

Christina Package-Ward: Do you mind if we just start with your background and how you got into fishing?

Jan Robison: I grew up in Depoe Bay and my dad had a charter fishing business and we started fishing really young, five, six years old going out with him and then we had rowboats in the bay and hear in Depoe Bay and we fished all around the bay, crab and out in the ocean salmon fishing in our rowboats at a very early age. We just kind of grew up in the fishing business. My dad had a trailer fishing business and so as we got older than we got to work on the boats. Just got involved in it and kind of stuck with it for a long time. We had a really good time doing it, learned a lot, got to do a lot of stuff. Eight, nine years old, he used to turn us loose on the forty-foot boat, go down by ourselves. Not many young children have that, get that weight on them, but he trusts us driving the boat around the bay and stuff. I remember many times coming in the channel, “where are you driving?” He’d scare you to death but eventually you’d get enough courage where you attempt it, you’d do it, and Depoe Bay’s just kind of a narrow place. We had a lot of fun. That's how we got started in the fishing game.

CPW: Are you still fishing now?

JR: No, I quit about fifteen years ago just because I spent enough time in Alaska fishing away from home and I just wanted –it was time for a change. There's more to life than moving around living on a boat, bouncing around. I thought I'd give the land a try for a while, that's kind of where I am there, now. I still have a small boat I bought for sport fishing and playing around. Just don't have the desire to go out and spend my entire life out there anymore [laughter].

CPW: But you guys own this place?

JR: What’s that?

CPW: This charter. Do you own this charter?

JR: No, my younger brother and a fellow that owned Dockside Charter Business and I – my brothers and I own the building. We all have boats. I got sense and got rid of my salmon troller, so I don't really have a boat. We have got a big dealership next door and store our gear in. Typical boat and you have boats you got to have someplace to store here. [laughter] Yes. A place to work. We bought this particular piece of building right after we got through filming *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Female Speaker: Oh wow. [laughter]

JR: My dad’s boat was the camera boat for it. Got to meet Jack Nicholson and all those guys. I was working with my dad at that time. That was interesting being around those guys.

CPW: That is neat. I did not realize they filmed that here.

JR: Yes. The charter fishing sequence.

CPW: Okay, that was just on TV somewhere that I was the other day.

JR: Yeah, the charter fishing sequence was filmed right here. Right down that dock right there. That was interesting being around those [inaudible]. [laughter] At that time, Michael Douglass was just getting started producing. He was a pretty interesting guy. Really, the whole group of people were really nice. I had a lot of fun with them. That big Indian guy. That guy drank a lot of beer. [laughter] We all did. It was fun. Okay, what else would you like to know?

CPW: Well, I guess how you got started in Alaska and what you fished in first?

JR: Well, I got started in Alaska because I got drafted. I was the last drafty out of this [inaudible]. My permanent duty station back in Virginia, I kept getting letters from my older brother (Beanie?) who was fishing on the *King and Winge* king crab at that time. He kept writing me newsletters. "Man, I just made ten thousand dollars this week," or whatever. I'm back there making three thousand dollars a year and I'm going, wow, there's – this is a no brainer where I'm heading when I get out of the service. So, when I got out of service in seventy-four, November seventy-four Then when seventy-five came around, I'd done a little salmon fishing during the summer and the salmon season my brother goes, "Well, why don't you come up north and see if you can get a job king crab fishing?" So, I borrowed three hundred dollars from the bank and went up there didn't have a place to live or anything they ended up staying with some friends of mine on their couch. Worked in a shrimp cannery for a short while and then the boat my brother was fishing on, *The Buccaneer*, was relatively six to eight months old at that time and I got a job working for half share king crab fishing and that's how I got started in that. We ended up being the second highest boat around Kodiak Island. We put in 450,000 pounds of king crab in a month and a half. I think my crew share was seventeen-thousand dollars or something and I never had that much money in my life. So, that was all right. It was lot of hard work and I was green to that fishery. We had one guy get injured and ended up getting a full crew share. Then after that the tanner crab fished that winner and then I quit that boat and I got a job working on the *King & Winge*, owned by Wilburn Hall and Billy Williams was the skipper. He was really a great guy to be at sea with and when he hit the beach he was a wild and crazy individual. He liked his whiskey and what not and that was all right. He was a really good sailor good fisherman too. We made really good money working for him, but I guess at that juncture in my life the money wasn't really such a driving force as it was just the guy was up there having a lot of fun catching crab and I just loved filling the boat up. I just really enjoyed doing what I was doing. I mean the money was kind of a secondary thing I guess. We had a really good time. Learned a lot of different things and this guy was – Billy was really good navigator and really sharp with engines and everything. Took the guy under his wing and he wasn't a yeller or screamer, he's was just a great guy to sail with. I mean, really good guy to sail with. Really sharp. I stayed on that boat for two or three years with the fishermen. That was just my home. I'd leave here in mid-August or something and I wouldn't come back home until the middle of May. When you just do the shipyard routine and that was my home living on that thing. That was a – I don't know if you're familiar with that boat, it was a 110 foot wooden schooner. It was an amazing boat to live on. I mean it used to be a pilot boat at the river thirty-two to fifty-seven I believe. The folks who were all hardwood cherry decks. It was just you go down in there and it was just like climbing in an Alpine chalet or something like that, with all this nice bright shiny mahogany and cherry and everything, a nice big galley for the wrap.

