listen to the fishermen? The more you get into these situations, you understand that's not a viable position to maintain. You can't just keep ranting and raving against the system because now you're part of the system and you recognize that all the other parts have their valid points of view as well. So you modify your position which makes the fishermen think you're going soft or you're selling out on them or things like that.

JM: That's tough.

RA: Yes, it is. [Chuckles] Particularly if you get on something like the New England Council where you have to vote. It's one thing if you can keep quiet about some things and speak out on others. You can kind of pick and choose, thinking about who your constituency is and where people stand. But if you're on a decision-making body, a regulatory body, and you have to take a vote, in some cases, you're going to have to vote against certain groups or for certain groups and you're going to antagonize people.

JM: That's a big responsibility to all those other people.

[End of side one, tape three.]

Third interview. March 20, 1987.

JM: The last time we talked, you spoke about the congressional moratorium on the lobster canyons.

RA: It goes back to the early '70's when the first oil sales were being talked about and the Department of the Interior put out the call for nominations. Atlantic Offshore was involved in this project with Woods Hole to look into the whole impact of offshore oil drilling on the fishing industry. As part of that, we gathered information about what the critical areas were and we submitted negative nominations. The ones that were accepted (I forget what the Department of the Interior ended up doing with them) but some of the congressional people picked up on it -- particularly the heads of the canyons. They put a congressional moratorium on leasing the heads of the canyons and that's still in effect today.

JM: Why did they do that?

RA: Because of their significance biologically and [their] productivity for the fisheries. They had other information. Some of the research submersible work that had been done showed that they were like a pueblo community for lobsters and tilefish and a lot of other fish living on the sides of those canyons. They felt it was best not to disturb that kind of an ecological habitat.

JM: What kind of regulations is the offshore lobster industry operating under out on the continental shelf?

RA: The same ones as the inshore fishery has. The American Lobster Management Plan just incorporated the state regulations -- to a large extent, the ones in the major states as a minimum size limit, prohibition on taking egg-bearing lobsters and brushing the eggs off of lobsters, prohibition on keeping just tails and claws -- you have to land the lobsters whole. There's an escape vent requirement in the traps where the undersized lobsters can escape from the traps once they get into them. There are some marking requirements, ownership markings on the traps and buoys. That's about all.

JM: A couple of people that I've been able to speak with have said that they've never been checked on their boats. What about enforcement?

RA: There isn't much. That's one of the troublesome parts about it. In the lobster fishery, I would say that it's not as big a problem as it is in other fisheries because there's a higher degree of voluntary compliance with the laws. But it still doesn't remove the problem that you've got the honest, law abiding fishermen being put at a disadvantage in competition with somebody who doesn't respect the laws. It's a real big psychological problem. It creates a resistance to any further conservation measures because the good guys say, "why should we keep restricting ourselves more and more when the bad guys are getting away free." One of the major points that comes up in any meeting of fishermen when you talk about management is better enforcement. I'm the chairman of the New England Council's Enforcement Committee, and it's a very frustrating type of thing to get at because the first thing that happens when you start to talk about enforcement is the enforcement people get very defensive about the fact of whether they're doing a good job or not. Of course, they think they're doing a good job and their only problem is a lack of money, lack of good regulations to enforce, no support from the courts, and things. None of it's their problem. They're doing the best that they can.

JM: Are they Coast Guard?

RA: Offshore, the primary responsibility is with the Coast Guard. Along the coast, the states have enforcement agencies. The National Marine Fisheries Service also has an enforcement division. They're spread really thin. They've got twenty-two agents from Maine to Texas or something like that. It's a combination of having enough resources, organizing them right and using them to best advantage, enthusiasm by the enforcement agents and where they put their efforts. In Rhode Island, the standard response you'll get if you talk about enforcement of the fishery regulations is, "They spend their time patrolling polluted shellfish grounds because that's a public health hazard." That's where they put their emphasis. You question the balance among the different fisheries, but that's the kind of answer you get.

JM: What do you think the future holds for that?

