

Olivia Rugo: This is Olivia Rugo interviewing Jimmy Bramante on May 11th –

James Bramante: 10th.

OR: May 10th, 2010. So, Jimmy, do you want to tell me a little bit about your history and your background as a fisherman?

JB: Personally or back to my father and my grandfather?

OR: As far back as you want to go.

JB: Well, my grandfather migrated here from Augusta, Sicily, in 1906. He was a fisherman in Boston. Apparently, his family was a fisherman in Augusta, Sicily, before him. My father came here in 1906. My grandfather came in 1902. They were both fishermen.

OR: What kind of fishermen?

JB: Well, at that time, they weren't dragger fishermen. They would go line trawling, tub trawling. When they migrated here, they lived in sort of communities as you would see today,, like the Latinos, you know. They all lived in the west end of Boston. There was a big bunch, a lot of them, all Sicilian fishermen. They lived primarily in the north and in the west end. We came from the west end of Boston. That's where my family settled. They went fishing. In 1909, my father went back to Italy and served in the Italian Navy during the war between Italy and Turkey. He came back to this country, and he went back fishing for a while. He married. In 1925, his wife passed away. He had four little girls, my four older sisters. He was kind of upset after that happened. He took a leave from fishing on this coast. He went to San Francisco where, in San Francisco, he sailed on a four-masted schooner that was all sail, no power, to Alaska. They were working with the canneries up in Alaska. He came back and traveled back across the country by train. He came back to Boston, and he fished from then on. That's all he ever did, was fish. He bought a boat in the late [19]20s. We've always been boat owners since then, boat owners and fishermen, one generation after another.

OR: When did you start fishing?

JB: I started – well, it's an odd thing. You had to be seven years old to go make your first trip. You had to be seven. That's when I started in the summer of, I believe, it was 1952. I was seven, and that's when I – I used to go every summer. I would try to take off every time when there was – say for Thanksgiving, you had like three or four days off. Well, I would try to take that. Then we used to stretch the trip a little longer, and I'd get back to school, say, three or four days late. They would say to me, "Where have you been?" I'd say, "Fishing." Everybody would laugh because they thought I was fishing with a fishing rod hook in school to go fishing. [laughter] But the ones that were from the fishing families, they understood because I – that went on for Christmas, the same thing, the Christmas, they left after Christmas. The Christmas trip or the Easter trip, we'd do the same thing, until 1959. That's when I was 14 years old. I enjoyed math in school, but I didn't want to be in school. I was confined. My mind was on the boat all the time. Where's the boat? I managed to somehow or another, con the superintendent of the

school to get a home permitted if I was staying home, because I am from a family of thirteen brothers and sisters. I went fishing after that. Other than one shot stint when I worked in the shipyard, I fished all my life, fishing or operating boats.

OR: What ports were you fishing out of?

JB: We mainly fished out of Boston because we lived, like I said, the west end was right there, right where the Mass General Hospital was

OR: Was it mostly groundfish?

JB: I did almost exclusively ground fishing. There was a big fleet in Boston, a real big fleet. There was the dragger fleet. Then there was what we call the beam trawler fleet. There were bigger boats. There was a lot of activity down there. I mean, you could see why, if you brought a young person, a young boy down there, he would have a hard time going back to school because there was so much activity and so much life down there at 4:30 a.m. It was like daytime down there. Everyone was having lunch at 6:00, 7:00. The next dock over where the World Trade Center is now, that was Commonwealth Pier. There were ships there unloading cargo ships. There were longshoremen. It was like living in a wonderland.

OR: How does it compare to today?

JB: Today is different down at the dockside. It's just completely different. Now there's all hotels and high rises down there and everything.

OR: So, the life that you knew is gone.

JB: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

OR: How many boats fish out of there now?

JB: I believe, with thirteen boats actually ported in Boston, but quite a few come here to offload. They unload to my nephew at Atlantic Coast Seafood.

OR: So, your family is still very involved.

JB: Oh, yes. We still have, in the family, we have one, two, three, four, five boats still in the family. I have one nephew that fishes, and the rest own – they own two seafood processing plants, Atlantic Coast Seafood, and my other nephews own Bramante Seafood. I'm sort of the unfortunate one. I only have one child, a girl, and she's becoming a doctor.

OR: That is unfortunate.

JB: But the rest grew up like my own kids because I was the last one to get married out of the house. In the old Sicilian families, you always stayed with the family. So, all the other kids grew up around me. I was 35 when I married. They were all like my kids.

OR: That is great. Do all your family members still work out of Boston?

JB: Yes. They have two places down at the Boston fish pier, two processing plants, and the boats are docked in Boston.

OR: Why did you want to tell your story today?

