Interview with John Remsen, Sr.

Narrator: John Remsen Sr.
Interviewer: Nancy Solomon
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Project Description: Folklorist Nancy Solomon has documented the maritime culture of Long Island through these interviews spanning the years 1987 – 2016. The collection includes baymen, fishermen, boat builders, and other maritime tradition bearers.
Principal Investigators: Nancy Solomon
Transcript Team: National Capital Contracting

Abstract: On November 17, 2003, Nancy Solomon interviewed John Remsen Sr. for an oral history project. John Remsen Sr., born on February 5, 1933, in Freeport, New York, provides a detailed account of his life and work as a bayman, sharing his family's multi-generational involvement in fishing and clamming in the Freeport area. The interview covers Remsen's early introduction to the bay at the age of five, his first experiences with clamming alongside his father, and the evolution of his work on the water. He describes the types of boats used over the years, from rowboats to Garveys, and details how transitioning to a motorboat expanded his working range. Remsen recalls the abundance of clams in his youth, noting the various buyers his family supplied. He also discusses the techniques for clamming, musseling, and fishing, including using nets, rakes, and pots. The interview highlights significant changes in the industry, such as the shift toward needing to diversify skills in response to fluctuating fish and shellfish populations, regulations, and environmental challenges. Remsen recounts the impact of pollution, particularly from DDT spraying and sewage treatment plants, on marine life and habitats. He notes the decline in clamming and fishing opportunities and explains how these changes led many baymen to leave the industry or pursue it part-time. Additionally, Remsen touches on broader issues facing the industry, such as government regulations, economic pressures, and the potential solutions for sustaining the baymen's way of life. This interview offers a comprehensive look at the challenges and adaptations of a lifetime spent working on the waters around Freeport.

Nancy Solomon: This is Nancy Solomon talking with John Remson. Today is November 17th, 2003. This is Tape 1, Side 1. We are talking about being a bayman in Freeport and changes in Freeport. That will be the life history. My first question for you is when were you born?

John Remsen Sr.: February 5th,1933 in a blizzard. My mom always told me that. [laughter]

NS: Where were you born?

JRS: Freeport. Right down by the old Freeport Stadium, right by the water.

NS: How old were you when you first started working on the water?

JRS: My mom and dad told me at five years old I was allowed to take a – I actually would scream in holler because my father worked with his father-in-law, wit. My great-grandfather. Actually, Net Simon. They hauled out in the ocean for [inaudible]. I could get a ride. If I was good, they would take me to the inlet in the dories which they rode. They didn't have motive. They had five or six men in boat. As far as remembering, I can't remember that [laughter] That's what I was told.

NS: What was your father's name?

JRS: John.

NS: John Ramson?

JRS: Yes. I'm a junior. We have the third.

NS: The fourth.

JRS: We have the fourth too. [laughter] That's right.

NS: What was your first working experience that you recall you on the bay?

JRS: Clamming. We went clamming and I would go with my dad. They would tread clams. But the bay was pretty well open then. Once you got to the first bridge nearby Freeport, the whole bay was open. We went about wherever you wanted to go, you could go there.

NS: What do you remember most about those first years that you were working on the bay? How old were you when you first started working?

JRS: I was probably seven or eight years old. I would go sit in the boat and I'd go in the water. I'm sure I had to be aggravating to have [laughter] so always thought I could work, I guess.

NS: Was it hard to get clams in those days?

JRS: No. Again, the market now is where they sell more littlenecks, more smaller clams. But at

that time, I can remember my pop would always be looking for chowder clams to make clams stew or something. At that time, I think cooking the clams was better than eating them raw. Not that they weren't eating raw, but it was just a bigger market.

NS: Who were some of his customers?

JRS: Most of the time we would sell to either a guy named Al Swanson. He was a wholesale buyer in Freeport. Or Johnny Glare, he was a wholesale buyer in Baldwin. There was another fella, Andy Jergenson, who had a bay house and he had clam beds. He would buy them during the summer, that's when we'd clammed because we could go in the water treading. He would buy them and plant them back. Then in the winter, they would dig them out with Tom and sell them. So, actually, he had clam bags.

NS: Do you remember where his bay house was?

JRS: Yes. He was at the beginning of Crow Island. Him and his father had it. But his father stayed out there all year and watched the bed. That was their business.

NS: Wow. Was Alice Swanson related to Timmy Swanson?

JRS: No. Not that I know. I would say no.

NS: When did you start working and making money clamming?