RA: I think there's a lot of potential. It's going to be tough because of this attitude problem that exists among the enforcement people and the fishery managers and the fishermen. It's hard to deal with the situation because of the automatic defensive mechanism that goes up with the enforcement people. They really don't want to talk about how to improve, they just want to say what a good job they're doing. I think there are a number of ways to help them do a better job -- maybe kind of a carrot and stick approach. In some cases you can offer them what they'll think is a good idea and in other cases you'll have to force some of it.

JM: Like what?

RA: There are laws now in other enforcement fields that the proceeds from the sale of seized equipment of contraband products goes to the enforcement agency. That isn't the case in fisheries now. Anything that they seize for violation of the law goes into a general treasury. They're complaining about having a lack of equipment and low budgets. That might be one answer to the budget problem. Utilizing the resources better -- I think the greatest enforcement resource we have is the Coast Guard small boat Stations. There's one in every major fishing port, plus minor fishing ports. They all have one, two, three, four small vessels. They're out doing boardings all the time for boating safety and that type of thing. They're right in the ports. They have a pretty good handle on what's going on. The Coast Guard has not seen fit to use them for any major fisheries enforcement activity. They view them as strictly a search and rescue type of resource. From talking to the people at the boat stations, they are amenable to getting involved in the fisheries if they're given a little better training. But here again, we've got a problem with the Coast Guard hierarchy saying, "No, those people can't, they don't have time," where the people themselves are saying, "Yes, we can do it." How do you get them the training if the higher ups are saying they can't be involved in it. I think that's a big resource there. There are some things like the Civil Air Patrol that nobody's thought about bringing in for closed area patrols. I got onto that because some senator got the Civil Air Patrol in Florida three quarters of a million dollars and fifty new planes or something to help out with the drug enforcement situation down there. I don't see why we couldn't use their resources for the fisheries enforcement. That gets back to the fact that one of the complaints the Coast Guard people have now is that as they've upgraded their equipment and gone to jets, they fly so fast it's hard for them to do the job of patrolling fishing vessels and to know what's going on. They used to have these old, slow planes that went almost at a walk and they could fly around and look and take pictures. Now they're just [snaps fingers] "boom" going by them. So maybe the Civil Air Patrol is a good resource. It's a low cost one. You could get a lot of coverage maybe for not too much money. States like Maine (I just found out) have a volunteer deputy program where for $750 they can put an enforcement officer in the field -- a volunteer they don't pay. They provide a uniform and training for them, get them out in the field and they work with the conservation officer. If every conservation officer has an unpaid deputy, you've doubled your enforcement force with very little cost. There's things like that that can be done. I think there are a number of things like that -- new ideas that can come up and can be used to help out enforcement. Even the regulations themselves can be changed and different types of regulations put in that might help out.

JM: You had spoken about increasing production in a safe way, placing more emphasis on the socio-economic and political ways of making decisions in this country. If you could be more specific about, say something like the lobster industry with that? I'm not sure I quite understood what you meant about that.

RA: In the lobster fishery, the scientists can tell you that the maximum yield per recruit is the point at which you should harvest the resource to get the most weight out of it. When the growth in each individual lobster starts to be balanced off by mortality -- they're getting old and dying --at that point -- the maximum point -- is a size of something like four and a half or five inches in carapace length. They've also told us that the egg production of the percentage of sexually mature females is anywhere from two or three percent up to maybe twenty percent, and where in the lobster's range you are before they're legal to be caught. Probably up to eighty or ninety percent of the lobsters in the inshore fishery are caught as soon as they reach the minimum size. It appears that a lot of them never have a chance to reproduce. Technically, you can prove that you can get a lot more out of that resource. Then you get into the social and economic questions of what's the market -- what's going to happen to the market if you increase the size; are you going to lose part of the market because the lobsters get too expensive or they don't fit on the restaurant plate or things like that? They don't go into the clambake trade anymore because they're too big to have as a one pound chicken lobster with a clambake. You get into the questions of why should we increase the size for the legal fisherman when it's just going to make a much more attractive undersized lobster? More and more people will say, "Hey, this is a great product, let's go after the shorts now," if there's no enforcement. That's why I say that technically we have a lot of information that says what we can do to increase the resources. We have it for the scallop fishery; we have it for the groundfish fishery; we have it for most of our fisheries. There are still a lot of unanswered questions, but we have a lot more information than we're in a position to make use of or to use in the way that a pure technical analysis would say this makes sense. If you were the sole owner of the resource, you'd just go out and use that information. To me that get's back to the social structure in the industry and how the industry comes to consensus, and how that consensus is transferred into the management system.

