Joshua Wrigley: So, if you want to just start out with an introduction.

Kelly Peyton: Formal beginning.

JW: Yes, got to get everything down on record. [laughter]

KP: So, this is Kelly Peyton. I am here with Jonathan Mayhew today on August 10th, 2015. We are going to be talking about his career as a spotter pilot. We are doing this for the Voices from the Fisheries project. So, firstly, what is your name?

Jonathan Mayhew: I'm Jonathan Mayhew. I guess one of my fields was a fish spotter for twenty-eight seasons, and a commercial fisherman. I've been around a long time, so probably eleven generations as an islander. Right now, I just got some photos that we just got the other day. I have on me the Martha's Vineyard Fishermen's Preservation Trust. We just had a few days, and this is what they did down at Menemsha. So, to give you an idea I took a few of these pictures. This is my uncle Ernest Mayhew, and this is the Menemsha Lobster where he sold lobsters. Then here's a couple young guys, who is us [laughter] as young men. Here I am. Although I look about fifteen, I'm actually probably around twenty-three, twenty-four years old, or maybe even twenty-five. This is my niece. Tom Osmers, a buddy of mine. This is my brother Greg. This is my brother Skip, or Benjamin. This is a swordfish that we have, and it's the whole fish. There's a little bit of story to that, in that normally we cut them up before we bring them in. But there was a guy named Spider Andresen. This is back in the [19]70s. There used to be a thing called I Love New York. He wanted to have a whole swordfish so that they'd have a swordfish in the middle of New York City. This was his concept of doing this. He wanted a whole fish and he was going to pay us the full amount, et cetera. So, that's why we had this whole fish. Although it was one of the bigger ones, it was probably about a four hundred pound dressed weight, which is no head and no fins and no belly, no guts. This is my brother Greg with the codfish. Here's some more of this, the same swordfish in Menemsha. This is our boat.

JW: So, that fish wound up in New York City?

JM: Well, that's what it was supposed to be going. [laughter] It never did it. So, Spider got it, he had to eat it all. [laughter] But I'm sure he still laughs about that. But this is the little *Quitsa Strider* here that we had. Quitsa being a pond that we live on which is called Nashaquitsa Pond. So, the strider is someone who sets a steady, straight, and successful course. Also, the Strider was the guy in *Lord of the Rings*. This is back when you just read about the book, and there wasn't any movies at all. But the Strider was the guy who was one of the good guys that helped on *Lord of the Rings*. But anyhow, so here we are again. This is my brother-in-law, Dominique, a younger man than he is now. So, this is the whole gang. Tom Osmers, who's no longer with us, passed away about two years ago with cancer. But that's how we started to do it, or at least into the swordfishing aspect of it.

JW: What year was that again?

JM: Around I believe circa [19]78. [laughter] Now that we're getting older.

KP: When were you born?

JM: I was born in 1951. So, as far as how I became a fish spotter, we were always lobstering and swordfishing with my father. So, the concept was, well, I'll go over there and check out a half mile away. Of course, I couldn't do that because we were in a seven and a half, not eight and a half boat. I said, "Geez, I'd like to check that out." I'd check over there. So, it was kind of a natural thing to be going and saying, "Well, I could do this in an airplane." Around eighteen, nineteen-year-old, there was two guys called the Malley Brothers, Teddy and Timmy Malley that worked out of somewhere up towards Plymouth area. They were two fishermen that decided and they were both going to be fish spotters, and they did it. They took turns. So, one guy would be the captain of the boat for a week or ten days, and the other guy would be the pilot. Then the next trip, the pilot would be the captain, and the captain would be the pilot. So, it sounded like a pretty good idea. So, I was all excited and my brother Greg was all excited. But at any rate, so we were both going to get our licenses. We both got the written part done, and now came the actual flying time. I was probably about ten hours or so, or maybe fifteen hours of flying in, and Greg wanted to have a turn. I asked this guy Jerry. What's Jerry's last name? (Copeland?). But anyhow, Jerry, if I could have my brother in the back seat. He said, "Yes, sure. You can do that." So, my brother Greg's in the back seat, and so, I'm going up and we're off of Chappaquiddick and probably about two thousand feet, 2,500 feet. Jerry and I were in the front seat and Jerry's telling me, "We're going to do cross-control stalls." Stalls in those days they used to actually have to learn how to do them. My brother Greg, unbeknownst to me, he was in the back seat, he was trying to listen and he couldn't quite hear. So, he undid his seatbelt and he went [laughter] forward just as I went up and went down. [laughter] That was the last of Greg's flying. So, he did some regular flying, but no more himself. So, that didn't work out exactly as the Malley brothers did it, but that's how I became a fish spotter.

JW: How did you know the Malley brothers?

JM: They were fishermen and we were fishermen. Initially, it used to be that before in the [19]60s and [19]70s, the guys all the way from Nova Scotia would come down and fish off the Block Island. And then they'd fish off Menemsha and maybe Nantucket and down along Georges. We all did the same thing, the guys from Nova Scotia and us. Then we went farther and farther. We went along to northeast part of Georges. You got the southeast part and the northeast part. Then you get Browns Bank and farther down towards Sable Island down off Nova Scotia.

JW: This was pre-Hague Line?

JM: Hague Line came into effect. Gerry Studds was the man who really said, "We really need the Hague Line." We said, "Well, geez, Gerry, if you do this, it's going to screw up our harpoon swordfishing." So, we actually met and talked with each other. So, he came down, and he goes, "Look, I really want you guys to get on board on this Hague Line." I said, "Well, we can get on board, but we have to have the harpoon fishermen come all the way from Nova Scotia down to here. And we would have to go all the way up there and both sides agree." Then he goes, "That's the first thing I'm going to do after I get the Hague Line." Well, that was my first

experience for a politician to come in and never do what they need to be done. I was, "This is really unfair. We now have a Hague Line." The northeast part of Georges was our best area for swordfishing. Now, the Canadians get all that. They aren't able to come down here at all, and we're not able to go up there. So, the Hague Line, and that's the start of the end from the fisherman's perspective.