JRS: Probably twelve or thirteen years old. We would go and you could make – again, I would sell to the ladies in the neighborhood. So, I didn't have to get too much to get two or three bucks. That was a lot of money. The first summer I had a rowboat. The second summer my father bought me a water witch. I think it was a Sears outboard motor. That's what I used. Again, he had a cabin boat. We had a boat that was built in Oceanside.

NS: How did having a motorboat change what you were doing as opposed to the rowboat? What was a typical day before you had the motorboat?

JRS: It just gave you a further range that you could go out further, stay longer, get there sooner. Gave you a longer working day out in the water.

NS: When you only had the rowboat, how far out did you go and what time did you start?

JRS: I would say we would leave the dock around – again, this would be just kids, I would go by myself. Probably 8:00 a.m. My pop would go to work and then I could go. We left right from Freeport Creek right over here. That's where we docked the boat. I don't know whose dock it was, but that's where all the clam diggers were.

NS: How many clam diggers were there in those days?

JRS: I would say probably full-time thirty or forty. Again, that was Freeport, Ballwin, Seaford.

Everybody was in this area. If there was clams in Seaford, everybody would go to see if they were Baldwin. Wherever the largest take was that's where everybody ended up.

NS: Who were some of the people you remember best from those first years when you were just a boy?

JRS: I would say Owen Carmen and Maynard Smith. Maynard Smith's father was a clam digger. His brother was Nell Smith who was a Freeport police lieutenant. Let's see.

NS: Was there one person that everybody looked to as being the best clammer in the group?

JRS: Matthews. There was a couple of Matthews from Freeport. I would say they clammed, they oystered, food mussels and steamers. They did it all year. They would go from one to the other where a lot of fellows only stayed. If they were clamming, that's all they did. They wouldn't go for oysters. We used to go pick sage oysters.

NS: What are sage oysters?

JRS: Sage oysters are the ones that break free at low tide. They'd be in the grass. When the tide got low, you could walk around and pick them up. Then the tide would cover them at high water. You could go get three or four bushels in a day. Just pick them up.

NS: Was there ever a time where you could just make a living year-round harvesting one thing? Or if you wanted to work year-round, did you have to change home season every time?

JRS: Not me myself personally, but I would say that there were fellows that just clammed the mussels from Baldwin. They clammed every day.

NS: Year-round?

JRS: Year-round. If bay was frozen, they wouldn't go. Obviously because they couldn't get out. But as soon as the bay opened, they had a big cabin boat. It would chug along and they'd have three or four of them that would go with Johnny Moss. That's what they did. They planned.

NS: Were there people that did nothing, but go musseling?

JRS: Yes, there was a couple of guys in Seaford. They were the guys that stayed primarily musseling. Again, if that tightened up, they would go for steamers. But the clams mostly, whoever stayed at it would stay all year where the other guys would float back and forth. Go in and out and so forth. Sometimes they'd go gill net out in the ocean.

NS: I know that nowadays you have to do just about everything. When did it really become essential that you know how to do more than one thing if you wanted to work on the water unit? Understand what I mean? Was there a turning point?

JRS: What I could remember would be somewhere around in the late [19]40s, early [19]50s

when they started. My father got a big Garvey with an inboard. That was probably the third or fourth one in the area. Everybody with a big Garvey, they could go killing during the summer, baiting during the summer, clamming in the winter. They changed though. You had to change. Then finally they would buy a skiff and they'd go out gill net and maybe in the spring or during the summer.

NS: Why did it change like that? What do you think?

JRS: My personal opinion, I would say just because of money. You could make more money by fishing. For bluefish and weak fish during the summer than clamming. It was more profitable to do that. Your investment became bigger because you had a different type boat and so forth. Different type of work.

NS: Do you know if it changed because there was less fish to catch or less oysters to harvest?

JRS: I didn't know it at the time, but I'm sure that would've been a problem. Because we do get peaks and valleys. We still do. If you didn't know enough to change, you'd go broke. You wouldn't make any money.

NS: When did you first start to see that changing where people started catching different things at different times of the year?

JRS: In the [19]50s. When I came out of the service, I went full time out in the water. When I got out in [19]55, 1955, it was a mussel set and everybody was musseling. But they caught it up. Then during the summer, a couple of guys went gill net and somebody else went crab pots, setting crab pots. We went for bait. We got Jones Beach. The fishing piers as a customer. That was a good customer. My father had made some contacts down there. That's when we really basically went into Achilles and spearing.