JM: Do you think this will all take place at a safe time for a species like the lobster?

RA: I'm not concerned really about the lobster. The lobster is probably one of the more stable resources we have. The scientists have been yelling about a crisis in the lobster fishery for the last hundred years or so. Ten years ago the scientists claimed lobsters were all on the verge of collapse and extinction. Since that time, we've increased the catch by fifty percent. I don't think there's a crisis situation. It's not a question of doing something in time. I think we can afford to take little steps that match the rate at which the social environment is changing and the people's attitudes are changing. I think with the lobster, we'll be reasonably safe. I'd like to see some movement in the regulations -- increasing them in size -- and I think they're coming about. If they were delayed, I'd be concerned that we might get to some point that we'd have a problem, but that's just a personal [view]. I don't have any real reason to back that up. I'd just like a little more insurance than we have now. In some of the other fisheries, I don't think it's a question of destroying the resources. I think it's a question of how long are we going to go on at a low yield when we could probably increase the yield? Or how long are we going to make lesser use of our resources than they have the potential to provide? That to me, again, is a balance. There's no sense in creating an upheaval and a lot of the immediate permanent harm because there's going to be a corresponding benefit somewhere down the line. You just have to figure out how to get the benefit with the least harm along the way -- the least immediate sacrifice. There's no particular time frame that I see. It's just a question of moving in that direction. I think the situation in Rhode Island when they increased the lobster gauge was a clear one. The scientists have been calling for a three and a half inch lobster measure as opposed to the three and sixteenth that Rhode Island had. That was the most important thing the scientists thought we needed. In Rhode Island, they moved the gauge up from three and one-sixteenth to three and three-sixteenths over a five year period. So they went a thirty-secondth of an inch for two years, skipped a year, and went up a thirtieth of an inch. People laughed -- a thirty-secondth of an inch -- to make the gauges different was the pass of a file. It was not a big thing. It didn't appear to be a meaningful thing to people on the outside, but in fact, we accomplished that change, rather than continuing to argue about it, by moving in those small steps that the fishermen were willing to accept. It didn't hurt the fishermen to do it. It became clear as we went along that it did not hurt them. After five years, we were there. We could have still been arguing about it, but we weren't. We were there. We made the change, and I think that's the approach that we really have to take.

JM: Is that the one that starts in 1988?

RA: No, that's a further increase. That's the same program. It's just to go from three and three-sixteenths to three and five-sixteenths. I think one other thing that the Rhode Island experience did was pave the way for the further increase to take place throughout the range of the lobster stock. The Rhode Island move was just to get Rhode Island up equal to the other major lobster-producing states. We all got equal and now we are starting to say, "Now should we all move again to go a little bit further?" Without Rhode Island having the experience that it did and doing it in the way that it did, I don't think we would have gotten the support to do it in the other states. I think that slow, careful approach in the long run is much better than the confrontational approach between the fishery managers saying, "This is what we've got to do," and the fishermen saying, "Hell, no. You're going to put us out of business."

JM: What are the species you're more concerned about when you talked about recruitment?

RA: I think the groundfish stocks have been at a pretty low point for a number of years. I'm concerned that we have some good year classes coming along, but there's the probability that we'll go out and hit them real hard before they really get a chance to contribute to the long term growth of the population. So again, I'm not concerned that we're going to make them extinct, I'm just concerned that we're going to keep them beat down to a low level. Again, it's a real hard thing to balance -- the need to get some immediate gain out of the resource versus how much you can kind of leave in the bank to gain interest. It's troublesome to me. I don't have a good answer to it. I don't think that the confrontational approach that we're in now between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the regional councils and the industry is the best way to get out of that situation.

JM: You had talked about recognizing all the changes that have happened in the industry and the importance of recognizing those in the management deliberations. What exactly do you mean by that? Can you give me a concrete example where that isn't happening or is happening?