JW: Do you know why he did not pursue some sort of reciprocity agreement or anything?

JM: One we can only guess. I was a young man, and I'd have to admit I didn't do that much into that at the moment. So, that's how it started. No offense to Gerry, but it's always been a problem that I've never had a good rapport with National Marine Fishery Service at all. [laughter] That's the truth of the matter. So, my father was a public servant for years. Well, he was in the selectman first job for thirty-two years, and then he was State House for three years. Unfortunately, he died as a fairly young man at the age of fifty-nine. Now it's young for me anyhow. [laughter]

KP: [laughter]

JM: Now I'm sixty-four. But at any rate, and he had pancreatic cancer. So, then my brother became a state rep from Martha's Vineyard from [19]69 to [19]72. So, we've been public servants in various fields. So, to get back to the fishing for the swordfishing, I was a pilot and Greg was the captain all the time. Greg was a very good captain and still is, and a very good harpooner. I was a pretty good pilot. So, that's what we did for a lot of years.

KP: How many other pilots did you know?

JM: Well, probably fourteen, fifteen, maybe up to twenty in the end.

KP: Were any of them really instrumental in teaching you how to fly?

JM: No, not really. I'd have to say that the piloting stuff, we were all fairly young guys initially. I think my goal was always to fly for swordfishing spotting. There are basically two types of pilots that you get. You get fishermen who become fish spotters and pilots. Then the other one are regular pilots that become fish spotters for a short period of time as a young man. They want to learn all about flying and they're very good at that. They don't care that much about spotting. They're trying to spot fish. Everybody's trying to spot fish, but the fishermen who become pilots they just want to spot fish and they aren't that good a pilot. [laughter] The rare exception is, say, Jack Mayhew or there are a couple other guys. But Jack was a very good fisherman, and he was also a very good pilot. For years he was flying. There are a couple of other guys that did that as well.

JW: Was he a relation of yours?

JM: Yes, fifth or sixth cousin. Yes.

JW: Mayhew is an old name.

JM: It is an old name. I'm eleventh generation washed ashore, as I say. [laughter] Because everybody says, "You're a washashore, you're a washashore," about all these people. Hey, I may be eleventh generation, but I'm still a washashore because the Wampanoags are the ones who were here first. They were probably washashores maybe four thousand years ago. I don't know. But we were all washeashores from my perspective. But I am eleventh generation. So, where were we? What else would you like to know?

KP: Well, you talked about that split then between the fishermen versus the pilots who were going into fish spotting. Are there any skills then that are really crucial for fish spotting that one of those groups has? What skills did you have that made you a good fish spotter?

JM: Yes, I'm very good with my eyes. That's very crucial. I used to say that the blue-eyed guys were better fish spotters than the brown-eyed guys.

KP: [laughter]

JM: But there is a certain amount of truth to that, which I just learned probably the last year or so. That there is some new evidence that says that if you have blue eyes, you can't see certain colors as well as people with brown eyes. But there are other colors you can see very well and they can't see it as well. Now, swordfish are usually a blue-purple in blue water, and that's very hard to see for a lot of people. It's hard, but not that it's hard, I don't believe for me. So, there's a certain amount of truth to maybe the blue-eyed guys can see better than the brown-eyed guys and girls. There have been a couple girls as well. So, I don't know. We all have a lot of theories in life, so there may be some truth to that. And when you get fishing and you're just further aloft than when you used to be just in your topness, and now I was higher than that. So, I get to see everything. "Hey, I'll go over here and I'll do my own thing, stay around." I think the other thing that you do is a fisherman who knows that swordfish don't like to see each other at all. However, they will stay in an area together. Usually, it's during tides and that sort of thing. But you go to an area, you'd say, "I know there was fish here yesterday," because you learned from yesterday, "and they're here today." It's just a question of the right tide." So, you just keep waiting and waiting and waiting. Then two or three hours later, well there's a swordfish. So, you get on that swordfish, you hit them. And you're seeing four, five, six, or seven swordfish, and then the tide gets strong in the other direction. They'll go off again. Time all the gear for the boys. So, the fishermen understood that. So, whereas if you're a pilot who wants to be a fish spotter you don't really understand this dynamic. So, he goes off seven or eight miles, which is a long way by a boat. That's like an hour away. Sure enough, he finds a swordfish over there. But the end of the game is, is that how many fish do you get at the end of the day, how many at the end of the week, that sort of thing.

KP: So, have you seen changes in the swordfish's behavior population wise or in that over the years?

JM: Absolutely.

KP: What sort of changes?

JM: Thank you, National Marine Fisheries. There's some horrible dynamics from my perspective. You have to understand now harpoon fishery is what we're talking about. That's harpooning versus longlining, which is the other major, in fact the major, way of doing it. So, the harpoon fishery – which is in total demise right now. Here you can see our fish here that were average dressed weight, which is probably around 225 dressed weight, which just means it's degutted and everything else. The average from a longliner is somewhere around – I don't know what it is now, maybe a hundred pounds. Probably less than that. So, on that note, we went to National Marine Fisheries and we said, "Look here guys, these are the harpooners from Rhode Island, the Vineyard, Plymouth, New Bedford, Connecticut." These all harpooners said, "National Marine Fisheries, you have to do something about this. You have a swordfish industry. We honestly demand that you make at least a hundred pound dressed weight for swordfish." They said, "Well, why you do that?" They said, "Because all these fish have already spawned. They spawn around 105 pound dressed weight," they say. "They've already spawned. They've already reproduced at least once. It means that a vast majority of them reproduced two or three or four times. Whereas longlining, you have little longline fish that aren't even close to being sexually mature. So, you've got to get off that area of doing that." So, National Marine Fisheries in its wisdom – because the longliners were furious that we would say such a thing, and longliners said, "We have to get smaller fish than 105 pounds." "Guys, if you go with 105 pounds you go into the colder water and you get bigger fish. You're fishing in the warm water, which is a little fish because you're allowed to."

