

David Crabbe: I do Fishermen in the Classroom. So, these are some things that I show the kids. But also, it helps to tell a little bit of a story. So, one thing is raingear, which you guys you're probably aware of. The fishermen wear raingear. So, when you go on the boat, you put on a full jacket and pants so you don't get wet out there. Because it does get wet with the nets. The nets coming out of the water all wet. So, you wear a full set of raingear including rubber boots, which I didn't bring any of those.

Female Speaker:: It looks like old-school rubberized stuff.

DC: It is. Yes.

FS: Nobody uses Gore-Tex or anything or is the rubberized just truly more waterproof?

DC: It's truly more waterproof. So, anything else that you wear is going to hold it a little bit and it's going to add weight. So, you're looking for basically slicker type of material where it can run off. The stuff I have here is (rainwear Wearce?) brand that we would use a lot. It's a high-quality commercial raingear manufacturer. This stuff is something from a gardening shop or something. But it works for the kids. So, the other thing that you guys saw were some corks.

FS: [laughter] We will consider it authentic.

DC: So, the one big thing is, is corks come in various sizes. So, the part of the net that doesn't hold as much weight where the fish are, has a smaller cork. Because you don't need as much buoyancy. As you work down towards the part of the net that holds a lot of weight, then you put the bigger cork. This cork here, this was designed to go on a drum. It has a hard shell. So, it's pretty hard material. So, when it goes around in the drum with all that pressure, it doesn't squish. Some of the corks that were earlier built, when this would go on, it would squeeze up like a little raising and it wouldn't have as much buoyancy. So, you had to go to this style cork to attack the pressure.

FS: So, they are called corks there because they originally were corks. But this appears to be like some sort of a styrofoam type material sort of?

DC: Yes.

FS: It looks like.

DC: A foam, but you're correct. The original material for this was cork material. So, they're still referred to in the fishing industry as corks.

FS: Must have been trickier when they got all soggy.

FS: So, on the drum, you mean it is on the reel that...

DC: It's like a reel that holds the net.

FS: It is huge.

DC: So, the drum size, yes. The drum is bigger than me when it comes out.

FS: Yes.

FS: Yes.

DC: It's large. It holds this entire net. Let me see if I can find the picture. I can show you a picture of my boat. Actually, this picture will show it. So, this is the drum on a drum sander where you see this boat doesn't have a drum on it. So, he pulls the net through a power block up in this area. So, you have two ways to pull the purse seine in. So, this was my boat. But so, this is where the net is going to pull up. Now, we're pulling the rings and we purse them to the boat. So, when you lay these nets up, there's rings along the bottom of the net along the leadline and corks around the top. The rings are about that big. They're eight-inch rings. We run a rope through all the rings. This is where the term purse seine comes. Because after you lay the net out, then you pull the rope in and it purses together the bottom of the net and that comes up to the side of the boat. So, in this situation, when the rings come up, we slide them onto a bar. We call it the ring stripper. It's really heavy, so you have to use all your [inaudible] to lift this up and get all those rings to slide onto the bar. Once all those rings are slid onto the bar, then the net is essentially closed. Then you'll start to drum it in, or like a big reel. So, you'll reel the net in, all the way in down to a small pocket. Actually, this is going to show us what a pocket looks like. So, this was an older boat of mine that I used to have. This was the first bigger boat that I got. The boat is full of fish. It's got about seventy tons in the boat. Then we've got another thirty or forty ton in the net. We're dragging the net into the harbor. They're going to put the pump in the boat. You basically drum the net until you get the smaller pocket. Then you dry up the – they call it drying up the net when you pull just the web until you just have this tight pocket of squid inside. Then you drop a fish pump inside. You could barely see a little blue hose right there. You probably saw what the fish pump looked like.

FS: Yes, we did.

DC: It pumps through a water separator. I did bring a little video that I think she's going to show you later that'll show that a little bit more clearly. The other thing, and I know you saw some of this on the boat. But just what some of the web looks like. So, this part of the web is used near the cork line or near areas where you're not worried about the squid getting in and out because a squid could swim through this. This is the size net. It's usually a little heavier material. That's the area where you actually have the squids or sardines or mackerel, whatever you're fishing for. So, this web here is going to be this stuff. Really, the entire net is made of this material, except for a thin strip along the leadline, and an even thinner strip along the cork line. But just to tell you a little bit what some of the different nets are for. When you rip the net up, this is called a sewing needle. [laughter] So, this is what you'll sew the bigger mesh together with. So, the stuff that you saw here, if you're going to lace this together or sew it, depending on what you're going to do. But this needle fits through this mesh pretty easily. They are different sizes. So, this needle here is for, obviously, a little bit smaller net. I don't know if this will. This may just barely get through that material. But then this needle is for the really small mesh. We

actually use a smaller mesh than this when we're fishing for anchovies. So, you need a really small needle. You can imagine how tedious it is [laughter] when you're putting this big net together.

FS: Oh my gosh.

DC: You probably saw how big, at least on the *Ocean Angel*, when you went on that boat, you saw how big that was. But if I were to lay my net out around this, it would go completely around this building probably pretty easily.