JB: Well, because when they first set up the fishing council, fisheries management council, I was a council member the first year. As I went there, a few of the meetings, I could see that – we learned the industry and what happened in the past through word of mouth. It was handed down to us. A lot of the old timers were telling us, "When I was a kid," or they were telling us, "This is what happened in the Mediterranean. We'd get fish, small-sized fish, and would keep fishing on them." They wouldn't raise the mesh size or anything. I wrote a lot of letters at the time to the National Marine Fisheries. This was before the council was even set up, before we got in trouble, before the (Magnuson?). I used to say to them, "Why don't you raise the mesh size?" Never hear anything from them. Nobody believed what would happen. The foreign fleets came here and everything, at the time. Back in, I would say, in the [19]60s – I remember in the late [19]50s, we had a low spell where fish was scarce. Then in the [19]60s, the stocks came up again. At that time, there were no foreign fleets here. We started seeing the foreign fleets in about 1962, down on Georges Bank, [19]62 or [19]63 like that. They came here in massive fleets. They were surface fishing and bottom fishing. We used to say to the person that came down to the dock from the Fish and Wildlife at the time, we said, "Why don't you get them both sides?" They used to say to us, "Well, they're not catching groundfish." We'd say, "You don't know what you're talking about. They're right next to us. We see what they're doing." This went on for a while. Then after a while, they came along, and they passed the 200-mile limit. They pushed the foreign fleets out. When they did that, the government came along and started mortgage guaranteeing boats. So, another big fleet was built. People never saw a boat, never saw the ocean in their life, they could get mortgage guaranteed, which I never took on any of my boats because I felt I'm good enough to pay my boat. I don't need a guarantee. A big fleet started building up here in New Bedford-Gloucester, everywhere. Well, as time went by, now you had the problem with the Canadians, with the Hauge line. We could see there what was going to happen, that if this Hague line thing went through, it would compress a bigger fleet into a smaller area. You weren't only dealing with a bigger fleet, you were dealing with a bigger, more efficient fleet, higher horsepower. When it went through, that's exactly what happened. We started compressing a smaller area. We started catching more fish out of that area. You can only take so much out of it. It used to bother me. I used to say, "We need some kind of restrictions here." I never really cared for the Hague Agreement because I knew in the past that, as we were kids, we did a lot of fishing on Georges, from Northeast Peak to Georges. We did most of the fishing there. It was mostly done by the American boats. When you went further to the east on Browns Bank, Emerald Bank, La Have Bank, places like that, Roseway Bank, it was done by the Canadians, except for a little part of the winter, which was probably three months in the winter. I keep trying to explain this. If you enter this into your formula and say this much fish, eight years ago, you're 100 percent wrong because years ago, your fish was sold by the area where you caught them. The highest priced fish, which by highest price, I mean like a penny a pound more, were caught off of the Cape or in the Gulf of Maine, the southern Gulf of Maine.

You got a penny a pound more, but you were selling the haddock for 4 to 5 cents a pound. So, a penny was like 20 to 25 percent more. There was no way of tracking us. As a fisherman, you know fishermen always tell tales. You have friends, other skippers, other boats you work with. But we only had an open-air system on the telephones. So, even if the guy was your best friend, you couldn't say, "Come here, I'm catching fish," because everybody would be there. So, you lied, or you had codes. Now the guy would come down, the man would come down, the statistic man from, at that time, I believe, was Fish and Wildlife. He'd say, "Where did you catch your fish?" You'd say, "Eastern Mass." That's what it was called. He'd put in the thing that you caught at Eastern Mass or down the channel. That was the next highest priced fish. Then it was Georges Bank was a little less. Then you got western Nova Scotia, which was Browns, and eastern Nova Scotia, which was western bank fish. They all went down in the order. So, we always said we caught the fish here. Like I said, it was 6 cents or 5 cents. It was 25 percent more than 4 cents. Of course, that was entered into their record. But we really didn't fish here for haddock in, say, from mid-January till probably the end of March. Most of haddock landed in Boston back in the – up till the, say, the 1970, came from Browns Bank or Western Bank. So, if you're entering into your statistical bank that all these haddock were caught here in the channel or that, you're wrong. So, now you've got a bad basis for your whole formula. Another thing I look at now is now they're saying I could see that scrod haddock are coming back, but there's no haddock. There's only scrod haddock. When I talk haddock, I'm talking about an average of 7- to 8-pound fish. So, there's a lot of scrod haddock around now on Georges Bank, most of them. They are starting to come in – we're starting to see some in the channel, which is a good sign, but they're small. I really think that now, they're talking about – well, they are going back to a 6-inch mesh. I think that's completely wrong to do because I could see both sides of the story now. My nephews are in processing. So, I see the process inside. I think that the government has a duty to get maximum money for their catch, because the catch is a natural resource. It's not only sustainable fisheries, it's maximum value for the fishery. I really believe that we should not go down to a 6-inch now but go up to a 7-inch cotton. Because as I see the processor's side, I could see that labor is a big factor. Also customers who call in and stuff, they all seem to want a fillet that is around 8 ounces, say 6 to 10 ounces. You can't get that out of a 17- or 18-inch fish. Basically, when you got a 19-inch fish, that is the one that produces the best fill. You're getting the maximum for your fish, it gets another spawning year, and for the value of the fish. Because like I say, the fish are really a natural resource. The government gets tax money off of fishermen. So, they're bound to get it both ways. They really should think of that as a business because I look at the fishing industry this way. We have something in New England that's unique, not only in New England, along all our coasts. In the Middle East, the people have oil. For instance, Dubai has no oil, so they're worried. They have oil. They drill them wells out, they're gone. Their industry is gone. We have an industry that if we manage it right, will keep going on forever, replenishing itself forever. I'm willing to bet you that if you drilled on Georges Bank today, all the gas you get out of Georges Bank all along this coast will not equal the value of the seafood we've taken out. It's a matter of management. It's the management and rotation. If you have a smaller area now and your fleet is too big, figure a way to cut the fleet back. Say you manage that and keep rotating, you'll have a never-ending industry. It'll just keep going on and on and on. There'll be something for the young people. Because I'm older now and I don't go fishing anymore, but I see a lot of young people that are like – let alone another generation coming into it, but say a person that's halfway in his forties. Where is he supposed to go? You think, well, it affects his pay. It doesn't only affect his pay, it affects his children. They have to

go to school. It affects his retirement. It affects everything on him. He's sort of stuck. He has no place else to go. He has to make this industry work. I think that the government really owes it to these people to say, "We're going to try to help you have an industry that you can pass down," not. "We're going to pull the rug out from underneath you and leave you high and dry." I think that's wrong. That's 100 percent wrong.