NS: So, that was in the [19]50s when you started doing moss?

JRS: Yes. In the early [19]50s.

NS: Now, did you still do other things at that point or?

JRS: Sure. Achilles would probably go from June until maybe the middle of September. So, that would keep you busy. Spearing would be in the spring, and then the fall at the spearing fish. Then in the winter we would clam. That was just a cycle.

NS: Now, what were some of the methods that you used for clamming? You mentioned treading and tongs. Were there other?

JRS: Rakes. A jerk rake, the big rakes. That was definitely a workout.

NS: Who made your clam rakes?

JRS: First was Theodore Bedell. Then we went out east to I think it was Island Fish Supply in Sayville. There was a fellow in Sayville and Bay Shore in Sayville. They made the clam rakes. But Bedell's, they made our anchors, my pops anchor. I still have a couple old Theodore Bedell anchors. That was his business. He had a blacksmith job.

NS: Where did he work?

JRS: He was on Church Street in Freeport. Right across from Freeport Marines parking lot. In fact, during the summer, we went over and there's still a couple of old buildings in the back where the barn type buildings with the wooden sheathing. Vertical sheathing still on them. Theodore Bedell.

NS: How long did he live? Do you know [inaudible]?

JRS: I can't remember. I would say probably sometime in the [19]50s he died. Late in the [19]50s. But he had brothers and other people that were working, which I didn't know who they were, but they were there. They worked there.

NS: Did anybody continue the tradition?

JRS: No. Once Theodore, the old man died.

JRS: That was it.

JRS: Yes. Disappeared.

NS: Wow. Now, what kinds of boats were you using? When you first began, you mentioned the row boat. Was it a dory or what kind of design did it have? [laughter]

JRS: When I was really small, like five years old, my father and them would row a boat to Jones' Inlet from Freeport. Actually, there would be two boats, the net boat and a fish boat they'd have. The boats were probably about an hour before guys rowing. However long it took them, they would go and they would hold at night or all day. Then row home. So, they put in long days.

NS: What kind of net were they using?

JRS: They would use a net from cotton. A seine net. Where it had a pocket but it was long. They would knit the net themselves. My great-grandfather and them, all winter, they would sit in the living room.

NS: Do you remember their names?

JRS: Julie. That was my grandma, (Julius Ellison?). Then his mate was a guy named (Tipola?). That's all I knew him, but I don't know what his last name was. But it was Tipola. He would knit net and they would hang it in with the ledge and the corks and so forth. They actually made

the webbing and then hung the whole net in. They were probably a thousand foot of net; they would fish on the beach.

NS: That is a long net.

JRS: Yes. A long one.

NS: What was the process of using the net? If you can describe how they would catch the fish using the net.

JRS: Actually, what you do, you leave from the shore and you live–

NS: There will be two boats?

JRS: No, one boat, the net boat. You would have two guys rowing on the net boat. One guy in the back throwing the net off the pile. You had to have at least two guys on the land. They called that the land shut. They would hold the rope, which was attached to the end of the net, and you would make a half circle.

NS: Yes. So, you would like row around in a semi-circle?

JRS: Right. Row around. When you came in on the beach, if it was rough, you had to actually roll the dory out of the surf a little bit, otherwise you'd pound up.

NS: So, you would do this in the ocean?

JRS: Yes. I'm talking about the ocean. But if they did it in the bay, it was the same process except it was calm. You'd make a half circle. One fellow would take the lead line and one fellow would take the core line. You would each pull and keep working together. In the middle of the net was a big pocket. That's where all the fish would keep swimming to. Then you had to dump the pocket. But at that time, it was allowed to do that in the bay also. You could actually say that in the Bay.

NS: When did that stop?

JRS: When I was small, I remember going with my father and Herb Muller. That was his mate. During the war. It stopped probably around the [19]50s. We would get all my dad's net. We would buy from WA, Oregon. It was an outfit in New York. They handled all fishnet supplies and ropes and it was down in Canal Street. I remember that was like a big trip we'd go to on the Long Island Railroad, carry a weapon back. It would be in bales. [laughter] Come all the way back to Freeport. My father and Herb would hang it in. By hanging it in, they would attach the corks to it and the ledge. You just bought the weapon and then attach the line. Again, that was manila rope. It wasn't nylon or plastic or anything like that.

NS: How long would a net last you?

