

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

DC: It is June 21st we are in Newport, could you please state your name for the recording?

JH: John Holt

DC: Fantastic. So I wanted to open it up to you and see if you had any cool stories about when you were fishing, how you got into fishing...

JH: [slight laugh] Well my dad was a fisherman. He started with his dad in the mid 30's out of Garibaldi. He fished during the depression and then during the war he worked at the ship yard at Swan Island building liberty ships until after the war. And then, I guess it was about the mid 50's that we moved to Newport and he started fishing again. He was also a diesel mechanic, so he had both jobs. Starting in about 1954-55 he started running a pilet boat out of Newport also. And he ran the pilet boat until the end of the 60's. He bought the first boat he bought for himself in 1958 or 59. I started fishing with him when I was 8 years old. I fished every summer from that time till I was actually out of college. Other than one year that I spend fishing in Aska in between my college years. Then I spent all the time with him the first trip with the boat we went to San Francisco right from Newport. Fished the whole summer down there and then worked our way up the coast.

DC: And then your sons got into it?

JH: I had two sons and a step son that are fishing, and a nephew that fishes. And my brother fished with my dad too when I quit, although he was older when he came home from the navy. Worked for Safeway, and worked there for a long time. Then started fishing probably, would have been '67-68, he started fishing with my dad and then actually had two of his own boats. One of which was lost at sea with all hands, but he was running the other one at the time. But his youngest son still fishes. My brother passed away in '95.

DC: I'm so sorry. Have you had any close calls like the?

JH: I've actually been pretty lucky [laughs] I've had some close calls but none that I would consider real, in my opinion, life threatening close calls. I've fished in some really, really nasty weather, and done a lot of jogging in real crummy weather. Been across some real nasty bars, but none really, that I felt was going to be endangering the vessel or myself or the boat. Especially the crew or anything like that. I said I've been very fortunate. But I have always been pretty safety conscious too. But it doesn't matter how safe you are, shit happens.

DC: So it sounds like your biggest motivation to get into fishing was your father.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: It was also, I love boats. In the time between when I was born, I was born in Hillsbouro, Oregon, and my parent lived there and I was born with an enlarged heart. The doctors told them at the time that I needed a dry climate. So they moved us to Bend, or Burn, sorry and my dad was a forman for a ranch there fore a while. South of Crane. And my health got better so when I was probably about 4 or 5 years old thats when they moved to Newport. Ultimaty I was here 3 or 4 months and winded up having to have open heart surgery, but I've never had problems with it since. I've been very lucky and had a lot of help from god I guess [chuckles]. Then when my dad started running the piolet boat thats when I started going out with them probably about 5-6 and then he started salmon fishing and tua fishing. That when he started taking me. My oldest son, his mother, and I have a daughter thats older than him, hes 38, my daughters 40 this year, their mother and I split up when he was probably 3 and my daughter was about 5 and they spent a lot of the time fishing with me on the boat even at that young of age. I broke him of the diper and the bottle on the boat. The other two boys, my step son and my youngest son both started at about 9 years old.

DC: SO whats your earliest memory of fishing?

JH: I remember my dad taking me tuna fishing one time. We were in Garabaldi, salmon fishing and he was 1 or 2 day tripping out there and my mom was camping in a trailer in Rockaway and it was always a family thing. My mom fished with us after they bought a boat called the Ileane in 1959. She fished with them clear until he retired from salmon fishing. But at that time I rememebr him deciding that tuna was close the weather was nice, so we went tuna fishing for a couple of days and did tell her. And one didnt bid well for either one of us when I got home. [chuckles] She had a thing about tuna fishing meant crappy weather and a long ways off shore. [chuckling] that was prbably one of my earliest...he had a nother boat called the White Cap, I think I was probably about 8 hen, and we fished the area between Newport and Garabaldi and we spent a lot of time anchored behind Cape Lookout and its real pristein in there, its a nesting ground for Muirs and Puffin and we had a skiff and we could row in and out of the cave and stuff like that. Thats an early, you know it just peacfull. Thats the part of it that I really like.

