

Christina Package-Ward: I am just interested. Maybe we could start with your personal background and family background and kind of how you got into fishing?

Bob Jacobson: I was born in North Bend, Oregon, 1939. I had a brother, who's also involved in the fishing industry, and a sister. My dad was a logger. But while we were growing up, we spent a lot of time down watching the commercial fishing boats unload in Charleston, which is Coos Bay. So, that kind of whetted my appetite for the ocean and fish. It's the whole marine scene. I went on to graduate from North Bend High School. I went to Oregon State University and graduated with a B.S. in business. I went back, did a couple of years of graduate work, ended up taking a permanent job with OSU, here in Newport, in 1967. About that year, maybe a year later, I decided I wanted to fish commercially for salmon. So, I used my weekends and vacation time and fished out a little twenty-foot dory. Actually, I did very well. That was back during the peak of the Coho Runs. When Coho Runs were just really out of sight, we had some tremendous runs during that period. Ended up getting a little large dory, then in about 1972 or so, I bought my first displacement hull, little trip boat, thirty-two feet long, and replaced that a couple of years later with a forty-foot trawler. I fished primarily salmon. But I also fished a little bit of albacore and a little bit of Dungeness crab. By that time, I was actually taking some leave without pay from Oregon State University, where it boiled down to then was a three-month leave over a five-month period of time. So, then during those early years, my brother called me up one day. He was actually selling those stocks and real estate in the Portland area. He said, "I'd really like to get out of here and go fishing. So, do you have any friends down there that might have a job for me?" So, I looked around to find him a job. He eventually ran into Wilburn Hall, who was a friend of mine. Wilburn offered Bill a position on one of his boats going to Alaska, king crabbing. He actually went up as an extra man,

meaning if anybody got hurt or anybody quit, then Bill got the job. When they got to Dutch Harbor, one of the guys said, "I don't want to be here. I'm going to go home." So, he had the job. Bill had fished there for eight or ten years. He called me up one day and he just said, "Boat for sale. I think that we need to look at it." It was a boat that was originally based here in Newport. It was in Alaska. So, brother Bill and I and a fellow by the name of Spike or Michael Jones bought the boat. I ran it for three or four summers. In fact, if you look in the *National Fisherman* last issue, it's the boat of the month. [laughter] It's a fishing vessel, Jeanoah. So, in 1983, I started fishing in Alaska on the Jeanoah. We've made a conscious decision right from the get-go that we needed to fish as many species, keep that boat as busy as possible. Halibut was obviously a key candidate because the season stretched over a fairly long period of time. So, we got involved in halibut in 1983, Dungeness crab fishery around Kodiak. We fish a little bit of black cod. What else do we fish? We fished tanner crab in the winter. We took the boat to Bering Sea to fish king crab, even though at eight-four feet, it was very small boat for the Bering Sea. So, I got involved in a lot of fisheries right off the get go. I had a real amazing partner in Kodiak with the name of Jerry Bongen. He still lives here. We allow Jerry to buy into the boat. Jerry and I now own that boat plus another one. For me, it was a huge adventure. I'd spent a little time in Alaska because I worked for the University of Alaska for a year from [19]72, [19]73. So, I got to travel and I saw a lot of the state, including Kodiak. But we just going up there and totally new country, new fisheries, new people, new area, tremendous experience, really a lot of fun, and also very rewarding financially. We haven't had a bad year. We've worked very hard at it. We kept our equipment in good working order. What you need to do if you're going to survive up there? Then you need to be smart. There's a certain element there that is absolutely essential. So, that's kind of how I got started.

CPW: So, then while you have that boat up there, were you still involved in salmon fishing down here for the...

BJ: No. I just totally dropped my fishing down here. Actually, for the first couple of years, I was up there. What I did was I expanded my leave without pay from OSU from three months over a five-month period to five months over a seven-month period. So, from the first of April, maybe the first of May, June, July, August – maybe through the end of November, I worked. I had five months leave without pay, but I was forced to work for a couple of months during that period of time. So, I flew back and forth from Kodiak to here, a number of times each year. But I gave up all my fishing down here.

CPW: So, what is the boat currently fishing for?