JRS: I would say a year if you fished pretty good. Again, if it was cotton again, it would just wear out. The holes, it was quite an art if you rip the net to mend it and not bunch it up because you had to figure out the cut to start it off so you wouldn't have double strings. It was quite an art to mend a net. That was like you really knew your stuff when you could mend that. Or cut the hole out.

NS: Was there somebody in your group that was a real expert?

JRS: My father and then Remsen Ellison, junior Ellison? They had long fingers and they could do it. [laughter]

NS: Did they teach you how to do it?

JRS: I could get by, but I was very slow.

NS: How come?

JRS: Because I didn't do it that much. They were always, whenever you ripped the net, you were either out in the bay working. So, you were under the gun to try to keep everything going.

NS: Now what kinds of fish were you catching?

JRS: In the spring you do flounders. That would probably start late in March. Middle of March towards the late. Then maybe around April would be weakfish and a few bluefish. Then you'd roll out of the weakfish into the bluefish. In June or so then into fluke. We'd end up with bluefish again, maybe around September. Bluefish if you caught them, you had to be careful to get them in a hurry because they have very sharp teeth. They would bite the cotton and actually they'd wreck your net. They could put you out of business if you left them swimming. They were very ferocious. Their teeth are like razor. Again, we'd get fast in the fall strike.

NS: So, how did you prevent the bluefish from destroying your net?

JRS: A lot of hollering and pulling fast. [laughter] It would just get them out of the water. In the water they were dangerous, but once they got out of the water they'd tangle into the net and whatever they bit would actually, they cut the line.

NS: So, how long would the net actually be in the water from beginning to end?

JRS: Probably half hour, thirty-five minutes.

NS: How many times would you put the net in the water in the course of the day?

JRS: Again, you just didn't haul anywhere. Everybody had their little shed spots and if there was a hole here and a sandbar there. So, sometimes it took – maybe you could only make three holes a day because of moving. Again, they were moving very slow. Had boats with no power, just about crawling along when you think about it. Because I can remember going all the way up

by Zach's Bay for stripers and would take us maybe two hours to get back to the inlet from Zach's Bay Road. Take them two hours and then we'd haul in the inlet sometimes.

NS: So, you would leave like at 8:00 a.m.?

JRS: At that time though, they would go at night or day. When I went with my father and them again, maybe I was ten or twelve years old. You were gone for the day [laughter] Definitely. Maybe the night too. They worked very hard.

NS: When you first got into Achilles, whose idea was it to get to start catching Achilles?

JRS: My father and a friend of his Jack Burke. He was a Freeporter. He was a boat builder also. They were friends. What had happened we had a skimmer boat. It was a big market for skimmers. Jack Burke had the skimmer bought him and my dad. We tied it up at the Atlantic Beach Bridge by Atlantic Beach. There was a fishing station there, Henning. They probably had like a hundred rowboats that they rented out. He wanted somebody to catch Achilles for the summer. He asked my dad who could you get? So, dad said maybe John. I'll help him and so and so. Because the Achilles were very plentiful. So, Jack Burke and my pop, they built fourteen pots and a rowboat.

NS: Now, how did you come up with a design for that? For the pots?

JRS: I can't remember. [laughter] I know I didn't do it. But again, Jack and my father, they got the wire from Oregon. That company in New York, we went and got a roll of wire. Actually, wire pots. There was a lot of wood on them, wooden frame. Again, we had to put cement in the pots. So, the pots were very heavy. Probably they weighed thirty-five, forty pounds.

NS: Why did you put cement in them?

JRS: To make them sink because of the wood. We had a wood frame and everything.

NS: Which is natural point.

JRS: So, you had to sink. But the Achilles were very plentiful. We could set those pots and probably get two hundred courts on one lift in one maybe two hours. They were plentiful. So, we sold them to Hennings again, Atlantic Beach Bridge. They were right by the Atlantic Beach Bridge. I didn't have my license. I couldn't drive, I was too young. We gave, I think it was either Wink or one of them. He used to get a nickel of quart to deliver. At first, I think it was old Wink.

NS: How much did you get?

JRS: We got twenty cents. So, we gave him a nickel. So, we got fifteen cents a quart. Which was pretty good. That was the first year I remember that.

NS: What year was that?

JRS: 1947, 48. Around there.

NS: So, right after the war.