CPW: Is that boat still here?

JR: No, it sunk about fifteen years ago up off St. Paul, or St. George up in the (Primas?). It's really a shame it should have been a museum piece. We had a terrific amount of history in Alaska. It pulled a lot of the bodies off the *Princess Sophia* when it ran onto the beach outside there and they lost 150 people in that crash. That's pretty bad. I can't remember what year that was. Also rescued the people off the Stephenson expedition. the guy who was going up around Northwest Passage and they got caught in the ice up there. Long saga getting back to someplace to go. Anyway, the *King & Winge* ended up getting four of those guys off. I can't remember what island they got them off of up there.

CPW: Oh, wow.

JR: [laughter] It had quite a history to it. Anyway, that's just on that. What other boat did I go to? Oh, let's see. Then I went to work on *The Progress*, which is the boat, another boat that Mr. Hall owns, that my older brother Bean was running it. I king crab fished with him. We fished up in the Bering Sea and then we went summer fishing up to the St. Matthew Island for blue crab. That was kind of an interesting experience up there, summertime fisheries, it was fun. We did pretty well up there. Then after that was about the time when the king crab crash. I think went from 120 million pounds down to 15 million. So, the boat was built with the setup with tandem going drag fishing and we got involved with the Joint Venture Fishery and then we set out doing that and of course none of us – we were just a bunch of stupid crabbers and we didn't know a thing about dragging net around the ocean so it was a real worrying experience for us. The boat had the drag gear on it but it was totally inadequate for the size net we were pulling, our engine wasn't the horse power for the size net we were pulling. Pretty good learning curve there. So, we came back down to the shipyards and did a complete retrofit on the boat, new winches, new hydraulic system, gantry. Started off a kind of new Joint Venture Fishing. Stay with that for quite a few years.

CPW: Was that fishing pollock?

JR: Yes. Yes. [inaudible] and pollock. We did that and then I had a pretty good stash. So, I was going to build myself a new house. So, I took six months off and built this new house in Depoe Bay. Then I got done with that and then a guy came down and contacted me to want to be a release Skipper on the (RBC?), which is another boat that Mr. Hall has interest in, Wilburn. So, I went to work on that boat for a while doing the [inaudible] skippering? Then, I ended up going back for my brother fishing there. Stayed with that (JV?) fishing; that was really good money. Then I was getting kind of towards the end of the things. We were making some really long trips. I think the longest trip was 135 days at sea. We had one period out there out of six months, where we were at sea for five months and twenty-five days, so we weren't getting a lot of time on the beach. Just about that time I'm running around. There's obviously more to this being floating around out here. I really enjoyed it when I was doing it and the money wasn't the driving force behind it. I was doing it because I really liked doing it. After a while I just didn't have the desire to be out there anymore, so I quit. In the interim, though, a couple of times, when I had time off in the summer, fished a couple of salmon tours down here during the

summer just for something to do, and then I had a thirty-eight-foot troller I had fifteen years too and come home for the summer break. Caught my salmon tour, go out on a boat ride and go salmon fishing, tax write off. [laughter] That's, I guess kind of a standard, but we certainly had some really wild time because it was pretty wild west of Kodiak when I went up there, I mean, there was...