OR: Do you have any ideas on how to make that happen?

JB: Well, I had once said to – I think I might have even told Pat Kirkel one time. Sometimes we go to these riots, like up in Gloucester last time. She did invite us in. We talked to her. I always felt that in the buyout, they shouldn't do away with the permit. If you bought up the boats, even in the past buyouts, instead of taking the permit away completely, you should have taken 75 percent of the days, 25 stays on the shelf, for when the industry builds up again. You can lease them out. But there were other things about buyouts that bothered me. Really, on a buyout, we need a smaller fleet. That's what we need. We definitely need a smaller fleet, a smaller, more efficient fleet. Because right now, you have boats that are going out there in bad shape, really bad shape. In the last buyout, if a guy was going to turn in his boat and destroy it, and it was a better boat than somebody else's boat, they wouldn't let him transfer it over. It was the same horsepower, the same everything. Why don't you let the guy take the good boat and do away with the junk boat? Now we come into today, what are we going to do forward from here? I think that somehow or another, we have to get, like I said, a smaller fleet that's efficient. It's going to run nice. We need some advertising too, because I don't like seeing trucks come by me with the sign saying, "Eat tilapia." You're in New England. Why would they – even in the flyers, tilapia fillets, tilapia, tilapia. Why would anybody want to eat tilapia? When you're in New England you have the best fish in the world, but the industry doesn't have money for funding to fund the advertisement and stuff. I think that we're missing a really good opportunity here, to build this industry into a really, really good industry, a long-term industry with a lot of jobs, long-term. I'm willing to bet you that there's no statistics on how many people are directly involved in the fishing industry, and indirectly, fish cutters, processors, box makers, all kinds of things. It's not a small industry. I'm willing to say that we're as big as the Red Sox or the Patriots, and if they went out of Massachusetts, they'd be screaming. The fishing industry's tied up. Nobody says a word. [laughter]. We don't realize it. It's been, over years and years and centuries, it's been an industry that didn't ask for anything. You didn't need any infrastructure for the fishing industry. You didn't need a stadium in the middle of Boston. You didn't need anything for it. They just went to work. The men didn't know any better. That's all we ever did was go to work and cut fish. That's it. You hold back your net. You get a lot of fish. You cut them. Came in. If you made money, all right. If you didn't make money, you went out again anyway. You had to, to support your family. So, I don't know. On a buyout, I explained this to Pat Kirkel one time we had a meeting. I said, "Really? The government comes along and says, 'Buyout.' We're putting up so much money for a buyout." I say, "Well, yes, let's be real now." Say I was to put my boat in a buyout. Now my boat's paid because, like I said, we were good fishermen. We were good operators all the time. I would automatically, if I sold the boat, I would have to pay probably around 30 percent tax on the boat. So, the government gets that money back. On the permit, I'd have to pay capital gain, which is going to be somewhere around 18 percent, somewhere around there. So, look, that's 50 percent of the money the government got back in taxes right off the bat on the buyout. Now, what I suggested was instead of doing

that way if they had a buyout, was buyout the boat, whichever ones want to leave. Don't destroy the permit. Put the permit on the shelf. As the fish comes back, lease it out. I feel that within ten years, the taxpayers are going to make a profit on this. They're not going to go behind because the stocks will build up again. You'll have an efficient industry, steady supply coming in, because the processors cannot do like they're doing, set up a whole line of process in these fish, cut them and everything. The next day, oh, we're stopping that type fish and claw. What do you do with all these people that are there? You can't just tell them, come in to work two weeks. Now, stop. Now, go. No, you can't do that. You have to have a steady thing in the market. It's really something that they have to sit down and look at the whole overall picture. The environmentalists could join into it. I've worked with Peter Shelley and everything. The environmentalists could do a lot. They could buy up some of the permits themselves and put them out. Later on, they could lease them out. It won't cost them anything. Because I really believe that we have something here really, really good. The fish replenish themselves. It's like a never-ending circle. Instead, an oil well or something, like I say, when it's empty, it's gone. It has to be managed right. The whole thing has to be thought out and managed right. You have to have the history in order to know – to try to predict some of the future. That's what I feel about this.

OR: What do you think about the new sector management approach?

JB: I don't like the idea of the sectors because a sector is like saying, "You as a group, we'll recognize your catch, for instance, your quota, but you as an individual, we won't recognize your quota." Well, did the individual do something wrong? He wasn't a criminal. He didn't do anything wrong. It just seems to me like if I make – my quota on my two boats comes up to around a million and something pounds of all the species right now without the monkfish, and now that poundage went into the sector because I'm with the sustainable harvest sector, all my permits are anyways. Now, why should they have any more benefit, they don't have any two-for-one days or anything, than the person who says, "I don't want a fish in the sector"? It just seems wrong. I really feel that if there was a legal challenge to it, if there was money in the industry, that some groups would get together and challenge it legally. Because that's automatically like saying that the individual is going to be a cheater, and the sector is going to do everything right. He has the right to go there and fish one day for one day. You can't go in the same area. You're going to have to pay two-for-one in certain areas. That is not right. It's not right.

