

Milford Lab Oral Histories
Jeremiah Relyea Oral History
Date of Interview: August 20, 2015
Location: Bayville, New York
Length of Interview: 00:04:55
Interviewer: WB – Walter Blogoslawski
Transcriber: NCC

Walter Blogoslawski: I'm at the Frank Flower Shellfish Hatchery. It is August 20th. I'm interviewing Jeremiah Relyea, who is Dave Relyea's son, who's also working at the hatchery. I've asked him a little bit about his perspective on aquaculture as a second-generation person. Jeremiah?

Jeremiah Relyea: Yeah. What do you want exact things?

WB: You've been working here, how long?

JR: See, I started when I was fifteen, sixteen years old. Now I'm thirty-four. So, quite a while.

WB: Yes. Almost fifteen years.

JR: Yes.

WB: You're doing all of the data entry it looks like.

JR: Yes. Well, that's just a very small part of the real work that goes on outside. You know, earlier in the season in the tanks. But it's a constantly evolving process, keep coming up with new ideas to do things better, quicker, more efficiently whether it be to process the shellfish in the trays, or to the trays themselves floating up boiler systems. It's an evolving process. We try to always be thinking step ahead, trying to get more out of the process.

WB: Well, in the market changes from what Dave told me oysters are down. So, now you're doing more clams, which means you have to manage the hatchery a little differently.

JR: Right. Well, normally, at this point, I would still be doing oysters non-stop. Now, we've got our whole system filled up with clams. So, I did outside predominantly, oysters from early April through the end of July. Now, besides the broodstock I have out there, I really don't have any oysters to speak of. You know, we've planted them all already. We grew so much less because of that fact, because of the fact that the market is so heavy towards clams.

WB: Which means you have to be flexible, every year that could be given.

JR: Yes. We tried growing clams early this year but they don't take well in the cold water. So, it didn't work.

WB: So, that was another learning experience.

JR: Yes. You could say that. So, you know, next year, because of that, we won't try that again with the clams and will grow more oysters. But we'll still get rid of them probably at a significantly smaller size. So, that we can concentrate on clams if the markets still up for clams. But in the same respect, you don't know what the market's going to be like in three years. So, if we need a whole mess of oysters in three years, and we haven't been growing them for the past couple of months.

WB: It's going to be difficult for the company.

JR: Yes. But by the looks of things, clams are going to be heavier in the market than oysters for a while.

WB: So, it's predicting the future down the road at least yours because of the growth time, from basically egg to adult.

JR: Yes. Well, clams take a lot longer time to grow too than oysters do.

WB: What are we looking at?

JR: Clams, three to four years, oysters eighteen months. So, I mean, you can get a good market sized oyster in eighteen months, unlike clams though. Clams are much more.

WB: Even though it's got a variety, which are a little fast grower.

JR: Yes. Probably a difference between hatchery raise maybe as little as three years but natural, probably five years.

WB: The white clams.

JR: Yes.

WB: Okay. Well, that's all. I don't want to take any more of your time.

JR: Back to work.

WB: Jeremiah Relyea of Frank and Flowers, and he's just given me his perspective. I'm going to shut down now.

[end of transcript]