CPW: Yes, what was it like up there? [laughter] If you can tell me. [laughter]

JR: Well, yeah, some of the things I won't say, but it was really crazy. We used to go to one bar, the (B&B?) quite a bit. That was right across from where we were unloading our crab at. It was just a real dirt bay little bar. You go in there and all these people king crab fishing, and everybody had lots of money, and you'd be sitting there drinking and the bell would be ringing and presumably you'd have a dozen shots of whiskey or beers or whatever you were drinking at the time and just it seemed like that just went on and on and on. Of course, you got young kids with lots of money and no place to spend it and that's what they did. I was right there participating with the best of them. So, it was really interesting. There wasn't a lot of recreation, around Kodiak at that time rather than that I guess, or we weren't – there was but we weren't finding it. We, of course, the middle of winter not a lot you can do outdoors so. I saw a lot of people spend a lot of money really foolishly on things that really weren't too legal and unfortunately, they lost their – well, I guess [inaudible] went away. Guys that got really big tax bring home make a lot of money, don't pay any taxes, and then the IRS comes down and pretty soon the guy's just lucky he's got enough money to buy a pair of boots and some rain gear. It's just really felt sorry for a lot of these guys, but you got to pay your taxes.

CPW: Seems like that would be hard to [laughter] make sure you put aside money.

JR: I know lots of guys wouldn't pay their taxes or wouldn't even think about it and they'd get a tax bill, then they'd have to go to work the whole next season just to pay their taxes on what they made. Kind of a never-ending vicious cycle. I don't think it was – I guess people had been doing that for years. I was fortunate enough I saved enough money to regularly pay my taxes and I had saved enough to buy some things that were of value, property, and whatnot. I was fortunate in that respect. You always hear the thing I chased women and drank and then the rest of money I wasted.[laughter] I had heard that a lot.

CPW: I like that [laughter].

JR: That's kind of the short story of it all. I saw some incredible weather.

CPW: Like rough weather?

JR: Yes. Really big seas. I remember this one night or one afternoon when I was running the (RCA?) got caught [inaudible] killed the engine in the boat and everything. So, we're sitting around there playing around and trying to get the thing out and about that time (Peggy Dyson?) comes on with a forecast with winds to one hundred knots and seas to forty feet and I'm sitting there dead in the water going, oh, well, this is going to be really a nice evening here. Fortunately, enough, we got the net out [inaudible]. That evening the [inaudible] really got with

it. It has really big, really rough, and really windy. Would have been a nice [inaudible]. There were quite a few boats that sustained damage in that particular world. I was fortunate [laughter]. Scary when you think about it. Now, at the time are you just feverishly working to try to pull something out of the hat to get it out and save your bacon, so to speak. Yes, a lot of different things, king crab fishing back in the late [19]70s and everything around Kodiak there's so many shrimp boats that were brought around down from the Gulf Coast that were not really adequate for the fishery or involved in. They sunk a lot of those boats. I can't remember what winter it was.

CPW: Were some of them from guys that lived here?

JR: Yes. Yes. One winter lost thirteen people I knew. It was cold, icy conditions and like I say really poor equipment. People I guess it was just like the gold rush. Lot of people with, I would say, minimal amount of experience or no experience at all operating boats and just real reminiscent of a gold rush. People are going up there and, "all right, I'm going to get in it." Well, you always hear the stories of the guys who made all the money, but you don't hear about the guys that are – didn't make any money because that ended up happening too. Or they end up losing their life, unfortunately. I guess that's the way of the world. Pretty tough at times. Like I say, as a young person I really learned a lot. I ended up running that *King & Winge* and they turned me loose when I was twenty–seven years old it was quite an adventure for me. The first time I was running down the east side of Kodiak Island and I started making a little ice, it sure made me a little nervous. No ice. I'll just keep going, through wasn't much ice at all but it sure makes you worry because you see all the pictures boats icing up and then there's always the John and Olaf that got iced up over there in Schoellkopf Strait and ended up kind of on the beach with the whole crew abandoned the boat and the coffee cups and everything we're still sitting on the galley table with ice in the sink [laughter]. Ice is a really strange thing. We were fishing over in Schoellkopf Strait in your Joint Venture Fishing got involved real heavy ice conditions.

CPW: What do you do about it?

JR: Well, you try to seek some shelter if you can, or – and if it's really bad and you can't really go any place just keep the boat going really slow so you don't throw a lot of spray up high and can get it icing up high. If he gets too ugly, get everybody out there with the sledgehammers and whatever you have to beat it off because it will create problems for you. The colder it gets the faster it accumulates.

CPW: Is it just the weight of it then?