FS: Oh my gosh.

FS: This is what? A thousand-feet long? So, it had a three-hundred-foot circle when it was dropped. Is that what you said?

DC: They're up to three-hundred-fathoms long.

FS: Oh, maybe you said that.

DC: My net used to be about two-hundred-fathoms long. So, this this net here, when it's completely laid out, it was two-hundred-fathoms long. Some of the nets now are bigger up to three-hundred-fathoms. Then they'll drop down about twenty-five fathoms. They'll fish one-fifty-feet deep, is about how deep you can go down and fish and still catch fish. So, we do need to find fish near the surface in order to capture them. But one-fifty feet on this building is probably –

FS: Three-stories maybe.

DC: Well, yes. Maybe only forty feet or something.

FS: Thirty feet?

FS: Yes.

DC: So, probably three times that building is how deep the net will drop down to. When you pull the rings in, it shallows it up a little bit. So, you can't really fish for the depth of the total net. But this was just a random shot off on my boat heading out to the islands and just a bunch of sea life that comes around the boat periodically. That we would see this regularly and we photographed with a bunch of dolphins playing. So, the other thing in squid fishing which you probably saw on that boat was the lights. They have these big, giant, luminous lights. They can be a thousand watts, two thousand watts, three thousand watts. They come from Japan. Some of the better made ones are from Japan. But we also work with lightboats. Which is a smaller vessel that's equipped with a lot of lights. They're a scout boat for the bigger boat. The scout boat will run around and look for squid. It has the same electronics as the big boat and it has lights like the big boat. It just doesn't have any way to catch the fish. But it'll run around and it'll find the school of squid. He will drop his anchor and he'll turn on his lights. He's trying to

attract squid. So, in this case, you can see all the squid that he's attracted to all around the boat.

FS: [laughter] Oh my gosh.

DC: So, you would come up to a boat like that. You have a sonar on the boat and you can look under his boat and see what the volume is and see how deep it actually goes as well. If it's just on the surface, it can be a certain amount. But if it actually goes down fifty or sixty feet or a hundred feet, then it's a real lot of squid. So, under a boat like this, you could have as much as, at times, amazing amounts probably up to five hundred to a thousand tons of squid under one lightboat. So, then we would come and let our skiffs out. So, these boats all run around. So, these are a bunch of squid boats and we all have skiffs. You probably saw the skiff.

FS: Yes.

DC: The skiff is how you deploy the net. So, you would come up to a boat like this. As you're coming up to it and you give it a pretty wide berth, you'd say, "Let it go." The crew would release the skiff. Then you would start to go in a circle around the lifeboat. Then you come back to the skiff, and that closes the circle. The skiff man or either guys in the boat throw the skiff man a rope, or the skiff man throws a rope. But at some point, you connect to the net. Then there's equipment on the boat to pull that net in. Then the skiff releases from the net and he goes around and he ties to – so, you can't really see it in this picture. But right now, my skiff is on the other side of the boat. He's pulling the boat. He's towing the boat in a way that keeps the net in a nice circle and keeps pulling it in off the stern. If you didn't have that skiff there, then the net could pull into the net and get this part and this would get tangled up with that part. It would create a mess.

FS: Is it the walking the dog? Dave told us in school.

DC: Yes. He might call it walking the dog where the skiff man is walking the back of the boat around following the net as you're pulling it up. So, quick story about Dave Tibbles. So, this was my boat.

FS: [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

DC: I had been fishing for twenty-five plus years in various – my life would start out by fishing squid in Monterey. We would fish in April. Then in early June, I would leave and go up to Alaska to fish in Bristol Bay for five to six weeks in a salmon gillnet fishery. I would come back from Bristol Bay and I would jump back on the squid boat and I would be fishing for squid. Then in October, the squid boat would leave to go down to Channel Islands in turtle area and fish squid down in Southern California in the wintertime. But also, the herring fishery up in San Francisco would start. So, I used to have somebody else that I worked with. They would either run the lifeboat and I would go fish the herring fishery in San Francisco. That would run for the month of December, January, February. Then I'd get off the boat there and go back down to Southern California and fish squid. We would fish up until about February. The season would

end. Then we would do a little, now that we've dry docked the boat, work on the boat a little bit. Then in April, we would start all over again. So, I was gone to two hundred-plus days a year away from home. So, I had some young children. When my eight-year-old was born and I was not as available to be gone as much or not as desirable to be gone as much, Dave Tibbles came to work for me and he ran my boat. So, he ran it for three and a half years. Unfortunately, on his way one day, he was coming in and he had half a load of squid on the boat. Some unfortunate things happened, but the boat ended up rolling over and sinking. [laughter]

FS: Oh, no.

DC: He and my four crewmen that were on the boat were all obviously rescued. But it was a good working relationship with Dave for three and a half years before the boat sank in 2006. So, now he's gone on.