JRS: One summer Wink delivered them, but he delivered them with a Garvey. He had got a Garvey from New Jersey, a big Garvey, about thirty foot long. So, he could load the Achilles. Again, he would take three or four hundred quarts a load. Every once in a while, he'd have trouble getting under the railroad bridge going to Long Beach. They wouldn't open it or he couldn't get the guy was drunk or whatever he was. [laughter] I went with him a couple of times. I know it was like a battle to get him to open the bridge for us. So, we didn't want to do that the second year. So, then one fellow came with some kind of a truck and he delivered, but quite a few of them died because he was taking a long time and so forth. The bait the Achilles were alive. So, then Jack Burke, who was my father's partner, built him a Garvey. Built my dad a twenty-eight-foot Garvey with a Chrysler Crown Engine. I could run the boat anywhere. So, what we would do is we would kill a couple days, and then we'd load that boat with Achilles. Which would probably be two or three hundred quarters Achilles and load them on, and I would take the boat to Atlantic Beach, which was probably an hour and a half ride. But the Garvey could go – we thought we were riding in a jet plane with that. I would stop at the railroad bridge. That was my first stop. Then we'd drop all Achilles in the water, in the boxes in the cars and drink them. Then we'd load them back up. I would have one of my friends with me. He was on the payroll.

NS: How come you would drop the cars in the water?

JRS: To drink the Achilles to keep them alive. We'd give them a shot of water. We would go early in the morning. We'd probably leave like 4:35 a.m. in the morning. Actually, what we were doing, we were shooting ourselves in the head because by the time we got to Long Beach, a couple of trains going to New York would tie the bridge up, keep it closed. So, we had to wait till we figured that took us like a year. [laughter] But we figured out we'd be better off 9:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. [laughter] But again, it got warm. We were trying to keep out of the heat of the day. We had those people for quite a while. Probably we had them five or six years as customers.

NS: (Huntings?)

JRS: Then it got just too much of a problem to deliver that by boat.

NS: So, what did you do?

JRS: Then we had Jones Beach, which was a very good customer. As I got older, they opened up Captree.

NS: These are the state parks you are talking about?

JRS: Yes. We had Captree and Jones' Beach. I was married then and we'd spend the whole

summer out at the Bay House with Grace and the kids, and my sister and her kids and my dad. I got a job and my pop stayed home and he would carry. Then he bought a truck, a flatbed truck. What we would do is we'd deliver the Achilles to Captree Island at night. When I got home from work, I'd eat dinner, and then about 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. We'd load the truck and deliver the Captree.

NS: So, at that point you were using a boat to deliver the Achilles?

JRS: No. We were using the truck to deliver.

NS: When did you start to do that?

JRS: Around 1956, [19]57.

NS: Because I am thinking, taking a boat all the way out to Captree Island. That would have been a long trip.

JRS: Believe it or not. We never did deliver by boat to Captree. We often talked about it because as time got better and more power and motors and things like that, you could do it because the boats could go pretty fast. The Garvey's, you could go up across the bay pretty quick. You could probably make twenty, twenty-five mile an hour. So, two stops and you'd be at the Captree. Gas wasn't that expensive. I think we were getting fifty cents a core at that time. Gas maybe was thirty, thirty-five cents a gallon. So, you could pay. But we just never did it with a boat. We never delivered to Jones Beach but not the Captree.

NS: You have had other customers that have bought Achilles from you. Who were some of your other customers? When did you start really having like a home network?

JRS: In the [19]50s. My father retired and he devoted everything to the Achilles. But again, it wasn't how many customers you had. You could only handle your biggest demand for one day. If Friday night everybody wanted hundred and fifty quarts, you could only catch a hundred and quarts. That's where you had to cut it off, because if you took more customers, you couldn't supply them. So, you were limited to their best day whatever. Like July 4th, I can remember sometimes we deliver four hundred quarts, Achilles. Again, I wasn't doing it full-time. My dad was, we had my nephew, my brother-in-law, my other brother-in-law. We'd all take like a couple of days off before the 4th of July and try to build up a supply to have a good delivery. Because Captree had several party boats down there. They had probably thirty or forty open party boats. That was a big customer. They sold a tremendous amount of paper.

NS: At some point did the Achilles replace all the other things that your father caught?

JRS: Yes. In the [19]50s.

NS: In the [19]50s he gave up the staining and the clamming and the oystering.

JRS: Actually, he really went just into bait in the [19]50s. We would go musseling in the spring,

in the fall. Again, when he bought this truck, he could deliver mussels to out east to like three-mile Harbor, Moriches. Montour North Fork, South Fork. Or anything out east he could deliver. Again, he could buy here. He would stock them. Again, bait mussels, you can keep them just out of the sun, under canvas, probably a week and they wouldn't die. They'd be good and everything was fine. So, he could put a couple hundred bushel up. Then load the truck and then go to Moriches.