OR: Why did you sign up with the sustainable harvest sector?

JB: Well, what it was, was when I didn't go fishing anymore, I leased my permit out. This is what happened with all the regulations. I leased my permit out two years ago, I believe it was. When it came to last June or May, last May of 2009, this letter came out that you had to be in a sector by August. August 1st of 2009, you had to be in a sector. You had to be already signed into sector. I didn't want to lease it out into the sector. But I did anyway because if you weren't in by then, you couldn't get into a sector. So, I didn't know if I could lease the permit out this year again. So, I signed in with them. I let Jimmy Odland take care of it. He says, "I'll lease your permits." He said, "But you have to do it by August 1st." Well, after I did it, then they came out with another thing saying by May of this year. I said, "Jeez, you can't have these

changes in the middle of the year." Whatever is done in May, that should have to stay on all year long till the next fishing. If you've got to correct it the next fishing year, that's something different. But the changes, you can't imagine the amount of gear that's wasted and the financial thing on the boat owners and stuff and on the men, the crew too, rigging these nets, with all these changes, changes, sudden changes this way and change in the middle of the season, change that way. The end of the dock is loaded with gear that's just thrown away, that you know how much that stuff costs and the work involved in it. Throw this away. We can't use this anymore. We can't use that over here. We can't use this. It's wrong. You can't just do that. I remember one time, when you couldn't find six-and-a-half-inch codend around, they asked for an extension on it, the time. You just couldn't find it. It isn't that you can just say, "Well, I want six-and-a-half-inch codend," and it's here the next day. That comes from Portugal or wherever it comes from. Not much netting is made in this country anymore. We have to wait for them to bring it in. As far as gear goes, I can see now – I talked to Jim a couple weeks ago, and he was telling me that their rural trawl is working good, but there's other factors too, for instance habitat. I didn't care for when they had what we call the cookie dusters, those broom sweepers. We call those cookie dusters. I didn't care for that at all. That's something I really think – I really believe that one of the real contributing factors to the demise of the fish is the rubber ground cable, the cookie ground cable. I don't think that should be allowed anywhere. I mean, I used them. We didn't use those around here in Boston until about 1983. We started seeing, I guess, the foreign boats were using them and then we started using them. The main boats came in, and they had them. The boats from Rhode Island had them. Then we had to compete. We had to do it. But I think that should be stopped altogether in the groundfish industry and the whole, in this northeast region here, from Georges Bank and stuff like that. People say to me, "Why do you say that?" I say, "Well, listen, we originally started off using ten fathom of wire ground cable. That's all we had. We made trips in those days. Then we saw these ground cables coming along, and we went longer and longer with the rubber-covered ground cable. I use 150 fathom like everybody else now. But what does the bottom of the ocean look like with those things? Even if you don't catch the fish, you beat them to death with the cable. You know what I mean? I think it should be stopped." They said, "Well, people will just go over and use straight wires." I said, "Oh, no, they won't, because it costs them too much for the wire." There should be no rubber-covered ground cable or bottom legs used. I don't think any research has ever been done on that to see what the effect is of that one, let alone on the habitat of the fish that are down there. Small fish, you beat them with something like that, there isn't going to be much of a fish left to grow.

OR: So, back to how did we get to where we are today, you kind of left off in the [19]50s and [19]60s. You mentioned that there was a scarcity in the [19]50s?

JB: In the late [19]50s, there was a scarcity.

OR: What would you attribute that to?

JB: We didn't know at the time. There wasn't much research being done, but there was a scarcity of fish there in the late [19]50s. Then in the [19]60s, they started coming back again. We don't know what that was. I remember one time I made a trip with my father in the wintertime. At that time, there were a lot of good boats around. My father was older because my father fished. My father went fishing, actually went fishing every single trip, like a regular