BJ: Still involved in the same fisheries, primarily. I take that back. We're still heavily involved in the halibut fishery. As you know, North Pacific Council went to IFQs more than probably a dozen years ago now. Our timing was almost impeccable. We didn't know at the time. [laughter] But we got started in the fishery on the first of the qualifying years for halibut. So, we didn't put in much in eighty-three. In about eighty-four, eighty-five, eighty-six, eighty-seven, we had tremendous seasons. So, when it came down to handing out the IFQs, I think we're among the top fifteen boats in Alaska. I might check on that. Fairweather Fisheries is the name of the corporation, but I think we're among the top fifteen because we've worked hard at it and never missed an opening. So, we still fish halibut, still fish black cod. We've given up Dungeness fishing. One of our big fisheries now is the pot fishery for cod. For the two seasons combined, we're

probably close to two million pounds of cod fish, fished in crab pots that are modified specifically for the cod fisheries. So, that's been a very good fishery for us. It's particularly good when the prices got up to the high fifties about three years ago. All of a sudden, they just dropped [laughter]. In fact, with one of our boats, we didn't fish for a year because of prices. It wouldn't even breakeven prices. But as prices crept back up to the low thirties now, it's quite good. So, we can still make a buck or two with that price. What else we fish? I guess that's about it. On the crab quota that we earned with the Jeanoah, that's not leased. I haven't mentioned the second boat. But we bought another boat in [19]92. Neither boats any longer participate in the crab fisheries. All of our quota is leased. Quite frankly, when we're getting seventy red king crabs, we're getting seventy percent on the lease. We can't fish it and make that kind of money. As an example, we pay the crew thirty-nine percent. So, there's basically only leaves sixty-one percent for all the fuel and bait and ice and groceries. So, if we were fishing it ourselves, we would probably be making someplace under fifty leasing it, or we can make seventy. It was easy decision as far as we were concerned.

CPW: Do you think a lot of people have done that with family and kids?

BJ: Yes. If you look at the number of boats participating in the crab fisheries, that's one of the big concerns among a lot of the crewmen is that because many boats have chosen to lease their quota to other boats, it leaves fewer jobs for individuals who had traditionally currently crab fishing. So, I imagine there's going to be some changes there in the next few years to try to compensate for some of that crew job loss. But that's just speculations. I mentioned a second boat in about 1991. We did buy a second boat called the Pacific Venture. It's 104-foot steel boat built by vendor shipbuilding in the Gulf in [19]68 or [19]69 converted to

crab fishery. It's been a very good boat for us. They fish pot cod also. We tender that boat in the summer. They fish a little bit of halibut in the spring. So, they finished their halibut fishery now. They're back tendering salmon. Then come September 1st, we got fishing pot cod. It keeps us busy.

CPW: I bet. [laughter] Did you spend much time in Kodiak when you were fishing on the boat yourself?

BJ: Well, yes. That was our home port. So, the halibut trips ranged in length. When we first got involved in halibut fishery, we had some seasons that were four and five days long. The last year before implementation of IFQs, we actually had seasons that seems to me like, rings a bell. There might have been an eight-hour season or two, but we definitely had twelve-hour seasons. So, he didn't spend much time in season. So, he spent a lot more time in the county. I spent a lot of time in Kodiak, got to love the place. I still go back to it three or four times a year for generally fun. I don't fish anymore. It's a nice town. Very nice town.

CPW: Do you feel like it has changed a lot from the time...

BJ: Kodiak?

CPW: Yes, exactly.

BJ: I think it used to be a pretty wild place in all means. Obviously, you weren't there in some of those early years. But when the king crab fleet would come back from fishing in the fall, it got pretty raucous. Yes, it's changed. The street used to be paved, even down on the waterfront. Kodiak was on gravel. Big metal holders

in the winter. Now, they're all paved. Yes, the infrastructure in the city has improved tremendously over the course of the first two years. But I don't know if it's grown, or I don't think it's grown a whole bunch, maybe it has but...

CPW: I do not know.

BJ: I don't know if it has been. But real nice, pretty nice town.

CPW: Do you think as far as people from here going up there to fish, it seems sort of common or like there are quite a few guys down there?

BJ: I put together that list for you. I don't remember how many people were on the list. I thought of a couple...

CPW: A lot. I was surprised.