JW: Where were they fishing mostly?

JM: This is off of here, off of Georges and off the Grand Banks. Whatever comes into the United States has to be a United States' product. So, it's true, no matter where it is, that if you fish in colder water, you're going to have bigger fish that you have to catch because you're not going to get little ones in there. They like to catch little fish from the warm water. At any rate, so for one year, the National Marine Fisheries said, "We're going to compromise and we're going to make it sixty-seven pounds per fish." I said, "Well that's really not fair. Sixty-seven pounds, that's not sexually mature. Now how can you possibly do that?" They said, "Well, it's a compromise." So, for one year they had a compromise. Next year, here we have another meeting and the longliners we're in full force now here because we hit them up. They screamed, "We have to have smaller fish." They said, "Give us a percentage. Let us have a percentage of the smaller fish and we'll give it to the food pantries." They said, "This is going to be a really good thing, let us keep ten percent." I said, "I got a better idea. You keep a hundred percent every fish you catch. Let's see how many fish you get that are big fish and how many are little fish. But let's catch them and we'll have the little ones below the sixty-seven pounds go to the food pantries and that sort of thing." Dr. Rebecca Lent in her wisdom said, "Well, that's interesting." So, they screamed. But the longliners screamed, ranted, and raved and now they're down to thirty-seven pound dressed weight. I said, "The difference between you guys, you got here where we are harpooning them. Under a hundred pounds, we let them go and we call them pups. You let the pups go. You guys call them rats and you keep the rats." I said, "That's the difference between the two fisheries."

JW: What year was that?

JM: Well, it's a number of years. There have been other factors. National Marine Fisheries started in probably the [19]80s, I think. Not long after.

JW: Right after the Magnuson.

JM: That was [19]78.

JW: [19]76, yes.

JM: [19]76, but [19]78 they got involved in it. Then they started getting involved with the whole thing. But this probably ended up in around the eighty-five on the swordfishing. The swordfish industry is one industry that is such a joke. It's so sad what they've done. Literally, we used to harpoon right out here off Normans about thirty miles, twenty-five, thirty miles. I've gone out there four or five times this year, and I got a white marlin skilligalee, and I got a mako. But I haven't yet to see a swordfish, not one. Now you can say, "The harpooning shouldn't have caught that many fish." But the reality was we got twenty-six swordfish out here in one day, back when we could. Yes, I had a plane, but other guys got ten or fifteen. I'm sure we were the high boat that day, but there was 150 fish in one day. There was maybe two hundred fish in one day. That stock of fish has never returned. It's not because of what we did, it's because the longlining outside that I am sure has kept the little fish that were never getting big enough to become big fish out that area. Now, there may be some out there, but I haven't seen them yet.

JW: What were the best years?

JM: Usually anywhere around 225 to 275 fish. I think it was something like that in that area. The average weight was 225 pounds dressed weight.

JW: Do you remember when that was roughly?

JM: Well, we did until probably mid to late [19]80s. I became more involved with longlining. Not longlining, excuse me, staying into the harpooning and China bluefin tuna. That was just another story of fish spotting that I dealt with. I'm trying to think if my brother continued, we were getting giant bluefin tuna. If you really wanted the limit of an airplane – because what happens with pilots that was a totally different. It used to be that the harpoon would never go near another guy's fishing gear. For instance, you went out and you literally stocked the area. You checked the area out and you liked an area that you liked, and you'd hopefully get a fish and then you'd stay about a mile each way around that gear. You keep staying around that gear until either you pulled them all and left. But another pilot and a boat nearby would stale that one-mile area of your gear. And he would have another area and you'd have up to twenty boats down the right, maybe ten in an area like southeast part of Georges ten or twelve boats. There'd be someone on the northern edge of Georges or maybe up this way. Not everybody stayed all together. Everybody had a different theory as to where they're going to be on this particular day since today is a good swordfish day.

JW: So, when you say, "Stay away from the gear," then was that when you would stick a

swordfish and then throw in a float after that to just keep track of it before continuing with the hunt?

JM: Yes. What would happen is you would harpoon a fish and the fish would go into the water and tow the gear for usually up to around an hour, an hour and a half. It depended. If you were really busy on more fish, you would leave the fish in the area and you wouldn't haul the fish back right away. The first thing to do is get another fish. So, sometimes when you get a really big day, you would leave the fish. So, you'd end up with seven or eight in one area and then you went to another area, seven or eight. But you always stayed away from someone else's area. You didn't start to go in.

KP: Well, I think that was an awesome question to ask, the difference between spotting your swordfish versus the bluefin.

JM: I'll give you how the story went initially. There was a guy named Leonard in Grande. Unfortunately, his pilot died out here on a bluefin tuna.

KP: When was that?

JM: Somewhere around maybe [19]85, I think. So, the seiner boat came in next to Menemsha and he said, "I'd like to see Jonathan Mayhew." So, somebody introduced him to me and he said, "I hear you're a good swordfish spotter." I said, "Yes." He goes, "Too bad about Brad." He goes, "Yes." Because Brad used to be a swordfish spotter. He goes, "Yes, well I want you." So, what happened was Brad was a good fish spotter, blue-eyed guy. [laughter] But we used to get fish one at a time. So, the concept of looking for giant bluefin tuna seemed like that's a good idea. So, I gave it a try. So, we went up into Cape Cod Bay and then down off of here. We were quite close, so that worked out pretty good. There was probably a little more money in it. That was probably the number one thing. But as far as what you're looking for, it's still basically the same, but usually you're looking for schools of fish. So, you're looking at thirty or forty giants. So, I get pretty good at looking at what a giant bluefin tuna versus a smaller fish. So, what you're looking for here is a single fish. And that's the two swords, not the pectoral. Dorsal and the tail fin, there they are. That's the swordfish versus a shark, would be just the dorsal and no tail fin. It's much lower. But the fact that these two stick out like that is quite amazing. There's another. That's with a swordfish.