JR: Yes, we had one picture of it. I think our trawl cable was seven–eighths–inch wire. We measured it one time and it was three and a half feet surrounding the same way we went to – back the winches off to drop the drag doors down, knock the ice off with the cable going from the gantry to the winch and there's so much weight on ice it just picked the door up and release the brake. That's substantial. Then of course you have got to go, it's really miserable conditions being out there doing that. Less than ideal, it's not a bright sunny day with the sun shining on you. It's usually windy and bitterly cold. Not much fun, but what an experience. Like I say, right now it's really easy. I sit back and make good sea stories about the time. If that's the way it

is today, so you just have to learn to deal with it. Everybody did enough bitching and everything about how ugly it was and everything at the time, but you look back now and yeah it was ugly, but you just have to keep saying it's just a day-by-day thing and that's the way it was today, and you better learn to deal with it because that's how it is today. Okay, any other questions?
[laughter]

CPW: I mean, I am pretty curious about what Kodiak was like during that time, too. You already told some stories.

JR: When I first went there, I believe there was three miles of paved road or something like that. Maybe there's only twenty-six miles of road or something like that. I know you could go out to (Cape Cheniere?). Never really had time to go out or you couldn't get out even to the (sag shack?) but there wasn't – everything was really gravel and it wasn't a lot of maintenance done on the road system and it was pretty rugged. All the cars had dents and bangs in them because it was wintertime where everybody crashes into stuff. It was pretty different. Of course, we were there in the fall and wintertime. Rain, wind, ice, snow. Just pretty ugly. That town's really something; it's got all that volcanic ash from [inaudible] erupted in 1912 so it gets really dirty. It's not scenic, white pristine; it turns into goo, mud all over the place. You go visit somebody in their house, first thing you do is take your shoes off when you step in the foyer or whatever. There's three or four restaurants around [inaudible]. You felt really lucky when you can go to (Saul's?) and get yourself a hamburger and you get – or you can get a tomato and lettuce on it. [laughter] Part of the weather would get rough and you'd go to (Crass?). There wouldn't be anything, no milk, those kinds of supplies because the ships couldn't get in. There wasn't a whole heck of a lot there. The bar scene was pretty incredible. I imagine I helped, too. People sit there and finish a drink and throw it against the wall. I'd see that go on. I think I participated.

CPW: [laughter]

JR: I know I participated in that a couple of times, and it was just four or five bars. There's always a lot going on. People are happening. I remember one New Year's Eve I went down to Tony's downtown there and you can just feel the energy outside the bar, and I've never experienced that kind of energy level without stepping inside the place where it was – it was happening there [laughter] really crazy. The Kodiak, it certainly wasn't laid back. It was a wild west type thing where there's a lot of crazy stuff going on with fights and this and that. Nothing really too serious, maybe a stabbing every now and then but nothing...

CPW: Was there much of a police presence?

JR: What's that?

CPW: Was there much of a police presence or anything?

JR: Not a lot. They were around. Every once in a while, they stick their head in a bar but usually they weren't too bad. Every now and then they'd haul somebody off that got way out of control, but generally that was dealt with by the patrons or whatever. The police in Kodiak are kind of hardened bunch of guys, too. They wouldn't put up with any crap. Put some knots on

your head and haul you to the tank or whatever. I've seen some really bizarre stuff going on [laughter].

CPW: What is the most bizarre thing that you want to share [laughter]?

JR: One night I remember somebody took the coffee filter out of the coffee machine and emptied that out and loaded up with psilocybin mushrooms and made a pot of mushroom tea and got everybody in the bar just cooking and then a gal was tending bar. She ends up dancing on top of the bar with no top on. That was pretty insane [laughter]. I remember one time we had a New Year's party and the canary put it on and then we kind of closed that down and the girls took all the booze and put it in the purses and went up to the harvester and just started having our own party right there with their own bottles. I don't know; they didn't throw us out. They probably should have. There's a little craziness going on. A few guys wrestling around the floor and everything. Nothing very serious. Nobody's trying to hurt anything, just kind of generally getting out of hand. Kids having a good time. Young people. Yes, Kodiak was an interesting place. When my brother was up there – he was up there before I got up there and he had the *Beachcomber* which was an old ship that they drug up on the beach and made a bar out of that and it was just really wild stories that went on inside there. I mean it was...

CPW: How big was it?

JR: It was a pretty good-sized ship. It was probably maybe 200 feet long.