DC: So which fisheries have you been involved in?

JH: Well I started salmon fishing, tuna fishing, I've been long lining for black cod, shrimping, I started shrimping in 1971 I think it was, groundfishing, started whiting fishing in '86, king crabbing, did that in 1967. I've never done any seining. I think thats pretty much it. Dungeness crab fishing obviously.

DC: Any favorites?

JH: I think my favorite is shrimping. It's an old mans fishery [laughing] it's layed back, you sleep at night, read a book [laughing] fishing got to be a little bit stressful

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

DC: Have you notice any changes to the Oregon coast or the fisheries, or anything else since you started?

JH: Oh yeah. theres been a lot of changes. Well the inception of rationalisation to which I disagreed with from day 1. A lot of my bretherin who still own boats are and were for it and created a grandfathered in fishery and retirment fund basically from my point of view. And because I sold my boats before this happened, neither one of my boy will probably ever own a boat, because you have to buy into it, unless they are able to get in shrimping and do that. Thats one of the main things. Rationalization right now they are finding in my opinion is to help some of the species that the scientists at the time said were over fished. Two of which I can think of they determined since then really werent overfished, but you know that works. But it has created a tremendous stress on the economy and the coast. This whole west coast, they only bring 30% of whats allowed to catch or they wont be able to come to the dock anymore because, mostly becasue people are afraid to fish in areas where the chock species, species that you dont dare catch, are there. And there is one in particular species, the Yellow Eye, can shut a whole fishery down for getting half a dozen fish. Because of how thats set up. [chuckles]

DC: Any other changes?

JH: Gear changes. Just before I started shrimping, the main shrimp gear was beam trawls, and now they use wooden trawl doors, in the old days we used to use gulf style double rig traw doors with 57 merina rich nets, has a big hood. Caught lots of smelt, lots of bycatch. Went from there to a high rise net, what we called a box net. Which is where the head rope and foot rope are basically the same length. You dont catch as many of the bycatch because they tend to go over the top of it. In the gulf they all them tents, here we just call them excluders. We've got an excluder that actually excludes most all bycatch now. It's a big hoop with a grate in it thats half an inch wide or something like that, that the smelt, the Ulicon, and rockfish, whichever you would catch, goes out an openeing that is just above it. A couple of years ago they found that putting little lights on the foot rope itself, help a lot of that smelt not even go in. So that cleaned it up. It's just gear styles, deals like that have helped the fishery a lot, where years ago it wasnt uncommon to get a tow of shrimp and 25-30 percent of it would be smelt and you would spend all day picking at a table. When I first started shrimping, you nailed peg board down on the deck and you were on your hands and knees all day picking smelt out of it. In the early 70's, guys started putting tables, which you could stant up and pick off of, then we actually put together a hopper system in '74 we worked together with a fella that invented a smelt seporator. Thats a sandpaper belt that they still use to this day. Then we put a hopper on a boat to put it in, and to my knowledge we were the first ones to put a hopper that in those days you just picked it up with a hook line, now it's all done by conveyors and thats pretty much the norm. That was a big innovation to shrimping when they came about because it picked out a lot of smelt.

DC: Seems like pretty simple, almost, devices.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: They are pretty crude. The trawl doors that we used for shrimping are big wooden doors, there are some fellows that are really doing some innovation right now using steel... out by Tiburon or Northeastern...steel doors that their getting good spread out of, getting the height. They are putting live feed cameras on their head ropes so they can see what they are catching, as they are catching it. Thats the new one. It's not cheap, but there are a few boats on the coast that are starting to go that way, and I can see that being a future too.

DC: It's interesting to hear that the fishermen are leading the initiative.

JH: The fishermen on this coast from the Oregon, Washington, and Northern California have always been leaders in the fisheries. Innovators, renovators, which they started doing joint ventures with foreign countries. Starting mainly with the Soviets in those days in the mid 70's. They started doing that. I joint ventured with the Poles [Polish] in the mid 80's clear until about 1990ish, something like that, when Americanization took over the whiting industry. There's boats that still do the same joint venture but with American trawlers. My oldest boy just go off one of those.