fisherman, till he was 72 years old. We headed out of Boston. We were probably about ten hours out, and he had heart trouble. He had taken a heart attack in 1950, out at sea. At that time, they couldn't get him off the boat. There were no helicopters to get him off at the time. They brought him in. It took them 14 hours to bring him in. They took him to the Brighton Marine Hospital, and they didn't know for two days that he had a heart attack. In those days, you had to recuperate for like six months. I remember as a little kid, my brother-in-law used to come down and carry him down the stairs and up the stairs a little at a time. We had tried a few stairs at a time, and I used to hold his hand with him. Not that I was going to hold him up. I was only a little kid. That was in 1949. He stayed the six months home. Then he went back fishing. He was older than most of the other fellows that were fishing because most people in Gloucester, their sons took over the boats faster. But we had such an age gap in the family, my brother Danny wasn't old enough to take over. So, he fished till he was 72. Like I say, we were headed out, and he just said, "Something's wrong with my leg." We turned around. He had a lot of pain in his knee. We turned around. We brought him in, and we dropped him off. My mother and them took him to the hospital, and we just left the dock. Just, we dropped him off, and we got called three or four days later. They said they have to amputate his leg. He had a blood clot in the knee. That stopped him from fishing, but he was always there. Even when they had to cut his leg and they put the wooden leg on him, he would come down the pier and sit there. Boy, I'll tell you, I remember one time we were sitting there. We were getting ready to leave. It was in April. It was windy out and everything. He's sitting on the dock, and he had glasses, real thick glasses, because everybody had thick glasses in those days. You had cataracts and stuff, and they removed them. But he had heavy glasses. It's kind of cold out and windy, like I said. We're getting ready to leave. He looks down on the boat, and he goes to me, "I see a hole in the net there. You didn't mend it." Oh, jeez, I've got to go down there now. [laughter] He was very active. He was a regular mariner. He knew how to sail and everything. But one of the last trips he made, like I said, fish was scarce. We were fishing. It was really bad weather. There was a whole fleet, the whole Gloucester fleet. We pulled a big trip out of it. Well, geez, all the guys that were young are up in Gloucester. They were older than me, but they were younger compared to him. They all used to call him uncle, everyone. Everybody up in Gloucester used to call him that. They all come up to him and shook hands because we had 75,000, that trip, and there was no fish around. I mean, the best boats, the (Joseph illusion?), those boats, they weren't even making trips. We made that trip, and the weather was bad too. Some of the boats stopped. They started laying there because the weather was real bad. But he kept fishing because we were getting fish, and they weren't. I don't know what it was at that time. We went through about probably a year of low catches.

OR: For all fish?

JB: Yes, for all fish, but you have to remember, we mainly try for haddock because, like I said, the price difference. We never really went a lot for cod fish. No one really did. Because cod fish, number one, if they were eating sand, they'd burn out quick. They wouldn't hold. If they were eating the scallop rings, if we went to find the scallop, as you know, and what they were throwing away, what we call the ring, that would burn them out too. You'd have to carry so much ice that you had to bring like a hundred thousand of fish to make any kind of money. The fish were warm. You'd have to shovel so much ice on them. You couldn't carry enough ice to bring, say, 100,000, 125,000 of them, because the ice would just melt away as you threw it on

them. So, we mainly looked for haddock. That's what it was.

OR: When did they start picking up again?

JB: I would say in within the [19]60s when they started picking up again. In the latter part of the [19]60s, we started getting better catches again. But if I remember correctly, that's when they started closing Northeast Peak for three months a year. Because at first, we fished on the ICNAF, which was the International North Atlantic Fishing Commission, and they decided, well, we're going to close Northeast Peak at Georges for, I believe it was three months. That's what we used to do. We couldn't go there. After that they started picking up good, the fish.

OR: So, was that their spawning grounds they closed?

JB: Yes. The spawning ground and all these – that was another thing that kind of got me mad. I felt, well, we did the conservation on Georges, on the ICNAF. We did the conservation because the Canadian boats, like I said, didn't fish there. They also had a place on Browns that they used to close to. Then, all of a sudden, it's not ours anymore. After we built the stock up, it's gone. We were like the scapegoat in the middle of everything, the fishing industry and all. It's easy to give something away if it belongs to somebody else. We felt we did all this conservation. Now it's gone away. You say, well, that's the way it came down to the Hague and all that. That was their side. This was our side. But for a while, we both jointly fished there, the Canadians and the United States. We didn't have – I remember in the [19]50s, I believe it was. Yes, it was in the [19]50s. We used to take people off from the Fish and Wildlife. We had a fellow, I believe he's a doctor now with – he has a doctorate with the National Marine Fishery, Kenny Sherman. I remember as a little kid, he used to have the thing, board with the tin on it, and he used to have the like the point. He used to mark the tail – the length of every fish. He used to say to me, "In so many years, you're going to get it good." We did. We used to. I understand he might still be with the oceanographic or Woods Hole or National Marine Fishing somewhere. He has a doctorate though. He came up with it. But after that, we didn't see too many samplers.

OR: Then the [19]70s and [19]80s picked up. Why?

JB: The [19]70s were good. We had a big turnaround at the end of the [19]70s on the codfish fisheries down off of Chatham, because the sand eels reappeared again. I don't know if they go in cycles or what, the sand eels. But when the sand eels reappeared, it was a massive amount of cod fish off of Chatham and Middle Bank and everywhere, Stellwagen Bank, massive amount. At the time, there was a lot of cod scrod. I remember writing a letter up to the National Marine Fisheries saying, "Why don't you close that area?" It was just there was too many cod scrod. All cod scrod it was. Because when you look at it, you say, well, the landing, you can't measure landings in pound because if you're measuring landings in pound – let's talk about individual fish. If a guy comes in with 100,000, which is happening now, if you come in with 100,000 pounds of cod scrod, let's say, well, to my mind, I think a cod fish – I don't know what the scientists say, but to my mind I believe a cod fish is sort of like a dog. I remember seeing the dog one time down the pier. He was little. Probably about maybe eight months later, he was a full-grown dog. I thought it was a different dog. I said to the guy said, "That dog" I said, "What happened to the little ones?" He said, "That's him." I think a codfish grows according to how