CPW: Okay.

JR: It had the bar inside there. Maybe it was some kind of a cruise ship. I don't know exactly what it was. There's guys shooting guns off inside there, bullets ricocheting around, apparently. A room for rent, so you can just imagine what all went on there. Like I say, that was a couple years before I got up there. Missed out on that, darn it. [laughter]. We saw lots of really crazy stuff going on. There were a lot of people from this area that were up there and Painters and the (Halls?) and just guys from down in Newport, Greenwalds, people from down in the Waldport area. Actually, it was quite a few people from Lincoln County involved in the king crab fishery.

CPW: Why do you think so many guys from here got involved?

JR: Well at that time salmon fishing was slow and wasn't happening here. Like I say, it was a gold rush type fever. "Boy, you can go up there and make a lot of money." That's why people got involved. There's a friend of mine I grew up with, his brother went up there and I guess he was probably still in high school working on one of Mr. Hall's boats, Wilburn's boats, and back in those days they made really good money. The year I went king crab fishing I remember we went on strike for fifty-two cents a pound and we thought we was making big bucks then. It came out pretty good. Then the price just started going up and fortunately I was right in nearly when the price got incredibly high. Good fortune fell my way on that time. Both pretty good amount of crab and the price was very high, so it turned out economically a pretty good time financially. Like I say, we had a lot of fun, too. That's about Kodiak – that I can tell you that [laughter] that probably shouldn't be told.

CPW: The PC version [laughter].

JR: Probably some stories that shouldn't be told that I'm not going to tell.

CPW: [laughter] Are some of those places, some of those bars still open up there?

JR: I believe so. I think the B&B is still in operation. I haven't been up there in quite a few years. One place, (Sauly's?) that was really kind of a famous landmark there, it has since changed hands and they made it into sports bar here about ten or fifteen years ago. Let's see, there's a little place they called The Little Bar and that's by the bowling alley and that seems to be a club where a lot of people go now. The Breakers, and I can't remember the name of the other one, but those were where the natives kind of hung out [laughter]. Not that those guys were any threat or any problem, but they are, unfortunately, native Alaskans and seems like they don't do very good with alcohol. Well, I don't think the white man does either, but the Indians seem to have the worst time with alcohol. Just didn't go in there too often.

CPW: Do you feel like the fishermen that were up there interacted that much with other towns people like the native...

JR: Yes. You meet somebody and you get to be friends with them. It was a pretty small community. I don't know, like I said we were there pretty much just for crab fishing and the salmon fishermen, that's a whole different fishery. In the spring when those guys moved in it was a whole different cycle of people. We got along really good with the local people. They're always really nice as well. They were a major part of their economy.

CPW: Yeah [laughter]

JR: [laughter] Everybody's out eating and having a good time, but we had to buy food, clothing, new rifles, and this and that [laughter]. Things you really needed. And every now and then you get the opportunity to go out and go deer hunting or go moose hunting or – so it was always fun, a lot of fun taking a little time off and doing some hunting and sport fishing and stuff like that. Local people were really nice to us. There's a lot of really interesting characters in the local people. It was always really interesting to check out and talk to the people who've been there in sixty-four with the tidal wave, earthquake devastated things. There's pictures of all the boats. One of the bars had a lot of pictures of boats up there. There were boats clear up in downtown Kodiak. It was really something to see the pictures. Well one family of Depoe Bay, the Painters were fishing up there at that time. Of course, they weren't up there when that happened, but they were up there afterwards, and it really devastated that place, changed the landscape all around Alaska. Pretty interesting. Let's see, anything else?

CPW: I do not know. I am interested in the Joint Venture.

JR: What's that?

CPW: In the Joint Venture.

JR: The Joint Venture Fishery? Well, we were involved with the Nippon Suisan Japanese. I can't remember how many processing ships they had. I'm trying to remember names. (*Runa?*) comes to mind. Gosh, I can't remember the names of those. That was really interesting, because we were – I think we were delivering at that time thirty– or forty–ton cod and that was really interesting dealing with another nation and everything; it was a real learning curve and really learn to respect those people because they're really good sailors and good seaman, and they've been catching fish with nets for a long time. We were just kind of getting things figured out. They were really great people to work with. Like I say they are superb sailors and seamen, good boat handlers are very helpful to us. Sure caught a lot of fish. I had one day when I was running that *Argosy* where I delivered 750 metric tons myself just on one boat. I don't know, one time we were in the Bering Sea there were East Germans, West Germans, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese Japanese, Koreans and then might have been a Chinese ship. There were seven or eight nations involved in that pollock fishery at that time.