RA: I don't think it's the type of thing that lends itself to concrete examples. It's a subtle kind of a cultural, social, economic change that takes place and just a mind set among people, a way of looking at things. I think I talked about the structure breaking down -- the small ports with the family-oriented businesses and as that breaks down. But I think a lot of us do think about it that way. Even when we're talking about investments and the ability of a fisherman to make a living, when a fisherman says, "You're going to hurt my business; I'm not going to be able to make a living, make my mortgage payment." He may be talking about supporting a pretty high level of income -- two or three boats that he owns and doesn't fish on and has hired skippers on. Yet we're still thinking about it in a way that, "Here's this poor guy out there, toiling away, operating his fishing boat and he's not going to be able to pay for it. He's going to lose his boat and have to take a job in a mill or something." It's just not quite that way, but we tend to think about it in that way.

JM: How do government incentives fit into all of this?

RA: The investment incentives?

JM: Yes.

RA: There are general incentives that have applied across the board in the economy -- the Investment Tax Credit accelerated depreciation -- programs like that, and then there are ones that are specific to the marine industry. The Capital Construction Fund applies to both Merchant Marine and fishing vessels. Then there are some specific to the fishing industry. There was for a while a subsidy program that went by the board quite a few years ago. In more recent years, we've had a Fisheries Loan Fund and we've had a Fishing Vessel Obligation Guarantee Program. Fishermen could get a loan for a fishing boat and have the government guarantee it. The loan was therefore more attractive to the banks and other investors. Also, the Small Business Administration has become involved in guaranteeing (actually making some loans), but more recently in guaranteeing loans that the banks make. It makes more capital available to the fishing industry for people to put into fishing boats. So we get more and more capitalization in the industry. The more capital we have, the more pressure there is on the stocks, the more the available revenue pie is split up in smaller slices, the more pressure on each fisherman to oppose regulations that are going to hurt him that much more. Particularly, if the worse things get from natural causes, the more pressure is already on the fisherman, so that much worse it's going to be if you try to put additional regulations on.

JM: This is off the subject a little bit, but do you think it's a little bit similar to what's happened with the farmers?

RA: Certainly no where near to the extent that the farm industry has seen. It would be hard for me to compare because the resource base is different. The whole property right situation where the farmer owns his land, decides what to grow and knows when it's going to be harvested, as compared to the fishery resource being out there swimming around in the ocean -- nobody knows where it is and you go out and hunt for it. It doesn't belong to anybody until they actually capture it. I don't think you can really compare. The troublesome thing is that while this administration was trying to cut the federal budget and all that, I think farm subsidies have tripled in the last six years. I don't know how many billions and billions of dollars in increases and price supports. Yet the administration continually proposes to cut the fisheries budget which is not primarily assistance to the industry, but primarily resource conservation -- studying the resources and figuring out how to manage them, habitat conservation and things like that. It's real hard for me to figure out what's behind it all. It doesn't seem to add up.

JM: You talked about the government subsidies in Canada and the need for a countervailing duty on the cod coming into this country. Is that frozen or fresh?

RA: Fresh.

JM: And it's whole?

RA: Not necessarily -- whole or fillets. Maybe frozen, too, as a matter of fact. Whole, fresh, I don't know if it's frozen or not. It's basically designed to compete on the fresh market with our product. The other category is frozen blocks -- the type of thing that ends up in McDonald's fish sandwiches and things.

JM: I didn't know if that was real fish or not.

RA: Yes, it's real fish. It looks like a block of marble if you see it before they bread it and put it through bandsaws. They just take all the fish, put them in a box and freeze them all in a block. Then while they're still frozen, they run them through saws and and cut them up in little portions and batter them. It's real fish, but the battering and all that is added to it afterward. It's not only codfish on the countervailing duty. It was most species of groundfish -- cod, haddock, pollock, flounders.

JM: Would some of the fishermen want this government to subsidize them in the same way that the Canadian government is?

RA: I suppose there's always someone that wants something. In general, I think there's a real distaste. People aren't looking for subsidies.

JM: Why?

RA: They view it as a perturbation in the system. Particularly if you're in the system, subsidies you just view as probably helping somebody else to compete with you. Most fishermen would rather go out and work on their own and make what they can on things. Most of the government programs tend to benefit the larger operations that have the bookkeeping staffs and the lawyers and accountants to fill out the paperwork and make the case for them to take advantage of the programs. With the primarily owner-operated fishery, most individuals would never expect to ever take advantage most of the programs that might be available. That's one of the reasons that they don't like a lot of the programs, because they feel that it's just helped outsiders and the larger companies get an advantage. I think that's comparable to agriculture.