much food is around. He may not be mature, but it grows according to how much food is around. So, I feel that if you take in 100,000 pounds of cod scrod, you're killing more individuals than if you did 100,000 pounds of market cod or large cod. So, that's why I say the same thing with the scrod haddock. Now you should raise the size up a little at a time. But one thing, whatever size we have should be the size that could come in the country. That should be the only size that could come in the country. Whatever the restrictions are on us, somebody else shouldn't be able to ship fish in that's smaller than us or any other product. That's why I say I would rather see a seven-inch cod right now, instead of going the opposite way and going down. We seem to think that we're out of the – we're not. I tell some of the younger skippers down there, "Listen, you don't understand." Now, they were griping about pollock just recently. I said, "No, you don't understand. You don't understand. When I was a kid, like I said, I used to skip during Thanksgiving and everything. From Thanksgiving until the end of January, we used to fish right off of Provincetown, and there was all the pollock you could ever possibly want to get. I mean, big ones, and massive fleets of boats would fish there. Catch all the pollock. You wouldn't pick up 100,000 pounds in one day. I remember one time as a kid when I took the trip off, because I was only like 110 pounds, and it was cold out. We'd catch the pollock. It was so big. They come up there live because it's cold out. They're really live. You have to bring them up from deep water. They'd twist all around. As soon as you cut the neck, they'd shoot blood in your face. My glass would be all full of blood and everything. I used to go up and say, "Dad, why don't we go look for some haddock?" Well, one time he went away and looked for haddock, and we didn't find any. He says to me, "You see? You made me go away from the pollock, and [inaudible]. We had to go back again. I mean, [inaudible] and everything." I said, "When I see those pollock back there again, then I'll say, 'Yeah, the stocks are up again.'" You know what I mean? I don't know if they – I don't see any coming in from that area, but we fished right off of Race Point. I mean, even off of Thatcher's Island, there was pollock. There was pollock everywhere. So, the stocks are not up to where they should be. They are coming. Don't think that we're there, so you can start lowering mesh sizes or anything. We're not there. Also the herring boats, they did – when they set that herring trawler, we didn't have those here before. When they came, all of a sudden, they changed. I don't care too much for gillnetting because I figured that they have a right to make a living too. But to me, I think, in Alaska, we spent all kinds of money – the oil company spent all kinds of money to raise the pipeline up. Well, to me, I think that that's like fencing off the ocean. That's a barrier. You know what I mean? I just don't think that that's the right way to go, because we started seeing – we kind of thought that down off of Chatham, that it was a decline in the stock after we started seeing gillnets there. We felt that that ruins the migratory pattern of the fish. Hook line doesn't hurt anything. It seems to be pretty good. I know when I was a kid, I know a lot of guys that did that. They had the little line trawlers that went out of Packet Pier in Boston. That was a clean fishery. Dragging was pretty clean up until the last few years with these ground cables. I mean, I know it's probably take it on the chin for maybe two years or three years without them, but I think that's something we could overcome. The bottom would be so much healthier. The smaller flounders, the grey sole and stuff. they will come up in stock.

OR: Then you guys had a heyday in the [19]80s, right?

JB: Yeah. In the [19]80s, I want to say we built, let me see, one, two, three, four, we built four or five boats. The family had built in the [19]80s. It was coming up. Some of my men would

say to me, "Aren't you worried about the Hague line?" There's no agreement they're going to throw us off of Georges for good, because we were still fishing there jointly with the Canadians. We had joint agreements there. But then I believe it was in [19]84 or [19]85 when they finally closed us off at Georges. But in the [19]80s, there was still good fish around. In the early [19]90s there was still cod fish around, down off of Chatham, down there. Then what happened there was the gear. People started getting more efficient, and they started coming up with bigger and bigger rockhopper gear and 30-inch, 36-inch. Then they come up with what they call the (cookie?) dust. I said, "Oh no, that that is the end of that thing. I mean, that's ridiculous." I remember one time I spoke to Ellie Dorsey about it. After that, they banned those things. That was the best thing they could do. Because I saw a lot of gear, different type gear, but I remember seeing them lift them off one of the boats with a crane. When they had it up in the air, that's all it was coming out of, was little, tiny yellowtails and little, tiny shrimp and everything. Small black bags were stuck in between the bristles on the – I said, "Those things will wipe out the whole ocean." You got to have some kind of gear restrictions because, like I say, you could destroy all the habitat and everything. There's no use in us banging heads against each other. There's room for an industry out there, and there's room for conservationists out there. We should be sitting down talking to each other. It's a shame. You're taking something good. A lot of jobs at stake here and everything. It's just completely wrong. You need some calmer heads to prevail.

OR: How long were you on the council?

JB: Pardon me?

OR: How long were you on the council?

JB: I only stayed on one year because I don't fly. I had to go to a meeting down in Hampton, Virginia. I drove all the way down there. I said, "I can't do this." Because some of the things – I can't see why I was spending all this money having these meetings here, there, and everywhere. I say, "This money could go better into more directed things. If we're in New England, let's try to do New England Fisheries Management Council, other than the joint meetings with the Mid-Atlantic Council over monkfish and stuff." They should try to keep them basically – I mean, some people are going to say, "Well, yeah, that's because you come from Boston." They should try to keep them somewhere around Boston or like that Gloucester because you're kind of in the middle. Let's take a guy from Port Clyde, Maine. He don't want to drive all the way down to Connecticut for a groundfish meeting. Let's try to keep him in the middle where it makes more convenient. Another thing I say, "Well, why do they got to have so many meetings and so many letters coming out every day?" Every day, you get two or three pieces of mail from them, from the council or from National Marine Fishery. It's too complicated. Too complicated. You got to remember, we're fishermen. We're not office workers. We don't understand a lot of this stuff. We do have to get back to the boat and maintain the boat. It's a unique person, the fisherman. When you lose that, it's gone. It's like the wooden boat-building industry. It's gone. If you're a real good fisherman, he's got to know how to weld, burn, pull his tow and watch his – cut fish, dredge fish, pack them away. You got to learn a lot of things. If you're really going to do the job right, you got to be really skilled good if you're going to do the job right.