DC: So where do you see the industry going?

JH: It's hard to say. In the late 90's everyone I knew was saying - no fishing is done, we have to find something else to do. And we made it though that so it's hard to say where it is going to go. I think a lot of the fish are coming back. Maybe it is because of rationalization, but the government needs to come to the table and release a little bit of that fish. They are very very slow getting anything done. It's worse than congress. Just ridiculously slow. And they are more afraid of doing their I's and crossing their T's than they are, sometimes in my opinion, than doing actual good for the industry. We have [chuckle] what I call bunny huggers, way too many of them.

DC: What is a bunny hugger?

JH: Environmentalists

Both [laugh]

DC: I like that name, I have heard them called greenies before.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: Yea we could call them a lot worse.

DC: Where would you like to see the industry going?

JH: Well, like I said, I have a lot of my relatives, my youth in it. I would like to see it kept up. I would like to see them all do well in it. As far as where it goes, I don't know of any new species to fish, but maybe somebody will come up with some. When I was a kid growing up shaking hake or whiting off of our hooks, they were just a rotten pain in the butt. God I never dreamed I would be fishing for them for a food fish. In a lot of cases they are worth more for making oil out of than they are eating, but a lot of countries eat them! I personally have never eaten one. [chuckles] Maybe I'm picky.

DC: It's tough when you are used to fishing tuna and pinks.

Both: [laugh]

DC: What would you say the most challenging aspect of fishing is?

JH: Challenging?

DC: Yes

JH: Right now government. It's always been challenging, as the years have gone on it has gotten worse. It feels like you are fighting them for every pound. When you walked in I was just going through a deal with my boss. I work for Pacific Fishing. I'm the assistant general manager in charge of fleet operations. I'm the alternate captain for our fleet. We have 10 trawlers on this coast. We just found out that, not one of our boats, but another one of the boats that fish whiting now had a huge hit of pacific ocean perch. Which may very well shut them down and could shut the whole fishery down. It's these choke species that can shut a whole fishery down. It happened last year with canary rock fish [referring to canary rock fish] with a boat that he won't be able to fish on this coast now, well I think he has 3 years left till he can fish on this coast. He can fish Alaska but not here for shore side. Because of the big canary hit that he got.

DC: 3 years...

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: Yeah, and the hit closed the season down for groundfish, in December. He got it late in the year or it would have been real ugly. You know it happens and it could happen to anybody. And that particular species is one of the species that the scientists are saying should never have been put in the overfished category and we had certain council members that refused to let go of it. [laugh]

DC: Sounds like a great deal of politics

JH: Yeah, politics.

DC: So did you encourage or discourage your kids to go into fishing?

JH: You know, no, I gave them...I feel like I taught them to be responsible, although it didn't seem like they were till they were over their 20's.

[phone rings, pause recording 00:17:02.7 - restart 00:17:12.1]

JH: No, my main goal was to teach them to be responsible citizens, to do whatever they wanted to do. None of them really wanted to go to college. My youngest didn't go to school, he went to Southern Oregon University for a year, and I paid heavily for that good time. And then he decided that he wanted to be an electrician. So he applied for the apprenticeship program in Portland and did extremely well. It was like he came in 15th out of 250. And had an awesome job and he was doing great at it, then 2008, when everything went belly up, all those jobs went away. So he had to do something so he moved back down here; and one of my daughters, she was managing the South Beach Rouge Brewery, so she gave him a job over there as a what started out as busing, then moved to waiting, then became a bartender. He did that for 4 months, something like that, 5 months, and then he got a job right away working in a net shop for foul weather trawl and Sarah taught him how to sew. He worked there for about 4 or 5 months and then got a job working for another fishing family in town. And that's who he works for now. They bought a boat here a couple of years ago and he runs it full time now. But he has been with them for 8 years, something like that, 8-9 years.