BJ: I thought of a couple since that time that I missed. But I think there were probably fifty or sixty guys on the list that matriculated from this area to Kodiak. There were some people from here that went up early that kind of were the forerunners, kind of set the pace for the rest of us. Wilburn Hall was one of them. Fellow by the name of Ted Peters, Sr. was another. All his boys followed him up there. (Clifford Hall?) was another one. (Kenny Knack?) was another one. They preceded most of us by ten, in some cases, fifteen years. So, we're all watching. What are these guys doing? We had a great year. Well, let's go. Let's do it. So, they really provide the kind of the impetus for the rest of us to go to Alaska. Some of it by providing through jobs to us. Then the rest of it is by listening to the stories and kind of interpreting what they're saying. I guess all of us at some point

in time or another looked at the potential for doing well in the fisheries up there, as opposed to long-term looking at potential down here. That's the reason a lot of us ended up there. Plus, as I said earlier, it was a great adventure. Someplace new and that was a lot of fun.

CPW: You mentioned that fisheries were new. I guess, was there more room than to get involved in down here at the time, or was it still pretty open down there?

BJ: At the time, I went to Alaska their handwriting was on the wall, Christina, that something was going to happen in salmon fisheries. That's why I got started. That's why I spent most of my time down here. They were already starting to talk about limitations on coho. The scope of stocks were declining. That, as a matter of fact, happened not too long after that. While there wasn't a lot of talk at that point in time about limits in the trawl fishery down here, rockfish fishing, flatfish, it was pretty clear that they were going to take some steps someplace along the line to limit the fishery down here. Three-twenty miles of coastline is a pretty small coast. He is talking about Alaska with probably as much coastline [laughter] as all the rest of the country put together. So, just a lot of area up there and a lot more potential. So, that's what basically all of us were looking at. Almost without exception, all of us that went to Alaska had had some experience down with fishery. There were a few that might have gone up as friends of fishermen up there that didn't have experience here, but not very many. I was thinking over that list I gave you, but not very many of them. Actually, the list I gave you were just guys that had gone on to become skippers. It didn't include anything. Guys that went up to crewman and didn't stick around to become skippers.

CPW: It seems like from the list you gave me also that there are quite a few,

maybe seven or so guys that live in Kodiak now. Do you think...

BJ: Me and my brother is one of them. (Vernon Hall?), Wilburn's boys. Another one, (Jack Hill ?). Had you been here last week, you could have got both of those guys since they had a boat down here in Newport working on it. So, anyway, they moved to Kodiak. They liked it, liked the isolation. It is isolated. There's two ways you can get on and off, either by air [laughter] or by boat. You don't dry, and decide to stay there. They're pretty well entrenched, actually. Others, you have Michael Jones, or Spike Jones name on your list. He and his wife lived up there for a number of years before they moved back down here. Gary Peter and his wife lived here for a number of years. So, there's quite a few of them who've chosen to live there at least, if not permanently, for a few years at the peak of the fisheries.

CPW: I think I am going to be up there. Maybe a Kodiak trip is the end of September, but I was thinking about trying to see if some of those guys are around during that time. But since I am already going to be there, might as well.

BJ: Might as well. Is she going on a business or just to have fun?

CPW: For work. We are doing all the office community meetings over the summer.

BJ: You are?

CPW: So, I was thinking I might add on a couple of days in Kodiak. But we are going out to Dutch and Anchorage and (Bethel?).

BJ: What are you doing in community meetings on, just out of curiosity?

CPW: So, we did these community profiles. Sir, one 2005, I guess this one. It is a giant, but –

BJ: I've seen one in Kodiak.

CPW: We did the [laughter]...

BJ: So, I'm on the North Pacific AP and we all got copies of those.

CPW: I do not know if you are thinking of the one that (Mike Downs?) did, or the one – we did a giant blue book.

BJ: This is a giant bluebook. It's big.

CPW: Ours are pretty. It is like they are five to seven pages long. I am pretty sure compared to what (Mike Downs?) did.

BJ: This?

CPW: Yes.

BJ: That must have been his then.

CPW: But we just did the short ones. They are based on secondary data census that we are going to revise them with the new census information going out to the

communities to see if they can suggest new things that they would like us to put in there this time.