KP: How high up were you when you were…

JW: Matt said that Wayne took this photograph.

JM: Wayne took that photograph, he did.

KP: How far up do you usually spot fish in the air?

JM: For swordfish, around five- to seven hundred feet, tops. But on a lousy day, you might be as low as three hundred, 350 feet. On rare occasions, you might be eight hundred tops on a really bluebird day. Then here we are in giants. This is 1993, I believe, maybe [19]92. This is

giant bluefin tuna. You can see how gray they are. It's hard to see how big they actually are. But the small ones are much, much bluer. So, when you see them, you know immediately that they're juvenile fish, so don't bother to set on that. So, I did both for harpooning and for seiners and even a few of the general category guys. For seine, for instance, this would probably represent probably, let me see, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. It's probably at least forty-five or so on the top, then these shadows. You can see them underneath here as well. So, what was happening in 1992 was the National Marine Fisheries, they said, "There's five thousand fish in the United States, giant bluefin tuna. That's all there is." We went, "So, how could they say that?" The other factor was the two-stock theory. The ones in the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic are separate fish from the Western Atlantic. This is unbelievable. This is forty-five degrees longitude. I said, "It's unbelievable. Do these fish know that they can only go so far and they can't go any farther? These other fish can only go so far and they can't go any farther the other way." It was five thousand fish. So, that year we donated our time, we got our laptops. First time I ever had a laptop in my life, and cameras. We took the pictures, and this is one picture that I took. This was counted not by us as to how many, but this tells you the time that it was taken timewise, time lapse. If you saw, say, two schools right next to each other, they'd say, "Well, you can only count one school because we don't know whether you just go click and then go click again." They're so close, so whenever in doubt they'd be in the new aquarium. Would only have one, say, "Sorry, these two are too close together. But we admit that you have at least one, so we're going to count one." They did this to probably twelve or thirteen guys and we have our cameras. So, we had twelve volts and we had to go through this whole routine with these computers that we had never used. No one has used this back in 1992. So, here we are in National Marine Fisheries down in Silver Spring, Maryland. So, Dr. Molly Lutcavage had this whole format of this, and along with big pictures of what we had done. National Marine Fisheries said, "You can only have fifteen minutes to do it." She said, "This is my program. I can't do it in fifteen minutes. It's not fair. I can't do it that way." So, they said, "Sorry, that's all we're going to give you." They told us that morning we're all down there ready to show off this – I'm the president of the Atlantic Fish Spotters Association. So, Molly said, "Well, I won't do it. So, what can we do about this?" So, I go, "How about this?" Because the general public at 3:00 was allowed to speak for ten minutes each, or maybe it was five minutes, five, ten. Well, no it was ten minutes. It was five minutes each, either five or ten. So, I said, "Well, I'll give my five minutes and John Betts was going to give his five minutes," so that's ten. Then another fish spotter said, "I'll give up my five minutes to Jonathan, John." So, all these guys said, "We give up our time, but we want this shown." So, we showed what we had. I said, "Well, you guys have said that there's five thousand fish in the Western Atlantic. Now, we have these photos are only two fishermen, two fish spotters, myself and one other guy. What we said was, "We want to show you what we have." I said, "We had thirteen cameras and thirteen laptops, but only two worked the whole day." Everybody else screwed up somehow because you're underneath. I said, "So, these are only two pilots." So, we showed all these photographs, and they said, "Well that's nice." I said, "This was a show day." But they said, "You know that fish congregate together when they're in total demise." I said, "Well, that's interesting because we were seventy miles apart." Because this fellow was up on China bluefin tuna up towards the Gulf of Maine, and I was down off of Chatham area. There was fish like this everywhere. But of the two pilots that day, there was a show day. And there was 4,994 fish that were definitely fish, and these are definitely giant bluefin tuna. So, that's how I got into this routine. So, what had happened, and this is probably the sad side of the whole story, was that, or further along, so to get into this

whole project we did it for free. What would've happened if they were continuing to allow to do this, was we would know how many fish there were on a given show day and admit that "Hey, there's less fish here. We got to do something. Get more less fish allowed, et cetera, et cetera." Instead, what happened was we were told that we can't fly anymore for China bluefin tuna. That was my junior senator, John Kerry. I went to this meeting. They had this big forum and it was at one of the colleges up here. So, I'm there at this forum and he didn't know me from Joe Shmoe and I obviously knew him. So, he's there and John Kerry's going to talk the talk and I'm doing this. Because we had sued National Marine Fisheries for not allowing us, it was said, "Jonathan Mayhew," because I was the president, and all want to continue to have the fish spotting. He goes, "I want you to know that Jonathan Mayhew and all are working all for the big boats and not for the little guy." I'm like, "I have a thirty-two-foot boat at this time. It's much faster than this boat, than my seventy-two-foot boat. How could you possibly say that?" My hand went up, and the moderator saw me and goes like that to me, "Okay, I see you. I don't know who you are, but I see you." I said, "Well, I'm still going to keep my hand up." So, John Kerry spoke for twenty minutes with my hand up. So, John Kerry was through with his little spiel. So, the moderator goes, "Yes sir. Would you like to speak on this issue?" I said, "Yes. One of us is a liar. My name is Jonathan Mayhew and I am not a liar." [laughter] Meaning John Kerry, you're a liar. But I didn't say that. I just said, "One of us is a liar, but not me." I said, "My boat is thirty-two-feet long. How could you say that it's a big boat? For you guys to do this, is totally wrong. We've got this program, we're getting a number of fish, and you guys are denying us." So, we were denied. So, now we go, "Hey, we're denied. Sorry guys, we lost." There is a lawyer in D.C. We had our lawyer already, David Frulla. David's cost us $175,000 that we really didn't have. But we get what we can from people. So, David goes, "We should go to the appellate court." I go, "You got to be kidding me. The federal appellate court, that's one thing before the U.S. Supreme Court." I said, "What for?" He goes, "Well, I want you to talk to this guy." So, I said, "Okay." So, I called. We did a three-way and he goes, "You know what they say?" I said, "No." He goes, "Well, when you write a document to have in front of the House of Representatives, it's a budget document. So, what they did in a budget is only good for the budget year." I said, "What does that mean?" He goes, "Well, the difference is if they said herein, then herein is for the budget year. Herein after – although it's a budget bill, but hereinafter is forever." I said, "Well, which one did they do?" He said, "Herein. So, that's just for the budget year." So, I go, "You've got to be kidding me." He said, "No. Not only that, but you're going to win." He said, "I used to write all the budgets for the Republican Party and I've been doing it for twenty years. I knew that mistake that these guys made." So, we won and we won in the appellate court. But it was already two years later and we were…

JW: So, what was the final ruling then with the appellate court?

