. Trolled all up and down the whole entire coast and couldn't find one.

T: You want to know what's happening if that ever goes away is your can of tuna that you buy in the store is gonna become very expensive. Or nonexistent.

S: Mhm.

T: Of course...

S: Or imported from another country.

T: Or imported, which would be very expensive but from here you buy canned tuna that's, that's a bad word. \*Laughter.\*

S: Yeah, everyone buys fresh tuna from the boats and cans it themselves.

T: Yeah. You don't buy a can of tuna in the store. Even though they have it there. That's for the travelers. \*Laughter.\* That don't know about the home can.

S: Mhm.

T: Yeah.

C: Yeah.

B: But, there, yeah, there's a lot of, uh, variables that go into a successful season for fishermen.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

C: Yeah. Um, again, you lead really nicely into my next question which is, what do you think the impact might be if you lost either fishing or maybe more specifically those family-based fishing, or even the individual guys that are fishing out of here. If you lost that in Port Orford, what would that do to the community?

T: Um, Steve might not agree with me on this. Um... gosh, how do I say it? Because our median age and the majority of the population is 55 and older, how many of those you say 35 percent of our population is fishermen?

S: No, I didn't say that, I say they provide about 35 percent of the revenue for the community.

T: Okay, that's what you said. Sorry about that. You know... exactly how many fishing families do we have here? I don't know that. But, um, the majority of the population that I understand is retired. So, would we become strictly a retirement community? You know. Um, possibly. Would we grow anymore? I really can't answer that. I just know that, um, uh, the only thing that would put people to work would be the shops that the retired people needed to live, you know. Um...

S: It's hard, it's a hard question to answer because it's purely speculation. You don't know what's gonna happen. Um, if, if, if they were to regulate and say no more fishing out of Port Orford who knows what would happen. You know, we'd have to find some other niche to, to compensate for that income. Turn the whole dock into an RV park, I mean...\*Laughter.\* Who knows, you know. You, you just don't.

T: And there are those storm chasers that would love to put an RV down there. Rock and roll. \*Laughter.\* We sat up, there's a parking area above the dock and, you know, my husband and I when we first came here we had a big pickup, you know. Uh, 350 crew cab. Those suckers are heavy and we're sitting there in that parking area and we're just, and I'm going, "Okay, it's time to get out of here because this thing is moving." \*Laughter.\* You know, um...

S: It's, it's pretty forceful. When I got that phone call when that storm was hitting I drove down to the dock and drove out at the very end and was sitting there watching and a big huge series came in and crashed up over the dock, hit my truck and literally moved it over about 6 to 8 inches and I was like, "Okay, we're done."

T: \*Laughter.\* It's time to move.

S: My whole entire truck was like encompassed in a giant wave and it moved it over so I took off. Locked the dock down, secured it and got everybody outta there. It was nasty. But, uh, it, it's hard to speculate on what would happen if, if the fishermen were just to leave. I mean, a lot of the kids that are in the school would be gone.

T: Gone.

S: Um...

T: Our, our school is shrinking, I believe.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: Mhm.

T: Um, less and less children all the time. Those working families have to go where there is work. And if they're not a fisherman right now, um... let's see, um.

S: There's not a lot of industry in this town to sustain that.

T: Yeah. No, I was trying to think of what the top, um, Coos-Curry Electric?

S: Mhm.

T: Uh, Ray's Market. Um, TJ's now employs 16. That's what I just recently heard.

S: Wow.

T: Um, so, and that's just a restaurant, you know. And that's something we're not in need of is another restaurant. \*Laughter.\* We have plenty of those. But, um, yeah, no, even the city only has 12 employees, you know. So...

S: We only have six including me. Um, yeah, it's just hard to...I know the town would significantly suffer if the fishing industry were to dry up. To what extent I don't know. It, it, it's hard to forecast that.

C: Yeah. What are other options for careers for young people here? You alluded to it already a little bit, but I mean....

T: Yeah. Like I say, Coos-Curry Electric. Um... and I know, uh, electric companies are good careers. My husband retired with Pacific Power. Worked there 30 years. Um, but, uh, other career opportunities is, um, your restaurants. You need to be in the food service. Um, and I guess that includes Ray's. It's a grocery store. You know, your clerk. Um, you work for the city. Um, gosh, what am I...the school district. Um... what am I missing?