OR: Then in the [19]90s.

JB: In the [19]90s, well, some of the fisheries changed. Now we started leaning over more towards monkfish and stuff because of the price. The [19]90s were pretty good because the price was in there. We had a monkfish. There wasn't much interference with tilapia and stuff like that. That's one thing that caught me right away. I used to tell my brothers, "There's nothing bothers me in this industry other than seeing farm-raised fish." I says, "That's the only thing I think we're going to have trouble – going to interfere with us." They say, "Oh, they ain't going to bother." "Oh, yes, it is. It's going to bother us someday. They're going to come back and bother us someday," I say. Because you tell people fish, a lot of people don't know the difference. We don't have much of an educated consumer as far as fishing goes. We never put anything into educating them to say, "Well, this is caught in New England. It isn't frozen. It isn't farm-raised. We don't feed them antibiotics. We don't do this. We don't do that. You are in New England." So, that's what happened. As you know, like I said, we went through the [19]90s pretty good. The prices were good and stuff. My boats, we leaned over towards monkfish and gray swordfish and stuff like that, what we call clean fishing because you don't use much heavy gear for that. When you go fishing for grays or monkfish, you don't want to dig the bottom up. You want to just tickle the bottom so that you just herd the fish along. If you kick up a big mud club, they're going to spook and go all different way. We did very well on that. Then we started getting to cutback in days and stuff. Well, then our days would disappear because I, myself, on one of my permits with one of the higher ones, I went from – I started off with 320 days at sea the boat sailed. Every time it came in, it sailed on the third day, what I call the third day. If you came in on a Monday, you went out on a Wednesday. Every single trip, no matter what the weather was, that boat left. So, we got 320 days. Then that was cut back and cut back and cut back. As we were getting cut back, the frozen Norwegian haddock is coming in from supposed to be Norwegian. We didn't know if it was from the old Soviet fleet that was offloading in Norway. They're coming in with no heads. I'm saying to myself, "Well, the law specifically says you got to have heads on the fish, on the haddock. The haddock, no heads. They've got a different law?" They said, "Well, what difference does it make there?" I said, "Because if they had to ship the head, it cost more money." So, that brought our prices down. Then tilapia started coming up here and stuff like that, frozen tilapia. People put it in the paper. But nobody says, "This tilapia was farm-raised. We have to feed them antibiotics, this, that or the other thing." You're in New England, fresh fish. It seemed like that as we were cutting back, well, now you couldn't have a steady supply in the market because you can't say, "Well, we have haddock filets today and not tomorrow. We're closed for a month and this and that." So, you have to have this steady supply, even if it's not a big supply, but a steady supply, and maybe some kind of a system like we had at one time when there was gas-rationing. See, because you have a total allowable catch. Now if the catch gets caught up, you start getting the attack up front. The boats that fish the backend, they're going to get shut out. So, maybe they should have some kind of a system, maybe, say, the last digit of your registration number. If it's an even number, you fish on even months. An odd number, you fish on odd months. Because it does no good to have a massive amount come in. Once we saw this, probably, what, four or five years ago when they opened the yellowtail up for – they opened it up, and they told us how many yellowtails we could catch. I figured out it was 9 million pounds. They opened closed area too, and they said, "Well, we're going to allow two trips a month of 30,000 a trip." So, myself, Pat Cavanaugh, Bobby Lane, quite a few others, some of the fish dealers says, "No, why don't you do 15,000 a trip, two trips a month, or even

10,000 a trip, two trips a month. Let it last through the whole season." They said, "No, this is what we're going to do." Well, we started figuring. We say, "Well, if we catch up all the yellowtails, we figured out \$1.50 price. We said we should be talking around \$14 million worth of catch." We caught up all the yellowtails within – I believe it opened in July. By September, it was closed, caught up all the yellowtail. We sold that catch for \$2 million. Because we flooded the market and then they were gone. We got 17, 18, 20 cents a pound for fish that were worth \$1 for. I mean, they were beautiful yellowtail, really beautiful yellowtail. The funny part about it, when it came to the winter that year, Christmastime, they had no fish. Then yellow tails went 3 and \$4 a pound. Now the consumer can't get them fresh. You need a little thought. You got to think of marketing too. I think that National Marine Fisheries should be involved in that because, like I said, these fish are a natural resource. Take the whole thing into consideration. You have an industry that will last forever.

OR: So, then into 2000.