JM: Because it took well over a year to do, another year, the final ruling was it was just for the budget year, last year, the previous year. But it was over a year and New England Aquarium stopped the project and stuff. We still have some pilots, but that was really the end of our scenario because we won the battle but lost the war basically on that. So, there are a few guys that can weigh in and they're very old dogs and there's really not a huge amount of money at it. I think Teddy Malley probably has the same issues that I had at the time where he's no longer flying in any anyway. So, where were we? So, that's how I did the fish spotting.

KP: So, your son mentioned whales spotting?

JM: Yes. I was on the whale reduction taskforce team. We were seeing a lot of whales. You do what you can. One of the things that happened, this guy named (George Piermont?) and myself and another pilot, and he was a (sailing?) pilot, we saw this mother right whale and a baby right whale in Cape Cod Bay. We're looking at them and suddenly the whaleboat saw this. About that afternoon, they started to see this right whale, so they started to congregate. I said, "George, there's something wrong here? These whale watchers are too close to the baby." You could see the baby was starting to get stressed. So, by the end of the day I'm going, "We got to do something." So, we called the coast guard. I said, "Look, I'm on the Whale Take Reduction team. You've got to do something. Because the whale watchers, they're not trying to hurt them, but the baby is very stressed by this." Then the next morning comes and here they come again. So, the coast guard said, "You got to stay fifty yards away from this mother and baby." It was literally almost seeing the baby really stressed by this. Later on, that afternoon, we didn't see the baby, but we weren't sure what's happened to it. The next day here was a mother like this, down with no baby at all. Then she'd come up to breathe and then she'd go down. Her head was down fifty feet down. I was like, "My gosh. You know damn right well the baby is in the bottom of the ocean." It was just humans in their desire to assist or whatever. So, that's the bad part of it. But since then they've gotten much more –

JW: What year was that?

JM: That was in the [19]90s, probably from the beginning of the Take Reduction Team. Stormy Mayo was in.

JW: With the PCCS.

JM: Yes, right off of Ptown. He was involved.

KP: Are they asking fish spotters to help in those conservation efforts for whales and things like that, to take pictures of them?

JM: Well, they have what I actually think as far as whales. The right whales are really pretty dumb. [laughter]

KP: [laughter]

JM: Which isn't really why they call it right whale. It's right because they had the right amount of blubber.

JW: They were the right whale. [laughter]

JM: They're easy and they are dumb to boot. Really the only real way if you want to use a fish spotter, the way to do it is to actually mandate that the boats going in have to have a fish spotter during the daylight hours for X amount of time. Yes, whether it be probably first of June to October, November before the wheels go back out to south. But I don't know, I don't think

they've done that yet.

KP: For this photography, do you always take the pictures?

JM: We took the pictures, yes. That was probably around [19]93, I think. But there would be as counted. We didn't do the counting, thank God. The poor girl did that, Molly's assistant who did that. She did a lot of counting. [laughter] There was a book called, what was it called? It was Doug Whynott, W-H-Y-N-O-T-T. But he went out fish spotting with me anyhow, one day. So, there was a chapter about that and a chapter about being down in D.C. Gosh, I can't remember the name of the damn book. But any rate, Doug Whynott's the guy.

JW: How deep in the water column are they traveling? Because we can see them on the surface here, but how far down do they go?

JM: Well, they'll go maybe fifteen. These fish are basically on the surface. They come up and they stay up for maybe fifteen, twenty minutes, half hour. Then they'll go down all the way out of sight. Probably down about thirty feet you can't see them. Depends a lot on the color of the water. And the bluer the water – there's obviously quite a blue one, so you go down maybe thirty feet. But you get the greener water, for swordfish about fifteen feet, which is about the length of the pole. If you can see, this harpooner is going up with a pole and this is the strider and here he is again. This is Wayne's photo.

JW: So, Kelly might have asked this before, but at what altitude are you flying when spotting swordfish?

JM: Yes, she did. I've been as low as 250, three hundred feet, which is really dangerous, to seven- or eight hundred on swordfish, because you're looking for just one fish. They do not like to see another fish. Sometimes you may see two fish, but they don't see each other. Swordfish are very, very skittish. If for instance, if you saw one really nice swordfish like this, and then here's another fish over here, you're going, "Oh man, I got to get this big one." Because then invariably what will happen is the big one will go down before the little one, and it's just the way it is, which is a little bit unusual. It's just my theory, but I'm not the only person who says it, is that the colder water down here down below, is where they eat. Then they come up to sun themselves in the warmer water, relatively speaking, up the eight, ten feet up from the sun. In fact, I have very rarely seen them eat. On occasion, you will. If someone would try with rod and reel, we'll get one, but not very often. For instance, in this bluer water the swordfish won't come up on the surface, because he doesn't need to. He'll only come up to where it's warm enough and to mellow and get rid of his food and digest. So, that's my theory anyhow.

JW: What language did you use to convey the position of the swordfish to the vessel, and how would the vessel approach the fish to stick it eventually?