FS: Did that sink the relationship? [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

DC: No, no. We're still friends and communicate. As a matter of fact, he gave me some pictures that I thought I have here. I don't see the ones I want to show you. But he ended up getting another boat with (Joe Capucho from Pioneer Seafoods?) which you guys went to his processing plant. So, a lot of times in this industry is what happens is if you want to get into a boat. But you may not have the finances, the processors will come in and help you. So, actually Joe Capucho bought that boat and Dave is a small partner on the running that boat.

FS: So, that is how he got his first boat. But what led you to get your first boat to get into commercial fishing?

DC: Well, I don't know if I'm unique to that. So, I grew up in Pacific Grove, which is on the other side of the bay from here, not far from Monterey. In the summer times, my mom lives near the water in Pacific Grove and there was a little concession at Lovers Point that I would go down and fish there. I'd help do the class amount of boat, but also go out in a little fishing boat. So, I grew a fondness of the ocean and time around the water. Then when I graduated from high school, I had gone up and talked to a school up in Washington. I was a baseball player. I was interested in going up there and playing baseball. But in the summer, a friend of mine's uncle had a new fishing boat come into town. So, in the summertime, we were down and helping him working on his fishing boat. Now, the boat was ready to go fishing. Since we were there working on it, he took us out as crewmen. So, at the end of the summer, my friend whose uncle had the boat, he got off and went to school, but I never did. [laughter] So, I stayed on that fishing boat working as a crewman for him for three for three and a half years and then I bought my first fishing boat. So, I kind of came into the fishing business. I was a first-generation fisherman. A lot of fishermen in the business, you hear about first and second and third, fourth-generation fishermen. I was a first-generation fisherman. I was getting into a fisheries era that was traditionally, at least in this region, were Sicilian Italians, mostly Italians. There were very few non-Italians that were in the net fishing business in Monterey. As matter of fact, when first they called us, I had a friend of mine that we got our first boats with, who was also non-Italian.

So, they called us the *Meriganees* for non-Italian Americans.

FS: [laughter]

DC: It was. It was a little bit of a learning curve to break into a fishery with your own boat with a bunch of people that are not necessarily welcoming you. You have not been in the circle, so to speak. But we made our way because we worked hard. We were successful. When you start to work hard, and you start to be successful, then you start to earn the respect. So, we did eventually, over time, become part of the community. I remember a meeting that we went to. Early on, we used to have these fishermen meetings that we were deciding whether we were going to go fishing or not. I remember in my first or second year, we were at this meeting, and I had made a comment about something. One of the older Sicilian guys turns to me and he goes, "You come here yesterday." [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

DC: Like I shouldn't be speaking because I had just started fishing or something. So, anyways, it was sort of a breaking-in process. But over the time, I built relationships with all of the fishermen in the area and still have some good relationships. The funny thing is, when I got in, I got in with a lot of the older generation fishermen who were still owning their boats. The kids were all working on their boats. I was a little bit older than their kids but I was a lot younger than the older generation. I watched these guys all retire, some passed away, move on and then their kids moved up and have started taking over. Watched a whole generation change in the fishing industry. But then I worked from one boat. The first boat I had was a forty-foot boat that carried about fifteen ton of squid. Then I worked up to a little bit bigger boat. Then we got that one wind boat that I showed towing the net which carried about seventy ton of squid. Then the last boat was the one that Dave Tibbles ran for me, which was called the *Buccaneer*. It carried about seventy-plus ton – it was a real nice boat – ton of squid. So, that was the last purse seiner. I also own a lightboat which is the smaller boat that I showed you for a tracking squid. I still have the lightboat. I also have or had a boat and permit in Alaska and fished in Alaska for twelve seasons for that six-week period of time. I also fished herring in San Francisco Bay which was for herring. It was for the egg roe which is kazunoko in Japan. Did that for sixteen seasons. So, I did a lot of fishing for the twenty-five years. But after my boat sank here and then my boat in Alaska was in a warehouse fire and burned up, so I stopped going to Alaska. But it's all been good. I got my real estate license and I do some fishery consulting stuff. So, I'm doing other things but sleeping in my own bed every night. Get to go to my kids' open house at school as well. [laughter]

FS: The two-sentence bio we got for you, it said you were a lightboat owner.

DC: [laughter]

FS: So, are you not out there looking for squid?

DC: I am an owner.

FS: Or do you still play a role on the sea as it were?

DC: I'm not. I do not spend time on the water anymore. Very little. So, I have a guy that runs my lightboat. Really a good guy who basically operates it. Lightboats are one-man vessels. So, he just runs the boat and I manage it from the beach. But I'm not on the water spending the night on the boat anymore. I did that for twenty-five years.

FS: You have mentioned family reasons and shall we call them natural disaster reasons, for not being on the water anymore.

DC: [laughter]

FS: [laughter]

FS: Are there any other factors? Do you think you would be off the water if the boats had not sunk and burned?

DC: No, no, no. My reasons were not because of the boat sinking and burning. I really weighed that out. It's because I had kids and I have small children. I have an eight-year-old, a six-year-old, and a two-year-old is why I'm not on the water as much anymore. Fishermen work really hard and they make tremendous sacrifices to be fishermen. That means being away from their family, missing birthdays, missing holidays, missing...

[end of transcript]