BJ: You asked a question earlier about what fisheries we involved in? Are we still involved in the same fisheries? You didn't ask how those fisheries have changed. I did mention it a little bit with regard to the IFQs. As more boats and more fishermen went to Alaska – and let's take halibut as an example. The IPHC, which manages the fishery, found it increasingly difficult to manage that fishery in any sane way. More boats, more effort, and plus, it's kind of like a giant chess [laughter] game between IPHC and the fishermen. They would shorten season. So, I would say, "What can we do to get more fish? What can we do to run more hooks? What can we do to catch more fish?" And so, that shortened season by day, we'd say, "Okay. Instead of going four-foot hook spacing, we're going to six-foot hook spacing. We're going to cut the side out of the boat, so we don't have to waste time lifting those fish over the rail, which all of us did. Cut a big hole in the side and put a ramp right there. So, it's like a huge chess game, move here, move here. Finally, when that got down to openings, as short as I said, eight, I know for sure that we had twelve-hour openings. They just said, "Can't do this anymore. We're going to IFQs." There was a lot of opposition, including a little for me about implementing that program. I won't say a hundred percent of us, after we have seen what it's done, are in favor of that now. Big majority of the people understand what that has meant to the fishery in terms of more orderly harvest of the resource. I think a harvest that induces less mortality on the resource because we're not constrained by any timelines, certainly safer. We've seen huge increases in prices. The year before IFQs were implemented, we were under \$1 a pound. This year, we're going to average 450 a pound for our fish. I attribute a lot of that to spreading the harvest out over a longer period of time. We've got fresh fish on the

market for eight and a half or nine months as opposed to having fresh fish on the market under the old system for maybe a total of a month, maybe. Fisheries changed dramatically over the period of time I fished up there. We witnessed it all. I needed to change. It just simply couldn't have continued to manage on the basis that the fisheries remain...

CPW: I am just interested. How do you think that compares with crab rationalization, I guess, the new system?

BJ: Two very different fisheries. Let's take crab first. It was the second fishery to become rationalized. The crab fishery – very cheap crab fishery was a hundred percent – not one hundred percent because I think there's a couple of small boats in Dutch Harbor that they expect. For purposes of discussion, a hundred percent of big boats look at the halibut, black cod fishery. There was a mix of boats from 126 feet all the way down to probably twelve to fourteen feet. So, the needs of the IFQ program to help the fish are a lot different in those in the crab fisheries. One of the things that council said back when they were dealing with halibut IFQs, "We need to protect the smaller boats because they're very important component in halibut fishery." So, the rules implemented way back when are really a lot more constraining and a lot more restrictive, and certainly more protective of vessel-sized categories than anything we see in the crab fishery because all those are big boats. I think, quite frankly, those protection measures they implemented were probably pretty well thought through. There's still some movement to try to get some changes in some specific areas with regard to the halibut IFQ program that I may not necessarily agree with. But for the most part, I think everybody would concede that program, as it was adopted initially, was pretty well thought through. The Fathers of that program need to be complimented for doing a good job. These

are kind of my thoughts on this.

CPW: What about crab? [laughter]

BJ: Well, we talked a little about that earlier. I don't know if anyone probably quite anticipated the reduction in the number of vessels that would actually be fishing crab after the third year or the fourth year now of crab rationalization. If they had envisioned that, there might have been some different regulations to protect some of those crewmen that lost jobs. But one of the things that totally gets overlooked – I don't even know if I have it. (Arnie Christiansen?). You know, Arnie?

CPW: I do not know him. But I know his name.

BJ: He's head of king crab group. Then he just got named president of the big association of fishermen in Alaska, whatever that's called. Anyway, he wrote a letter about two or three years ago, that really, I thought, did a pretty good job of outlining and computing some of the claims among some of the crewmen, City of Kodiak, for example, about what crab rationalization has done or has not done to various communities? I think it's working very well. If you look at the safety record from up close for one, I don't think there's been loss of life. I don't think there was last year, maybe there was. There might have been one last year. But anyway, it's enviable what has happened since implementation of IFQs. We've lost some crew jobs, but money is still being made by someone out there fishing and it's true. So, if you talk to the crews that are full-time on a lot of those boats now, they say we've never had it better. We're making a lot more money than we've ever made in the past up here because we're fishing more product. We've got this

least product for fishing. We got our own product. So, depending on who you talk to, it depends on what kind of a response you get to the question, "What do you think of the crab rationalization program?" I think it's working fine. Probably still need a few tweaks here and there. If it's not broken, don't fix it. [laughter] That's my theory.