CPW: Was that in the [19]80s then?

JR: Yes.

CPW: Okay.

JR: You had all these processing ships running around and I'd hate to guess how many capture boats were working. Probably one-hundred, I don't know. A lot. Taiyo was another big good Japanese fishing company. We didn't work with them; we worked for Nippon Suisan. It was just incredible the amount of fish that would be caught. At least the Japanese were really good. They didn't waste anything. The Koreans were, at one time, we were fishing Schoellkopf Strait, they were just basically at that time stripping the eggs out of the fish and throwing everything over to the side which kind of made everybody real miffed at them. The Russians were in there, too. We delivered several times to the Russians and that was big ship and everything, but really slow getting your (caught-ins?) back out of the water. There's really no incentive for those guys to work very hard. So, you delivered a bag of fish, and might have to wait four hours to get you caught-in back. You wanted to keep track of your own gear. We delivered to that big ship, and we delivered to the (*BMRT?*) once or twice, a smaller ship. Those guys were pretty interesting. It always interesting like being in the Dutch Harbor or something and there would be a Russian ship and walk over there. A couple of times I walked on board, you look around and here's all these guys staring at you and there's a KGB officer up on the bridge laying there. They're really checking you out. There was a Russian research vessel in Kodiak one time and we went aboard that it had an open house and remember some of the guys are walking around with their shirt tails out and there's some officer going around telling everybody to tuck their shirt tails in. I wouldn't [inaudible] that's, but that's the way it was. Russian ships were – some were pretty squirrely. Not much for maintenance, just probably on the fifteen– or twenty–year plan. They didn't spend a lot of money on scrubbing them off, that's for sure. We had in the late sixties had a big fleet of Russian ships fishing off the Oregon coast here and with my dad's charter boat we used take the ones that had fallen off the ships to the hospitals or we'd run them back out to their ships. That was pretty interesting. High school aged guy and get to meet these people from a completely different, strange land. Nobody talked the language, but they sure showered you with

cigarettes and whatever, and they liked *Playboy* magazines. [laughter] That was a – I don't know what you could barter but you'd give them stuff like that. Pretty soon you just realized after a while most people were really fine and they probably thought we were alright, too. It was just two governments didn't see eye to eye. They were just people like us out trying to make a living, but they didn't spend a lot of time out there, too. Anything else you'd like?

CPW: Did you keep fishing pollock after the Joint Venture stuff ended? Or you went back to crab?

JR: No. Well, I kind of quit about that time when the Joint Venture stuff went and then I went up to Bristol Bay and fished salmon in the summer with a friend of mine who did that for ten years, played around up there. That was a whole different experience all to itself too. There's a lot of people up there that know what they're doing and there's a lot of people up there that don't know what they're doing. Seen some of the most bizarre boat handling things I've ever seen in my life. I saw one down on the south line down by Naknek outside there. I saw one collision with six boats in it and these hardheaded Italians running into each other. Just crazy. Stupid boat tricks, crashing into stuff, it just – and you guys been doing this for a while? It was really just nuts. Ended up, the guy I worked with, the second year I worked for him he bought a new aluminum gillnetter, a really nice one a (queen jack?). That was really fancy, and we really took care of it and there was another guy that had a brand-new boat that same year and we saw his boat after the end of the year, and it looked like it had holes punched in it, it had dents all over it. It looked like it was fifty years old. I don't know these guys fish – you got a fish line, and you can't go over the line or you get a ticket. So, everybody's trying to stay down this line and people just running by you at full speed, just sat in gear and running into each other. That was insane.

CPW: Yes. Why was that? Because the opener was short?

JR: Yeah, it was the opener and the tide's coming in. You're out in the south end so the tide is setting up to the north and the fish are going with the tide where the guys are trying to get the first set in – or the next guy. You might have gillnets that are foot apart by the time everything gets settled up. One fish will swim through two or three gillnets. There's just guys running over each other's gear and fists raised in the air, and fortunately nobody's brandishing a gun. I guess if you do pull a gun up there Fish and Game will –

CPW: Will get you.

JR: Yes. Fish and Game or the state troopers will come pull you. You're done. That was really crazy, really crazy.

CPW: Is it still like that?