JM: Well, so on swordfish here, we work totally on trying to get the sun behind our backs. The fish may go left, right, or center. What will happen is, so you'll say, "I got a swordfish ten-boat lengths, which is probably thirty-five feet, so it's 350 feet. It may be a quarter mile, but normally when it gets closer you do by boat lengths. 12:00 is a dead ahead. 12:15 a little bit to starboard,

12:30, 12:45, 1:00 is obviously close. So, you may keep the fish around 1:00 if you're going to go to port. Then as you go down sun, you go down and then it goes like, "It's at five-boat lengths, start to steady her up." In other words, keep her to start at around 1:00 at ten-boat lengths. As you get closer, you know what the pilot's trying to do. If you're at 3:00 over here, for instance, so this is 12:00 dead ahead, this is 9:00 there, this is 3:00. No, it's 3:00 here, 6:00 all the way behind. So, you use the clock system and the distance in boat length. So, in this boat here, the fish is about maybe, well now at that length she's not even a half-a-boat length, she's twenty feet. He obviously sees them that way. But this one for instance would be maybe three quarters of a boat. We'll get behind the sun as you could see. The wheelman is the one who does all of that once he sees them, does the final adjustment. So, very often the pilot was already pretty quiet. Because in this case, the fish is finning and the wheelman is doing it perfectly leading ahead of them a little bit. The pilot's getting ready to throw onto them. But very rarely are they up really close like this. They're more like this. This one's down a little bit, I believe. Yes, this fish is underwater that you see here. This is a very good distance. So, he's probably here. It's about maybe four hundred feet, five hundred feet. For swordfish, I'd like to be around six- to seven hundred feet and for tuna, eight hundred to a thousand feet because you're looking at a bigger mass and sometimes, they'll fly higher, twelve hundred feet. The swordfish pilots, we're very respectful. In here in the closer fisheries where you've got boats that go fast and they're very close to each other and there's no respect. [laughter] That was one of the biggest things was for me to see a school of fish a lot deeper than this one that's up here. I'd see a little shade like this. I'd see that and recognize that that was this up higher. So, I'd be trying to get the boat in the proper position, whether it be for harpoon boat or a seine boat. Seine boat I'd be over this way. So, basically what we would do is we would come behind and keep the fish – for seining, you try to, here's the fish, you'd go over and get them at your 2:00 position, it depends which boat it is. You go around and the fish would never see the same in theory. You get ahead and you actually set the net up here and you go way up here and then way back nice and slow. When you get over here, the fish continues in one direction. Then you come in behind and then you start to seine and sometimes you get them, sometimes you don't. These tuna fish are tough. Because what happens is this one here, if he sees the boat, this one over here will go away at the same time, all of them, everybody. They say it's not a symbiotic relationship, but the only thing that they can think of in human terms is ladies dancing or ballet. The whole ballet would know at the same time they get used to working together and you know and all the way across they do the same routine. But in fishing terms, you see it on with minnows to everything.

JW: Because school moves.

JM: School moves, yes.

KP: So, when you are flying that low, I guess what risks are involved? How is the weather affecting you? You said today is a good swordfish day, so is it usually nice weather?

JM: It has to be. You always want it to be. This is what we call surface day or bluebird day, blue sky, no wind. Can't be any better than this, and it's pretty rare to get that. When you're a spotter, one of the advantages to a spotter is you don't have to have the fish up on the surface like this. He can be down a little bit. Because you're a pilot looking down, you're not looking for the fins, you're looking for the actual fish. For instance, say the boat is in the location and you get to

the location and you start working in the area. So, what happens is you get out to this boat and so, the boat's not going really fast for swordfish, maybe five knots, six knots. So, you'll start working in the area. Here's the boat, say, it's going due north slowly. You want to go east and west, so you go back and forth ahead of them. So, what I will do is go maybe a mile on the port side. I go down across his bow and look across all the way to a mile on the starboard side. Then I would go quarter mile farther to the north and I'd go back. The boats moved along, so we continue to make sure that I had maybe quarter-mile swathes where I do a swathe. Then I turn and I do another swathe, and we just keep doing swathes. I may end up going maybe four miles to the north. Then he'll go to the western. So, he goes to the western. Now I make my swathe this way and I go east and west. But I'm always looking just on the down sun side. You don't look up sun at all. You're always looking down sun. Basically, the way you operate is that until you get the first fish, then you work an area. So, you go to one area and I'll go again. Maybe it's east-west this time or maybe it's north-south or just depends on where the sun is. So, I'm looking down sun all the time. Say, if I'm going east and west, I'm going down here and I'm always looking to the east in the afternoon because the sun is in the western, and I'm looking down at the sun all the time. In a real, real nice day, you can really cover a lot of area. The clouds are obviously the worst thing possible. If they're light clouds it's not too bad, you can maybe be at 550 feet. Then if the clouds get heavier, you're down to maybe four hundred feet. If the clouds are real heavy and get showers, you're 350 feet and you're not very happy and you really want to go home and that sort of thing. But that's how it works. Basically, it's the same with this. The difference here is the plane doesn't really affect a single swordfish very much, but a plane can affect all these tuna fish. If you like to fly around twelve hundred feet, once you get to a thousand feet, they hear the noise, once one of them says, "That's making me nervous," they're gone. They're totally gone. You just watch them go deep and you go outside and go, "I had a school here and I don't really want to tell you, but I screwed up and they heard me." [laughter] But I didn't say that. But that's the reality. A lot of times they'll also hear a boat and they'll do the same thing.

JW: How often would they spook like that?

JM: More often than not. Yes, especially a large school. There are a couple different terms that we use. Obviously, you get a pod or this is a gaggle of fish, there's a lot of fish there. So, it's very hard for the seiner to get on them because if one sees the seine net, they all go down, they all get out of dodge. It's also hard for harpoons just trying to get up and get one. But if he's trying to get one of the back ones, then they'll have to be deeper back here. Any one of these fish suddenly sees a plane coming or a boat coming, they'll get out of the way. That's another reason why when you're on a school of fish and another pilot sees you, you can go above me but don't go underneath me. If you go underneath me, I think that you're trying to screw my fish up, and I don't like that at all. If you go above me, I can understand that you want to see what a fish looks even though we've all seen them. But then if you want to see something else, see the fish up, you can see the fish up. But don't go underneath me thinking that you're messing me.