DC: Sound like he has some great skills

JH: Yeah, yeah. The oldest boy and my step son, both of them went and got their heavy equipment certificate, neither one of them used it. My middle son, he's my step son but I have had him since he's been a year and a half, me and him are real close. Our families are both real close. He fished for a long time, started with me, fished for me for a while. Then he got out on his own, and fished for a couple other boats and he spent a lot of time going back on boats in Alaska. Decided to quit here a couple of

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

years ago. He has a wife and 2 small children, and went to work at the mill. I told him at the time, man I kinda ruined you, to ever do mill work cause thats pretty monotonous. And he lasted about a year and a half. He said "I just cant do it anymore". So hes actually working on the same boat that my oldest son is working on. And they work...all of the them work very well together. I tried to teach each of those 3 boys to sew and didnt have the patience. My oldest son is left handed, so I had to get my nefew to teach him [laughs] who is left handed [chuckles].

DC: So did you want them to go into fishing?

JH: I think I probably did. I didnt every really tell them that, but I wanted them to go into fishing. I wanted them to make their own decision as long as they were good, productive folks, you know? I men I felt pretty lucky that my wife and I raised 5 kids and none of them are in jail and none of them are druggies. they all seem to have found their way and they all do well. My one daughter lives in Vancouver. Shes inbetween jobs right now. I have another one that lives in Lincoln City, she works at the high school up there. She's one of the secretaries at the high school. And then the 3 boys still fish.

DC: Do you think it benefitted the 3 boys coming from your family background?

JH: You know, they each made their own way but they grew up in this community and a majority of the older fishermen here are people I grew up with or have been freinds with just about all my life, so they all...they grew up with them, they grew up around them. The oldest boy, Jeremy, the boat he is the alternate captain on it right now, the owner of the boat...I think Jeremy was 9 years old when we were joint venture fishing. And he was my partner boat; the guy that owns the boat that Jeremys working for now. And so [chuckles]thas the stigma they have to deal with, that whoever they work for is probably going to be someone I know very well [laughs] It's usually not by their choice and I think sometimes theyed prefer...Whenever the boys are in town I'm always down with them on the boats, tinkering around. Since the owners are all old friends of mine, they dont seem to have a problem with me hangin out there. And I keep telling them I've become my dad because thats what my dad did to me when he retired. He was just around all the time. I thought it was great. ANd like I said, they dont seem to mind it so, I just come and pester.

DC: Thats good, It's nice to see them. So what attracts young folks to the fishing industry now?

JH: Used to be the money. Now I dont think they make as much money, the crews dont, as they sued to. The percentages of the boats make to their crews are about the same, fuel has gone higher. Some boats pay for the fuel and pay the crew less. Some boats take fuel off the top and pay the crew more. The last few years, the big shrimp seasons we have had have been pretty leucrative. This year is going to be a test because the amount of shrimp just arent there. Whether it's because of El Nino or what it is. There cyclical. Crabs and shrimp run on a cycle. I've been through this in probably 3 or 4 cycle in my

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

fishing career, between the fish and the crab. Theyll go down and then they will go up and then they will go down. Kinda the way of things.

DC: So what are the barriers to entering the industry?

JH: Barriers? Well it helps if you know somebody. A lot of people that ask for jobs that come in right off the street, that dont know anything, those folks have a real struggle getting into it. It does help if you know somebody. Ambitious people that want to stick to pressure and to give them the chance will ultimately, I beleive, come out of it. I guess thats the only barriers. What I see is barriers in terms of owning boats. And groundfishing is...they wont be able to. Nobody is selling their quota shares, their permit, ownership of the quota shares to anybody. Thats the old guys, like me, retirement fund. The guys that have kids that are fishing, their doign quite well. And I have a lot of friends that...I sold my boats. I had a boat called the Pacific Future that I built in '79 and brought it around from Texas. It was a 78 foot trawler/crabber/shrimper. I sold it in 2002, I had another one that was about the same size. It was just a shrimper, and a groundfish and I sold it in 2007.