JR: I would imagine it's settled down quite a bit because there are fewer boats participating in it now, I think. There's the same amount of licenses but they've changed some regulations around there. When I first went up there, first couple years, they had airplanes for spotters and guys kept crashing into each other in the air and killing people and they finally just go, no, no, no. Stop this. This is not happening anymore.

CPW: That is crazy. Because they do that for herring, right? I never heard of it with salmon.

JR: Yes, they do that for herring. But yes, the salmon was – they were doing it up there. No, thank you. I mean, it'd be pretty tough duty for a guy flying an airplane. Anyway, I did that for a number of years, ten years, and then seemed like the price of fish was falling every year. Been there, done that. Time to go do something different.

CPW: Yes. How did crab change over the time that you fished?

JR: What's that?

CPW: How did crab change over the time that you fished for it? The fishery itself?

JR: Well, it just declined. It had to, I mean, when there's that – there was a tremendous amount of pressure on those crabs. They probably killed more crabs dumping crab pots on them. There's a terrific amount of pressure. There's a reason why I went from 120 million pounds down to 16 million. I don't think there's – well, there isn't even a Kodiak King Crab Fishery anymore, I don't believe. There's just a small boat fishery for cannery crabs. When I first went to Kodiak and shrimping was going full speed at that cannery I worked at. You'd go down there every morning and there would be eight or nine shrimp boats tied to the dock just their decks loaded with shrimp.

CPW: There is not a shrimp fishery anymore, right? I have never even heard of that before.

JR: I don't think so. If it is it's very minimal. I don't believe there's any shrimp fishery in Kodiak anymore. That shrimp fishery Kodiak was amazing. They even had it down in, I think, (White?) Bay and (Piolli?) Bay they had floating shrimp cannery processors down there, too. A lot of shrimp being caught. Anybody that could catch shrimp was doing it. Deck loads of them. I remember one guy he was just coming up the bay there in Kodiak and his boats sunk right there because he had a deck load of shrimp and got him some tough weather and down she went. Are we holding you up here, Jim?

Male Speaker: That's all right.

JR: You can go ahead and lock the door. We can go out the back door. That will work.

CPW: Yes. [laughter]

MS: Got another key we can give you there too, so.

JR: Oh. I don't know I – we can go out through the back door.

CPW: Do you think that guys from here are still able to go up there and fish, like new people getting into fishing?

JR: Yes, I think they can. It's getting harder and harder because there's fewer boats and –

MS: Do you want the light on or off?

JR: Oh, you can shut it off.

MS: See you tomorrow.

JR: Okay. When the – do you want me to lock this door up?

MS: That's all right.

JR: Like my brother's boat, some of his crew had been on there for fifteen, twenty years. People don't give up their job very easy. Once in a while the guys that go up and still do the drag fishery out of Newport they trout, they change out crews, but it seems like the bigger boats most of the crews are really tight on there. They stay right with it because they understand that it's a good job. Those guys can almost make a six-figure income. [laughter]

CPW: [laughter] That is way more than me. Yes, wow. That is amazing.

JR: I just don't want to do that anymore. I lost my interest doing it.

CPW: Seems like it would be hard to be away for so long.

JR: Like I say, the time when I was doing it wasn't that big of an issue, but after a while and as I got older. I think there's something different out there and I'm going to go see what it is. I've always had a real love for riding motorcycles, so I can't do much motorcycle riding out in the ocean. [laughter] So, I channel a lot of my efforts into my – that's kind of one of my hobbies or form of relaxation is riding my bike. Yes, but I don't think there's many jobs available, obviously, as there were at one time. People don't give up their birth anymore. There's some [inaudible] in a lot of the boats I think that can come up with job openings a lot. There's a reason why that is, whether it be personality conflicts or safety issues or something. Those things come up. I know when we were making those long trips, you had to have a crew that was pretty compatible when you're spending that much time at sea you couldn't – you get mad you can't just stomp off and go home. You have to bite your tongue or work the differences out, then every now and then everybody's going to have their time for the guy to vent a little frustrations and you learn to deal with each other and that. You might be a son of a bitch one day and a nice guy to your buddy the next. So, that's how that works out. You just kind of have to learn to roll with the punches and deal with it; it's day by day.

CPW: Were the other guys that were on the boats you were on from here or were they from up there?