S: Chevron, Circle K. I mean there's a lot of small shops but not really enough to attract people to come here. There's no business.

T: Right. The service industry is...

S: You have to, you want to live here because of the beauty and the, the relaxing atmosphere.

T: Which really surprises me nowadays. Why don't we have a more....with technology and so many things can be done from anywhere, why wouldn't somebody just pick here? I mean, my gosh! Everything that we have to offer like you just said, the view, you know. Um, why wouldn't some...

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

S: Because we get back to that 50 percent of the people that live here don't want new businesses and change to come to town because it's gonna grow. Everyone's scared that it's gonna turn into a Lincoln City or a Newport or something, you know. That'll never happen, but...

T: It's called controlled growth, you know.

S: My feeling is if there was more opportunity, more services. Uh, that could provide for people that want to come in here for families then I think this, this town would be huge. It would boom real quick. But... again it's getting that...\*Laughter.\* The town to want to grow. And we're that battle again.

T: And they don't want condos, you know. The tiny home thing hasn't come up yet with council but it, it's on it's way. I've had calls, conversations with, you know, property owners around here that, "Oh, we're thinking of a tiny home," and I go, "No, you're not." \*Laughter.\* "No, you're not." You know, we do have ordinances and requirements that would have to go through the process of changing and, you know, that kind of a thing, but, um, they, they want to stay that small, quaint, different little town. We are designated an arts district. And Port Orford is the first to have, on the Southern Oregon Coast, a, um, scenic bike...

S: The Oregon Coast Wild Rivers Bike...Scenic Bike Way.

T: Right. You know, um, we have signs all around that show you which direction to go to go that scenic route. Um...

S: We do have a large art community here.

T: Very.

S: Huge. Really huge.

T: For the, for the small population, it is. It's huge. Um, art is...and any art form. Music as well as paintings as well as creations. Um, the students here, I had the opportunity through Ford Foundation cohort that, uh, I got to work one on one with some of the students and, "Oh my gosh!" The artistic talent, whether it be with drawings and because, you know, kids, when they're sitting in this room full of adults and they're discussing personalities and things, you know, just doodling. There was some fantastic art that was doodled out during those classes. And, um, we have one young lady who's got a signing talent like you wouldn't believe, you know. Um, so, there's intelligent, artistic, uh, the retirement community. We have lawyers and, you know...

S: Engineers. Pretty amazing.

T: Engineers. And accountants and, you know, school teachers and, you know, um, the intelligence that, um, lives here is, I just wish we could utilize all of that, you know. Um...

S: Another thing Port Orford doesn't have going for it is an I-5 corridor.

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

T: Yeah.

S: So we're stuck right in the middle between two corridors and, I mean let's face it, people like to shop and have conveniences, you know. They want to be able to go to a Ross or a Wal-Mart or something like that and that's not here. This is small town at it's finest.

T: An hour away. I also understand that, uh, after they reach a certain age they are looking to move away to be closer to the hospitals and stuff because...

S: Health care.

T: Um, half hour south and a half hour north are the two closest hospitals. And then if you would... um, you gotta go an hour for, what do you call it? It's Coos... um, Bay hospital is um, it's bigger. You know, and, um, we have health communities here. Um... okay. Coast Community Health and Curry Community Health and I believe there's another one and I think it's more mental health. But, um, we have a doctor's office here. Uh, Dr. Pitchfort's been here for years. Um, he... tries to keep the community healthy. Uh, we have a, everybody calls it the blue building which is Curry Community Health that also sees people. We have Coast Community Health who's going to be building a new center here. So, things are happening. Um, and I believe that if the fishing industry ever did leave that adjustment is starting to happen. Not that it's, the fishing industry is going to be leaving, but it's kind of adjusting to what if it does.

S: Health care is a big thing. My parents flat out told me they love it up here more than anything. They'd leave where they're living right now down in California and move up here in a heartbeat but my Dad needs extreme medical assistance and he can't find it up here. So... it's unfortunate.