JW: Did those conflicts ever arise?

JM: They do on occasion, yes. But any rate, that's, yes, not very often.

JW: [laughter]

JM: Usually not twice. Usually a pilot's ready to say, "Hey, don't." Because what will happen is later that day this guy's circling the fish, "You do it, I'll do it. Go underneath me, guess what? The fish got spooked. What a surprise?" Usually, it's the young guys learning how. But Joe dogs don't like it. [laughter] But there they didn't, anyway.

KP: With the spotting techniques that you were talking about earlier, were those something that you pioneered or you learned over time? Or what techniques were new? What were old?

JM: I'd say probably I just learned them, I guess, more than anything else. The problem that you had as far as swordfishing, there was a couple guys from California. I guess I shouldn't call them, but they ended up making a movie called something like just any other – we always call them Cali-fornicators. Anyway, is what we call them. But when they came to the area from California, they thought they were top dogs and everything and they had what they thought were secret radios. [laughter] Everybody thought they had a secret radio. Yes, you be careful what you wish for. I have a funny experience because my brother Greg, he was pretty good with the radio, having second, third radios and stuff. He goes, "Well, that wasn't so good." [laughter] I said, "Well, why not Greg?" He goes, "Well, it wasn't bad for you, but it wasn't good for me." I go, "What the heck are you talking about?" I can't remember his name but, "You know the guy on one of the California boats?" I go, "Yes." He said, "The pilot's a nice guy, but the captain's an asshole." [laughter] Of course, Greg couldn't say anything because he was on the secret radio. He couldn't say anything on the radio. But it was funny that he did that.

KP: [laughter]

JM: So, these California guys came in and they didn't believe in any respect. They would go, "We're going to go down through this fleet and then maybe we'll go back down through the fleet again." All of a sudden you had another plane underneath you. You'd say, "Well, what's this guy?" Because you're looking down, you aren't looking up all the time. You're really looking down almost all the time. You get very good at telling what height you're at, very, very good. But for instance, if say, I'm at seven hundred feet, I can see a fish and hold the fish. Your peripheral vision sees the up and down very accurately once you learn for a while. I can be at seven hundred feet after fifteen, twenty minutes. I didn't think too much of it, but still there, that's my spot. I could tell that. But tuna fishing and stuff like that, it was definitely a little more worrisome. That you'd be there and you got a lot closer to the grounds. Here, you're up 150 to two hundred miles on swordfish, and tunafish are within twenty-five miles. You get somebody sometimes in a Cherokee, which is a low-wing plane, which is ridiculous. As soon as you start a Cherokee, you're like, "Oh God, watch out for this guy. I don't know who he is." I tell the other guys, "We got a yahoo out here and so, watch out for the yahoo. Right now, he's at my level scaring the daylights out of me, but he'll be at your level next." One of the things that happens is that the commercial guys, the guys who did it regularly, we would pick our altitudes and we'd stay at the altitude. I'm at 750 feet, he's at 850 feet, he's at a thousand feet, and et cetera, et cetera. You pick whatever level you wanted to be, but if you're in the area first, "I like eight hundred feet. Today is a nice day. It's going to get nicer. I like eight hundred feet." Someone else will go, "Geez, he's at eight hundred feet. I'm the same area. I either need to go lower and

stay lower or I need to be higher and stay higher." One or two guys it's not that big a deal if you're close. But if you had more than one guy at 750 feet, then you became a problem. On occasion, we'd have a mess up. Like I was on 750 feet, and guy named Dave, good friend of mine, he was in a different area and he's at 750 feet. Well, it doesn't make that much difference. So, I'm looking down, four or five hours went by, it was around noontime and I glanced and I saw this plane going nose-to-nose 750 feet. I went up and over him, and it was Dave. I said, "Oh my God." You're both doing seventy-five, eighty miles an hour and we'll both be dead. So, I said, "Well, Dave, that was fun." He goes, "What?"

JW: [laughter]

KP: [laughter]

JM: I go, "Well thank God, you didn't see me. Because if you'd seen me, we both would've gone up." Instinctively, you'd want to go up because it happens quickly. Going down it's very slow. The plane needs to go down. But going up, it wants to do this. That's what your plane is doing. But I said, "I'm glad you didn't see me, but we were just nose-to-nose." So, that has been known to happen.

KP: So, what type of aircraft were you flying generally?

JM: Well, first I had a Super Cub, which most everybody knows. Then I had a Citabria. My Super Cub decided to land on the water with me, but she didn't decide to take off again. [laughter]

KP: [laughter]

JM: No, I had a little engine trouble in 1979 on the way out. On the way out, she decided to no longer run. What it was, I believe, it was my exhaust system of the plane. So, I was having trouble with this airplane. She'd usually start out at 2,550 rpm. So, that's what she normally did. In June, I had the plane all retrofitted from the beginning of the season. It's now July, probably around July the fourteenth in 1979. You're wide open when you take off. You're full of fuel, wide open. I'm looking at, "Geez, she's only running 2,450. That's weird." So, then I went fishing, just spotting all day, and on my way in I called up the guy in New Bedford. I said, "My plane, there's something wrong with it. It's only running 2,450." Of course, when I landed, I don't go full rpm. The only time I do full rpm is when I take off. So, he said, "Well, let's check it out." So, the next day we took everything apart. We took the carburetor apart. We did all this different stuff. So, the long and the short of it is, is that he couldn't find anything. So, we had the carburetor, we did the top overall, we did everything we knew how to do. I'm just a kid at the time. So, I said, "Well, this is kind of dangerous, isn't it?" He goes, "Yes. I don't know what –" He goes, "Oh, maybe it's your exhaust system." So, I said, "Well what about my exhaust system?" "Well, you have the inner pipe. They call it a bell or something. It was bent a little bit. Well, I decided to save you money." I said, "Save me money? That thing, yes, it scared the daylights out of me. I want a new exhaust system in here. I don't want to save me money." So, I said, "Well, how dangerous is this?" He goes, "It's not dangerous at all. Just when you give her the power wide open on that beginning of the day. Other than that, you're fine the whole day."