JR: Let's see. I worked with my brother. When I was on the *King & Winge* we had a – we want to sail with three guys on deck and all three of us were from down in this area. Actually, one of them was the guy I kind of grew up with and the other guy I had known. I worked with him

right after I got out of high school on a crab boat out of a Newport. We called him the Happy Go Lucky Indian [laughter]. Anyway, I fished with him for quite a few years on the *King & Winge*. Yes, there's a lot of local guys around. There's the (Moll?) brothers from Newport and the (Capris?) and a lot of those guys were around. Molls and Capris are the only coming to my mind right now, I know there were others. Their names don't come up right now. Anyway, yeah there's a big population from this county up there.

CPW: So, I think I have covered about all that I have got on here. When you kind of switched to different fisheries, why was that? Was it just that there was a new opportunity or something?

JR: Yes, well say when we went to Joint Venture Fishery, the crab quota went from 120 million pounds down to 16 million pounds. It was just a matter of economics. I guess that's why we did that. There's a couple of summers, one or two summers, where I stayed up there for a brief while and went halibut fishing, too, with a friend of mine. We did pretty well that. Needed to go check out halibut fishing, too. That was really interesting. We did really well and made good money, but that's a lot of work. It's hard work. Your hands get really sore and tired. Anyway, I just did that for a couple of summers. It wasn't like I was going to stick in that fishery. Then that halibut fishery went to – what did they call it? It wasn't free for all, but when the season opened the people just had to go for it, weather or not, and a lot of guys who got hurt doing that. Now, it's on an individual IQF thing. I think it's a little more realistic how they go about it. Anyway, I'm not fishing anymore. [laughter]

CPW: I see. I know I had something else that I thought of but I forgot what it was. But I think we have covered about everything I have got on here. Besides, is there anything else you would like to say about that time fishing in Alaska?

JR: Well, it was a really good time for a young guy. I was twenty-one or twenty-two years old. Yes, it was great. I mean, what a great experience. It was the gold rush. I had a really great time doing it. Money was an incentive, but more so than that way, I guess it was just the adventure of doing it because I loved doing it. It was fun. It was interesting and exciting. Every day was different. I just don't think a person will ever see anything like that again in history. I don't think that that – unless there's some resource out there in the ocean they haven't tapped into yet. I don't think that's going to happen again. It was a lot of fun being involved in it right at the heyday. Fortunately, I was right there when the king crab was really good and I was right there in the Joint Venture Pollock Fishery where it was really happening, too. I was really fortunate to be right there in those two fisheries when it was, I have to say, in its prime. I'm thankful for that. There's a lot of really good times, firsthand. I don't think it's going to happen again. I kind of feel sorry for – I know there's a lot of young people out there who'd like go dive into that. There were women involved working on deck, too, and there's a lot of those gals I knew that were really good and ended up running boats. Some are still at it and some of them aren't. I admire those people for sticking with because it wasn't an easy task for a woman that's for sure. Anyway, I think that's about all I have to – my comments, unless you have more questions.

CPW: Were there many women that fished?

JR: Well, I was in such a small area of Kodiak and out west, there's gals that work in the galley, that cooked on some boats. Kodiak, there were two or three gals that actually ended up working out on deck. When I was running that *King & Winge* I had one gal work for me. She was really good on deck. Susie Wagner's one gal that comes to mind around Kodiak. She worked on deck, and she was really good, pretty tough and she ended up running a couple of different boats. I know that southeast there's quite a few gals who run boats and the salmon fishery in Bristol Bay there's a lot of women involved in that. I really admire those ladies for doing it because it wasn't tough. It was tough and there's a lot of people, guys out there that are really just flat ass sexist. They don't get it at all. Anyway, my hats are off to the ladies that went ahead and did that. This friend of mine that I grew up, he's a pilot on the inside waters of Alaska running a cruise ship and he's met this gal, (Tomi?), that wrote a cookbook, she, and her sister, and I've met her. She's working to get her pilot license. She's got a seventy-foot boat and she's kicking around, and she fished out in the Bering Sea and stuff. Those ladies have my respect. It's tough, especially for a woman because there's all these crazy fishermen out there probably trying to hit on this poor young woman and all she wants to do is just leave me alone and let me do my job. These ladies are a pretty special group, I think. Anyway, I think that's – unless there's anything else you would like to question me about.

CPW: I think that is about all I've got for you. I could keep going. [laughter] Seems like an interesting time. All right. Well, thank you.

JR: Well, thank you. I hope I answered...

[end of transcript]