T: Mhm. So I believe too, and I think you're still on that question, um, what would happen to Port Orford if the fishing industry left? I really kinda think we would become a bedroom community...in a distance. I mean, normally your bedroom communities are not far from a big place. But, uh, retirement community I guess. Um....

S: Strictly have to utilize a tourist...

T: Mhm...

S: Um, posture, to generate revenue for tourism and that's a...

T: Well, with the lack of jobs across the nation, um, with the, uh, meetings that I have attended. The OCZMA meetings, small city meetings and stuff, um, even across the state in high desert, tourism...the logging industry's non-existent and so everybody has to turn to tourism. And how it is we can all afford to travel when we don't have jobs, I mean, you know, it's amazing. But, uh, tourism is the next industry.

S: It's huge.



## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

T: Mhm. Just, um, like I say, we have things here that have not been broadcasted far and wide as far as I'm concerned like our dolly dock, you know. Um, a lot of people say, "Oh, okay, whoopdy. It's gonna, you know, do that," so that doesn't interest that type of person but there are people out there who are interested, you know. I want to see the unusual. Well, that's unusual for the United States.

S: I think the big thing that's hitting out here is the environmental tourism. People love that. They want to come see the whales. They want to come see the storms. They like the ocean.

T: Hike the trails.

S: Hike the trails, mhm.

T: We have a wonderful trail system here, too.

S: Mhm.

T: So, there's a lot to offer here it's just not employment-wise, you know.

C: Yeah. That's the end of my questions unless there's anything else that you want to add either about the role of fishing here or challenges you see, opportunities you see for fishing. Anything like that, but... Any lost closing thoughts you might have.

S: We have that Redfish Rocks area that, um, I don't know a whole lot that and the POORT.

T: So there is a section of our ocean out here that is a marine.... preserve. Gotta make sure that right. It's not a sanctuary but it's a preserve where it's been, um, turned over to the state and it's got full regulation and you're not allowed to fish out of it, do anything in it. It's used strictly for research. Um, so, that's another big, uh...industry that could have potential, uh, is research. Um, again, we have immediate access to the ocean, no bar to cross, fresh salt water to do research on. Um...

S: OSU has an extension office here.

T: We do. In fact, one of our Commissioners, Tom Calvanese, I'm sure you met with him.

C: Hoping to.

S: Yeah. He's, uh, he's the, uh, the manager over at the field station over here. And, uh, he can give you all sorts of good information on the Redfish Rocks and stuff that's his, his degree is marine biology so he's pretty up to date on all that. Um, but, you know, I mean they use that whole Redfish Rocks reserve as a, as a petri dish to do studies. So, it's, it's interesting in that aspect. A lot of people got upset at that because that was a great fishing spot, you know. So, you just gotta weigh it out, you know. I mean the benefits coming out of it versus what we're taking from there, I mean, it, it's... it's hard to speculate on what would've happened if they wouldn't've

## Graying of the Fleet – Voices from the West Coast

done it versus, you know, that they did do it, so... it's all politics. I try to stay out of that as much as I possibly can.

T: Oh, I wish I could. \*Laughter.\*

S: Just try to provide, you know, for the local community and make sure that these fishermen have a operational dock to do their business out of. To provide food and a house over their head for their family.

C: Yeah. Any closing thoughts from your end?

T: No. It's just an amazing place to, um, be and if you've never been, you need to visit, you know. Um... there's, I don't... I guess I can't find the words to really describe what it is to, to be here. Um...

S: It's unique.

T: Very unique. Um, and just like any town, we have our ups and downs, but, um, you know what. You go for a walk on the beach and...

S: And you forget about it real quick.

T: And you forget about it real quick. Search for agates. \*Laughter.\*

S: You go agate hunting out here and whatever you're thinking about will disappear in a heartbeat. 'Cause it's, you'll get sucked up by the serenity of the, the beauty of this place. It's amazing.

T: It is. It really is. Just...go out on the heads. Sit on one of those little benches and just take it all in, you know. And the colors of the hills, you know, the... I can't describe it enough, you know. It's, it's pretty amazing to be here.