So, I said, "Okay." So, I took off and I came back to Oak Bluffs. So, I'm at Oak Bluffs and it was foggy for three or four days in a row. It would light up around 2:00 p.m. a little bit here. But on the boats, it was all foggy probably about five days. Fifth day, my boat was out off in Millman's, probably like twenty miles, maybe twenty-five miles. A lot of the guys that had been fogged out came closer to the vineyard and closer to home. It's probably seven or eight boats out there. The pilots were all down waiting. So, one of the guys says, "Well, I touched my boat, it sounds like it might be okay if it lights up." So, I said, "If it's not okay, I'm going to go to New Bedford because it's been four or five days and I'm waiting." So, I get up and I'm going down the beach out here and she only ran – I was full of fuel, and she only ran around 2,400. I almost landed at a Farm Neck, down there, Golf Course. I really thought it might have to. But anyhow, I didn't. So, I managed to get up. It took eight hundred feet, I'm on my way, and some fog. I called my brother Greg after I got a few miles and I again, "Greg, how's this weather doing?" He goes, "It's starting to lighten up here. I think it's going to be a good day." I said, "All right." Well, I said, "If not, I was going to go to New Bedford to get the plane worked on." So, I'm on my way out and 2,200. I said, "Geez." Well normally I ran around 2,300. I said, "Man, we did something. The throttles messed up now too." So, I get her back to 2,300. Yes, I'm going along and it's 2,200 again. So, I give her some more power. 2,300. I said, "Geez, I don't like this. This is weird. This damn throttle is really –" so, then I look and she's 2,250 going to twenty-two and a quarter. She's wide open. I go, "You got to be kidding me, wide open. That's not good." At 2,200, I need at least 2,000 because I'm full of fuel to stay in the air. So, I called my brother Greg. I was about seventeen, eighteen miles out. I said, "Greg, I've got a problem and I got to go back in." I said, "Something's wrong here with that. I'm not sure what it is, but it's a problem." I saw a dragger that had gone by on the way out. So, I turned around and I looked, she's at 1,800 wide open, and then seventy. I said, "Greg, I'm going in." He goes, "Yes, you're going back in." I said, "I'm going in, in. I'm going in the water. She's wide open now. She's only running at 1,400. It's way not enough." So, I went by this dragger and I was fifty feet off the water, and the guy goes, "That plane sounds like my truck." [laughter] I went off his bow and I started to turn around and I was, "That's really close to the ground like water." [laughter] I'm three quarters away, and I straighten her out and full flaps and I put her slow in and plunked her in the water, which actually wasn't too bad. [laughter] I was, "Oh." My initial fear was I was underwater completely because the water just closed up and over in you and forty-five degree in. But then that water just subsided and I was actually above the water. So, I undid my straps and I had my survival suit in the back. I had my life raft in the back and I took my brand-new headset, put it right in the spot. [laughter] Very calmly, I said, "Okay," and then I started to get out and I realized my foot was still stuck. The only way I had to get back in and clear my foot underneath [laughter] my seats. So, I cleared my foot, I got back out. The water's now lime green from all my dye marker. I forget what it's called now. But anyhow, we had dye marker material that I used to have to spot the swordfish especially. So, I'm out of the water. I'm in the water but I haven't got my survival suit on. I just got a little raft I'm using, and I'm holding onto my life raft too. But here comes this dragger along the way, but he's dragging a net eastern rig. So, he comes up in about maybe five hundred yards, four hundred yards away and he goes, "We'll be a few minutes. We got to holler our net."

KP: [laughter]

JM: Yes, I know how long that is. It's twenty, twenty-five minutes. I'm not staying here.

[laughter] I said, "I'll be right there." [laughter] I start battling over towards him. So, I get over there and I go over and I come up, and they had these two young guys reach down. I tried to give him my life raft because it's not inflated or anything. I got my survival suit. The two guys grab my hand and zipped me on board and I'm, "Did my $250 survival suit going bye-bye." I said, "I'll be right back." Because the dragger was neutral. [laughter] So, I dove overboard and I got the survival suit back. I bring it back and the guy, the old dogs there, "You keep that kid on board. Don't you let him [laughter] near again. Then here goes a blue dog down swimming across saying, "Don't worry, I won't go anywhere this time. I just didn't want to lose my survival suit." They hauled back, but the plane sank. Then my brother came over and picked me up.

JW: Did you recover it?

JM: The plane, no, no. One of the draggers has a prop that was bent in the water, and probably it was mine. It was sailing seventeen, eighteen miles out. Well, the name was the (*Scrim Docket Rocket?)*. [laughter] That's my dog, it's just (Scrim Docket Rocket?), but it's a beach over here. But it was (eight-eleven hotel?) was the number. So, anyway. Then I had a borrowed plane for the rest of the year and that was a short-wing Citabria, which Citabria supposedly means air. What is it? Citabria, airbatic backwards or close there off. At any rate, so I had a short-wing Citabria, which was a real dog, very bad dog. It's short-wing and it didn't have any flaps. So, by dog, I mean it didn't like to fly well at all. It only hit ninety gallons on the bottom and thirty-six gallons in the wings. It was a scary plane to fly. But there was another plane which is also a Citabria, what they call a GCBC, which mine was, and which I just got rid of this winter actually. But that's what they call a long-wing Citabria and it's a much better plane for flying. That was swordfish spotting at the time. Actually, my buddy Brad, who died, he had a Super Cub, which are nice planes. For whatever reason, I guess he didn't own it. At any rate, he had a short-wing Citabria when he died fish spotting. He was a very good fish spotter, one of the best, actually. His name was Brad Donahue. I took over his gig on the seine and harpoon and that sort of thing. So, what else would you like to know?

JW: Can we pause it for a second here?

KP: Yes.

JM: Sure.

[end of transcript]