JM: We had talked about the traditional inshore fishery that was here from when Newport began. The only thing we didn't talk about in that part was the inshore lobster industry. What's left of that here?

RA: That's thriving -- the lobster fishery. At least in the last few years. Well, I won't say it's just getting better and better, but it's improved over the last ten years probably. It may have tapered off some over the last two or three years, but I think if you went way back and saw the catch records for the Rhode Island inshore lobster fishery, they were really pretty low at the turn of the century. They peaked in the 1920's and dropped off again. They're kind of up and down. They hit a low point in 1952 and then started back up. About the same time that the gauge was increased, the catch took a big jump which was kind of opposite to what was expected. Some of the numbers took such big jumps, it makes you wonder whether the statistics are another problem there. I think it's pretty clear from the number of fishermen -- the increase in the number of fishermen -- and just looking at how they've done. They seem to be reasonably successful at it. It seems pretty clear that it's been a healthy fishery.

JM: How has the technology changed over the years?

RA: Hydraulic haulers, nylon twine, and synthetic ropes are the major changes in technology. All of those things let people fish more and more traps. Fiberglass boats were a big change that came along in the 1960's and '70's. The wire traps are still in a period of transition. Now [we're] going more and more towards wire traps. I wouldn't be surprised if we see a plastic trap on the market. There have been some plastic traps. They've never really caught on. My guess would be that eventually there will be a plastic lobster trap that becomes popular. Those are probably the major technical changes.

JM: What else is left of that whole inshore industry here besides the lobster and the trap fishery?

RA: There's still quite a fleet of inshore draggers that's left, probably not as large as it once was -- not in comparison to the fleet of offshore draggers that we have now. Quahoggers, of course, not here in Newport, but in Narrangansett Bay is probably the largest employment.

[End of side two, tape three.]

JM: How far offshore do offshore draggers from here go?

RA: They go to the Canadian boundary.

JM: Most of the older men that I've talked to that have been involved in the industry for a long time -- it seems to be a mixture of art and science in going about their business. The younger men, it's more how much money they make. I wonder how you think that ties in with the future of the industry in a place like this?

RA: I don't know how that fits together. You could almost say that it will make the industry more responsive to changes in the economics of the industry. Entrance and exit will follow more closely how the economy of the business is because there's not the tie that the old timers had that they were going to be in the fishery whether things were good or bad. I wouldn't be willing to say that that's actually going to take place. I don't know. If you went back to when these old timers were young fellows, whether they put a different emphasis on things too.

JM: What about the conflict between tourism and the fishing industry all up and down every coast of every country?

RA: It's going to be a tough one. You can look at it just from economics and say, "Well, if it's not worth it -- if the fishermen can't compete, or the fishing businesses, then it makes sense that they don't." Somehow they have to find a place in the cost structure that would support the facility -- that competes with other uses. Then you can go to the other side of the argument and say, "Well, the waterfront is part of the transportation system. We support boats and bridges and we've got the waterways. We have to have a way to get a product from the waterborn commerce into the landborn commerce and that's a rightful role for society to play -- society should make some efforts to maintain public access to the waterfront." I think that's basically going to be a question for society to answer both at the local level and the state level primarily. Whether it'll ever get to be a national issue or not -- it is in some senses. There are elements of the national government that are looking at that question, but it's certainly not a major concern at the national level right now. There are a number of ways it can be approached that people are looking at around the country, in different cities. There's no one answer to the problem.

JM: Do you have any involvement in that at the Atlantic

Offshore Fisherman's Association?

RA: I personally haven't, except to keep track of what's going on with some of the general things I get involved in. Bill Palombo was one of the key figures in getting the state to establish the State Pier for the fishermen here in Newport. He got involved with a group that was going to buy the pier, got the option on it, then worked out something with the state so that the state eventually took it over. That wasn't really Atlantic Offshore, but it all tied in with Bill's activities both with the Association and just for his interests here in Newport.