[phone rings, pause recording. 00:24:30.0 - 0:24:39.0]

JH: Well the barriers for the young people getting in...for young people owning a boat. From the groundfish point of view, they will never own. They say they can buy quota shares and be able to put it together that way but, you know, they should...if they ever wanna shrimp or something like that, I think they would be able to buy a boat eventually if they save their money [laughs]

DC: How much do these things cost?

JH: Millions...yeah. The boat that my youngest boy works on, they bought it...I think they payed 1.3 [million] for it, but it came with all ther permits. The permits cost money too. And then it came with a trawl permit with quota shares. The boats themselves arent really as expensive as you might think, you know? Depending on the boat. The one he runs is 75 foot. But they did a lot of work right away onto the boat. So they had to put a bunch more money into it to bring it up to grade and everything. Gear is expensive. I always said that the worst thing I ever did was getting involved in whiting fishing. I never spent so much on a fishery to get payed so little for. i fished for years for 2 and a half cents for a fish. And then a few years back they were getting 12 and 15 for it. My god. They are down to 8 cents this year. 6-8 cents is what they are getting for whiting this year. But I put one whole season in here, 6 million pounds of fish that I put in one year in Newport. '97 I think it was, and our food fish, we were getting payed 2 cents for. And the fish that were going directly to the meal plant, we were getting payed 2 and a half for [chuckles] Thats it. And fuel was going up pretty good in those days too. Fuel and insurence. Insurence is a biggy too. Yeah.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

DC: Yeah. So dangerous

JH: Dangerous. The price of the haulin macheinery isnt extremem but it's the PNI that really hits you. You gottainsure your crewmen for a bunch and then of coarse its not cheap eather.

DC: So what would you say is the average age of a fishermen is?

JH: Wow. You know, I guess youd have to go by fisheries. I think the average age is getting older. You know I really don't...I would say probably 40ish

DC: What about the owners?

JH: Oh owners? [chuckles] Well theyr my age. They are pushing 60s and 70s

DC: have both of those been changing? Both the fishermen and the owners?

JH: No, no, since rationalization theres not a lot of change in ownership. Like I said, I'm 68 and most of the owners are my age. Theres quite a few younger but a majority of them are. Some of the shrimp boat owners are younger. But the groundfish age isnt. Between 40 and 50 most of them are.

DC: For the owners?

JH: Yeah, I guess so.

DC: And then for the crews?

JH: For the crews, 20s and 30s.

DC: Is that normal?

JH: Yeah.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

DC: Is that how it has always been?

JH: Yeah pretty much. I think the crews that move up [cough] are...well the ones that can move up fast are... you know...my youngest son, he will be 30 in December, and hes actually pretty young for a captain.

DC: SO would you say that this graying phenominon, this aging of the fleet, is this a real thing?

JH: I think young people will be coming eventually to take over. You know, when the space is there its going to be filled by somebody. It's not going to be filled by another old goat [laughs]

DC: Its just the owners that dont seem to be...?

JH: A lot of the owners have offspring, in the groundfish, this is the groundfish I'm talking about. This was my main fishery, it was groundfish. The shrimping, not so much. I think

[tech check 00:29:28.0-00:29:20.0]

JH: Anyhow so...

DC: Interesting. So it's mostly the ownership.

JH: Yeah, the ownership is older.

DC: So what would it be like in Newport if these fishing families no longer owned their boats?

JH: Well most of them pass them down. In the groundfish, a lot of the ownership of the groundfish owners pass them down to their offspring. Theres a lot of fishing families in Newport that come down. I guess what I'm talking about is the ones that...my kids would have been set and pretty right now if I hadnt have sold my boats. Let me put it that way [laughs]

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

DC: Alright [chuckles]

JH: But now they have gotta... you earn it the old fashion way [laughs]

DC: So as somebody who works for Pacific Seafoods, do you see this...so are there a lot of boats being sold to bigger cooperations?

JH: There was a period of time when a lot of folks were offering their boats up to this particular cooperation. A majority of the boats that were offered up were boats that...to be quite honest, were deteriorating because they werent making enough money to keep them up. So it was a way out. We spent a lot of money on the baots that we have. To bring them up to grade. And still doing. My general manager, hes real big on safety, extremely big on safet, and he likes things neat and tidy.