JB: In 2000, I was still doing the same type of fisheries when the century changed. My boat was still doing the same type of fishing, monkfish, grey sole, lobsters, try to get 100 a day, lobsters. Then we started noticing a decline in the fish and more regulations started coming in. You had less days. Everything was getting mixed up. If you went to this place, you had to use that type of gear. If you went to that place, this is closed. This is open. This is open a week. That's closed. It was just working on gear and working on gear. Then we had lost the market. The prices went down and everything. Men started leaving. No new men were coming into it. Because I always felt, when I retire someday, I want to teach the young people and tell them what I went through and everything. Now I go down the pier, and it looks like a ghost town almost. I said, look at this. This was a whole industry completely destroyed, poor planning, just lack of thought, looking at only one aspect and not an overall. It is an industry. I told my nephews that. You can't just say – for instance, a few years ago, two or three years back, the pollock were 28 cents a pound off the boat. At this day and age now, certain times of the year, they're \$3 a pound. What's going to happen? You can't just say, "Well, grab every fish I can off the boat for no money. Who's going to man the boats to bring you the next fish?" You know what I mean? You can't expect the guy to – first place, like I said, it's a unique industry. Who's going to train these guys? If the old timers are gone and no younger guys, who's going to train the next generation? It is a good industry. If it's managed right, it'll just keep going on and on and on.

OR: So, what happened in 2000 or thereabouts?

JB: Well, the restrictions, more restrictions came in and the changes and restrictions and this and that. You couldn't fish in this area. You can't fish in that area. I even look at today. May 1st, you can't bring in any catfish, wolf fish which is a catfish. Well, how did they arrive at the conclusion that there's no more catfish? I can't figure that one out because catfish are hard bottom fish. You find them in the hard bottom. There is no more man to man the boats to go fishing the hard bottom. If they knew anything about statistics, they'd say, "Whoa, we closed all this down to the south. You can't catch any winter flounder and no yellowtails down – no one goes there. That's where the catfish live." So, they say, "Well, no catfish are coming in. They must be disappearing." No, there's no more men to mend – if those areas are closed and that's

hard bottom, you're going to tear the net up more often. There's no more men to mend the net. So, of course, there's going to be less catfish coming in. Right away, you say, "Well, there's no catfish around." No, there's no men to catch the catfish. That's the problem.

OR: Did you see any decline in the fisheries and the stocks during that time?

JB: I can't say if it was a decline or if it was because of the regulations. I can't really say. Like we had the problem with the albatross, like I tell you, back when the Delaware was around. It was the same thing. They'd come up next to us. We'd be fishing the same area. They'd call us, because a lot of the skippers on the beam trawlers knew the fellows that were on the dock. They would say, "What'd you catch?" We'd say, 2000 or 1500. I'm talking a little smaller nets and stuff. They'd say, "Well, we had 500 pounds." Of course, in those days, we were saying we had like 1500. We didn't count the grey sole. That was like a side catch. Monkfish, we were throwing over the side. We didn't even bother. We never decided to bring them in. Mostly the Portuguese and the Italians were bringing in monk because Mediterranean people ate them. They knew what they were. But the market over here, they didn't use very much of them. So, we would just throw them over. We'd throw skates over. We just throw them back over again. We were really catching a lot more fish than what we were in those days, because of what you call discards, the really marketable fish. We're just throwing over the side.

OR: Well, where do we go from here?

JB: Well, some kind of planning has to be done from here, some kind of real planning. You probably need people who – right now we're stuck with the sectors, which everybody hates them. Nobody wants sectors. Everybody wants individual fishery quoted. I really think, like I said, we need a buyout. I don't know how they're going to fund it or how anybody would fund it. Maybe even some of the environmental groups could join in or maybe put a tax on the sport fishing boats. When people go on a boat fish with those charter party boat, put a 50 cent a person tax on it. If they're willing to buy a beer for \$3, they can – come on, let's be real now. But don't throw the permit away. You have to give them something for their money. So, if an environmental group bought a permit, bought a boat, bought a permit, like I say, and put it there. Lease it out later on. You're going to get your money back. Also, I mentioned to Pat Kirkel they're talking about this carbon footprint thing. Well, you take a boat out of the industry and destroy it. You smash the boat up. A fisherman doesn't know anything about selling this carbon footprint or carbon offsets. They don't know anything about this. But a government agency would know. Maybe they can go somewhere and say, "Well, we have so many boats that are going to be gotten rid of. That's a big carbon offset." Up in Chicago, there's a carbon offset exchange. But we wouldn't know how to get there. Maybe Commerce Department could help us in that. That would help alleviate the problem on them too, with paying. Over the years, they get their money back. I figure that the taxpayer wouldn't lose anything in the buyout. Like I said, you'd have a smaller fleet, more efficient, cleaner fisheries, the less boats that are out there. He used to say before, even if a boat isn't making money, he's still dragging and doing the same harm to the bottom. So, you're better off having a more efficient, smaller fleet that fishes all year long, brings in a good product and say, "Look what we have here." It goes on and on and on. It's, well, I say New England, but there are some Mid-Atlantic states too, that do ground fishing. It's a regional problem. The states have to be involved in it. The federal government and the

industry people have to be involved. They're all going to say one thing. We want to go in one direction. We want to have an industry that's going to last a long time, produce a good product, a specialty product, and we want to train the men so that they understand it's a long-term thing. It's a long-term industry. It's going to go on. It isn't going to end. That's the only way they have to look at it. We've got something that I don't think any place else – any other industry has in the world, something that replenishes itself automatically. Manage it right, and it'll go on.

OR: Is there anything else you want to add today?

JB: No. That's all.

OR: Well, thank you, Jimmy.

[end of transcript]