JM: Some people say that the state government seems to be paying a lot more attention to Point Judith than Newport. Do you have any opinion or thoughts on that?

RA: I think it's probably true. I don't know if you analyzed it objectively and looked at values and numbers of boats and things like that, how it would stack up. Certainly there's a lot more activity going on, a lot more money being spent in Point Judith, but rationally whether it's proportional or not, I really couldn't say. We can go all over the state and talk to the quahoggers and they feel that they get no attention from the state and they're the largest group of fishermen and one of the most valuable fisheries that the state has. Yet nobody pays any attention to them at all. A lot of it just has to do with degree of organization both of the industry and even the size of the units in the industry. A fellow with a ninety foot trawler or two or three ninety foot trawlers tends to be more active and more visible and have a closer relationship with the people in the state who make those kinds of decisions than the fellow with a quahog skiff that doesn't get involved and isn't organized. Point Judith certainly -- the Co-op has been the key to what they've gotten out of the state. It's recognized as a big business entity in the state and an important one. It doesn't take much of a word from the Co-op and the state responds to it.

JM: There's a lot of conflict among the fishermen themselves here. I'm sure that goes on everywhere. Was it that way over in Point Judith?

RA: I talk to fishermen who don't agree with their brothers about fishing techniques or anything else. I don't know if it's any more of that in one area than in another. It all depends on the issue. Fishermen will pull together on some issues and on others they go their own way.

JM: What is the most frustrating about your job at Atlantic Offshore?

RA: It's frustrating to me that the fishermen don't take a more active interest in the policy field, the things that are effecting their business. I think that's human nature and I don't really complain about it. It doesn't do any good to yell at the fishermen and say, "You guys ought to be more involved." It just doesn't work. It doesn't have any impact on them. Then I turn around and look at the other end of the system and say that if society says that it should manage the fishery resources and we have fishery management agencies, then if they're going to do their job, part of that job is structuring a system that takes the fishermen into account and draws them in. Fisheries management will be more successful to the degree that it involves the fishermen so that it's not just that you benefit the fishermen by getting them involved, you benefit fisheries management. So if the fisheries managers want to do a good of fisheries' management, they'll design a structure that involves the fishermen. I guess I find a lot of frustration that the fishery managers don't want to get involved with the fishermen. They basically want to decide what should be done and try to do it regardless of how it affects the fishermen or what the fishermen have to say about it. You have an awful lot of academics and bureaucrats that have no basic experience in the fishery, don't want to get near the practicality of it and yet they think they've figured out how things should be managed. I guess my greatest frustration is with those kind of people.

JM: What would you say you liked the best about what you do? What's keeping you there?

RA: It's probably a good feeling about fishermen in general. I enjoy being with fishermen and talking with fishermen -- their independent outlook, their practicality and the idea that I can somehow reflect or pass that on to the management system and in turn, make the management system so that it has a long term benefit to the fishermen and the resources. I'm trying to provide feedback mechanisms both ways. There are some managers and biologists and people who have some good ideas, and when you study the resource, the animal, there's some things about it the fishermen don't know that it's good for them to know and to try to provide the bridge between the two groups. I find that rewarding and think that it may be some kind of a long-term benefit to society. That's why I do it.

JM: What are your main concerns for the future?

RA: I guess the deepest concern I have other than the fairly short-term things that I'd kind of like to see improve, but won't really matter over a long period of time -- getting the most yield out of our fisheries and things from a management standpoint that aren't a deep concern. I think it'll work its way out and that's not an irreversible thing. The things that concern me the most are the pollution questions, long term habitat degradation, loss of fisheries habitat, toxic materials in the marine environment getting taken up in fish. Interestingly enough, despite that being my deepest concern, I don't really get involved in that issue very much at all. I tend to concentrate on the more day to day kind of critical things that are coming up, rather than the long-term subtle things that are going on.

JM: How much time are you able to spend out on your own boat?

RA: From February to February, I've spent about two days on the boat. This year, I intend to get out quite a bit more. [I'm] trying to work out that balance between going to sea and working on fisheries politics.

JM: I've covered all of my questions. I know that we could never really be finished with this. Is there anything you can add?

RA: No, I think we've pretty well covered it.

JM: Well, some of it anyway. I really want to thank you.

End of Interview