DC: It's a good thing to be focused on

JH: Yeah [chuckles]

DC: Would you say that Newport has a fishing culture?

JH: Absolutley

DC: Do you think that anything threatening that fishing cuture?

JH: Are you serious?

DC: I have to ask [chuckles]

JH: We could get rid of a few more Californian inbreads [laughs] That shouldnt probably be repeated. Have you been over here much?

DC: I havnt, no

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: Well the port, along with the feds, just spent a bunch of money on upgrading our deep water port. When I was a kid in high school, I've seen as many as 5-6 lumber ships in here loading lumber and other stuff at a time. We havnt seen a ship in here in probably 20 years, 30 years. They built, compleatly renovated our port. And they had visions of maybe bringing cruise ships in. Smaller ones because of the height of the bridge. And log ships. Well there will be times that somebody brings up bringing log ships or lumber ships in, youve got a group of the...people that have moved here from out of town, that live close to that "oh we dont want to hear the noise" or its the main thing is that they dont want to hear the traffic or they dont want to hear the noice. They want to keep it prestine. Well even some of the folks that lw ent to high school with, I graduated from here. I got my 50th reunion this year, and some of these people that moved away and want to keep it prestine, they forget how this port was built. It was built on logging, fishing, and mostley the maritime industry. It wasnt built on tourism [chuckles] Theres an old goats personality.

DC: DO you think that theres a possibility that the fishing sector will get bumped out?

JH: No...no...

DC: Fishing is here to stay?

JH: Fishing is here to stay. This is one of the earliest ports on the Oregon coast to be a fishing port. They built the bridge in 1936 and there were boats long before then here fishing. We have one of the largest, I will say we have the largest non-Seattle based far water fleet on the west coast. As far as groundfish. We have numerous vessels that fish both on this coast and in Alaska. We have a lot of vessels that fish stricktly Alaska that are based out of Newport. The crabbing fleet, and the groundfishing fleet that fish Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, Adack, that will always be a fishing community no matter how hard they try and run us out. [chuckles]

DC: Good

JH: We could save a few less sea lions though. Yeah

DC: So what would happen if, hypothetically, all the fishing boats were sold?

JH: Somebody would buy them

DC: And keep them up ...

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

JH: Mhmm. Somebody will by them, keep them up

DC: So that was my last official question, so you are free. But I quickly wanted to make sure that I got everything that you could possibly have to say. So is there anything that I missed? Anything that you want me to know?

[00:34:58.9]

JH: You know, I dont know what you are going to do with all of this, I guess thats my question

DC: So my steps....

...chatter continues about next steps...

[00:36:00.0]

JH: Well you know when I was a kid growing up I used to swim in this bay, and people thought...I can remember some of my teachers though it was horrible that we would do that. But you know I swam in the ocean too. There was not a lot of sea lions in here at that time, and when there was, the orcas would come in and take care of them. Well they built that little brick jetty thats rght out from port dock one. And it seems to be that they just come in in the hoards. But they ahve done it all up and down the coast. theres docks in San Fancisco that you cant get near. Theres docks in Astoria, Oregon that you cant get near. You can go up to Bonnavill Dam right now and their just... and they blame overfishing for the salmon going away...come on. [chuckles]

And what really gets me, your going to love this one, you get e. coli from any mammal feces. What do you thing those sea lions are doing? Theyr not eating. And they worry about, they worry so much about the environemnt, the water environment from boats and people but it seems like they compleatly forget about that. And the one last year that really got me was that the bunny huggers stopped the shell oil boat from leaving Portland and they are all out their in their neoprean kayaks. And I'm like are you kidding me?

DC: I just heard about that! I heard they were hanging off the bridge.

JH: Oh they were. And the trouble was they had the mayor of Portland in their back pocket. He's a bunny hugger too.

6/21/2016

Interviewer: Deanna Caracciolo

Participant: John Holt

COMPLETE

[END 00:37:52.3]