CPW: Do you think it still happens that guys from here go up to Alaska? Is that common? I guess, new fishermen.

BJ: Yes, there's still a few. Guys are taking their kids up now. A couple of those, you probably noticed the same last names [laughter] on a few of those on the list. There's probably just (Mark Cooper's?) kid is up there fishing, (Craig Cochman's?) kid is up there fishing, Ted Peters' kid is up there fishing, Gary Peter's kid is up there fishing. There's probably a dozen whose kids fish. They take crewmen from him. So, I think it's probably going to be maybe more difficult for guys to go up and jump on a boat and within two or three years be running the boat, like we did when we went up. Or in my case, I went up and started running immediately. But the guys still go up? They still make good money. I don't think we have anybody from Oregon. I mean, they're [inaudible]. There's still an opportunity. A lot of it's who you know. You have the right context, makes a big difference.

CPW: And then is there anything you would like to say about that time fishing in Alaska? [laughter]

BJ: It's great. Just a great experience. I mean, just great experience. Sometimes your heart was right up in your throat. The weather gets you. I remember one night we're fishing halibut in September and we're out in the area 4A or 4B. I can't

– 4A. Peggy Dyson who was the National Weather Service weather forecaster out of Kodiak came on and called for gale warnings out of the east. I mean it's (flat com?). Absolutely (flat com?). This was late August. Anyway, it blew sixty or sixty-five out of the east. We had some gear. We had to get out of there. Kind of just like that one. Wish you weren't there. But it's all part of the experience. I've never been north of Dutch Harbor, really. So, they had some – oops. Fire marshals here [laughter]. So, where were we?

CPW: We have never been north of...

BJ: Anyway, we're talking about experiences. There was a halibut season on area 4D, which is up around St. Matthews, couple days north of Dutch Harbor. We said let's go. Let's go back in the probably mid-[19]80s sometime. Still during the qualifying years. We got up there. There are actually two islands, St. Matthew Island and a little island adjacent to it, with a pass between it called Hall Island. We got there about twenty minutes before the season started at noon. We did see the fin of a big killer whale up in front of us a mile or so. Put the glasses on it in this pod of killer whales. It's surrounded this school of walruses. As we were idling up to watch the battle, a couple of dead or dying walruses – actually, one of them slowed down and actually hit the boat. Watched it for right up until noon until the season opened. I had the video camera lying right there. I was so enthralled of what I was seeing. I thought we forgot totally about the video camera. But the purpose of the killer whales were just toying with these walruses. It is a little quieter in here. Are you ready?

CPW: Yes. [laughter] I do not know how do you start and stop this.

BJ: – experiences like that. I can remember anchored up under this place called Islands of Four Mountains, just about a hundred miles west of [unintelligible] in the Aleutian chain. Anchored up there one night looking up and watching this active volcano four thousand feet right above your boat spit fire. Just great, great experiences. There's always that spirit of competition between the guys. I've always been very competitive. That was one of the fun parts of it. You've lost that now that we've gone to IFQs and then goes to the crab fisheries and now the black cod. But in the early days, that was a big part of it.

CPW: Does that impact the enjoyment that people get from it, you think, or...

BJ: Well, it did for me. I have not fished up there. 1999 was the last year I fished. That was after the implementation of the five-key program. But my guess, yes, it probably impacted a little bit.

CPW: We probably covered about every bullet point I've got here. Is there anything else you would like to say?

BJ: Not really. I'm glad I did it. I imagine everybody else you talked to him or interview is going to say the same thing. It's the wonderful experience. Pretty integral part of my life. I worked for the university for twenty-eight-and-a-half years. Fishing has been a great retirement program for me. I've a wonderful partner in Kodiak who just takes care of all the boat work and things. I take care of all the books on both boats. So, it's something to do. It's good income. Looking back, it's great investment when we decided to enter.

CPW: It seems like your timing, obviously, is just right. [laughter]

BJ: Timing, timing, timing. Timing and location, really. It was impeccable. Absolutely nailed it. We didn't know at the time. Obviously, the guys who came along afterwards who wanted to get involved had to buy their way in. I have not followed where crab or how the shares are selling right now. But for 3A, last time I checked, they were \$22 or \$23. I remember the first couple of years of the program thinking that the shares that were for sale for \$4 or \$5 were way overpriced.

[end of transcript]