NS: Who did he know in Moriches?

JRS: Geigers. Silly Lily, Cerrillo brothers. Nastic bait and tackle.

NS: Where would he catch the mussels?

JRS: We would go the whole town of Hempstead. All the way into like Eli, Woodmere. In New Islands out there to Marshall.

NS: All the town waters.

JRS: All the town waters.

NS: Was there a particular kind of habitat that mussels preferred? I know Achilles preferred creeks during…

JRS: The mussel, believe it or not, I always felt. The softer the mud, the bigger the bait mussels. Were a little tide running on it. They'd have to have a little current. They couldn't be in stagnant water but if you had a little tide and soft bottom, the mussel would become big in maybe two years.

NS: So, would you see them in the creeks or in the mussel edges?

JRS: When we would go out catching Achilles during the summer, you'd go up in all the creeks and everything. On the islands and all around the bay. You would find beds of mussels. We'd write it in a book and then that's where we'd go.

NS: So, mussels preferred creeks as well.

JRS: Yes. Actually, little Islands.

NS: Now, what would you use to catch mussels?

JRS: Just your hands. Pick them with cotton gloves on. Again, in the spring, if you – actually St. Patrick's Day, that's when most of the flounder fishing started out east.

NS: That early. Wow.

JRS: Yes. Around St. Patrick's Day.

NS: Musseling same time?

JRS: Yes. Musseling with flounders. That was the primary bay. Some of those customers, like (Silly Lily and Geigers and Cerrillo?) brothers, they would actually take probably fifty bushel of mussels a week to sell. On the rowboats where people would catch forty, fifty, a hundred flounders per person out that way. The flounders were unbelievable. What you would see out there.

NS: Now it is the recreational fishermen that were buying?

JRS: Would buy them. Right. Again, they would use them as bait on the hook, and they would also break mussels up for chum. Because flounders, huge chum so it was like a double dose they were using.

NS: Can you describe how chum works? Because a lot of people do not know.

JRS: The chum actually, what you do is you break it up and you put it in a wire basket with a lid on it and a rope and drop it down to the bottom. Every once in a while, just as the mussels were all broken up inside of it, you take it and you just bang it on the bottom of the bay. A little bit, just banging, pull the rope up and down. Then the water washes through and you set up a slick that will run with the tide. Actually, it works. Flounders are lazy and they stay in one area and they'll follow the bait. They would follow the bait line right up to where you were fishing. Then you had to…

NS: Now I have also heard too, of people breaking the mussel on the boat and then just dropping it in the water. Does that work?

JRS: That works fine. Actually, probably a chum bucket it's more confining. You're going to draw them to a certain area because they're all in one basket. They're not out.

NS: What is a chum bucket? I have never seen a chum bucket.

JRS: That's a chum bucket.

NS: The wire mesh.

JRS: A hardware cloth wire with a lid on it and a rope.

NS: About how big are they?

JRS: The party boats sometimes would take a half a bushel. Their chum bucket could hold probably a half a bushel. Whereas in a little boat, you could hold a couple of quats of mussels. In fact, in the [19]50s and early [19]60s, my father had a contract with Jones Beach Fishing pier that he would grind up maybe say ten or twelve bushels of mussels on Friday. He would go down to the fishing piers. They would chum all around the piers. So, when the people came

down to go fishing on the piers, they'd be productive because the flounders would find out where the bait's coming from, and they would get close to the pier. So, actually, they chummed the piers [laughter] That was a couple fellows from the beach spotted doing that.

NS: Did you work with any of the charter boat captains here in Freeport?

JRS: No. I sold them bait.

NS: Yes. That is what I mean.

JRS: Yes.

NS: Who were some of the people you sold to?

JRS: Probably Montrose. Domy Montrose with the Gladys B. Then the new boat, when he got a new boat was named the Fun.

NS: What was his name?

JRS: Domy Montrose. He lived on Woodcliff. He had the fun and the Gladys B.

NS: How do you spell his first name? That is an unusual name.

JRS: [laughter] I know him is Domy. I don't know what it meant. Donald McCan had the rod gun. Walter White and the fishermen, they were all on Woodcliff.

NS: Walter White. I have heard his name.

JRS: Yes. Walter White. They built boats. He also built boats spare time. Walter White.

NS: When did you start getting into the boat building? [laughter]

JRS: I guess in the [19]50s, 1950.

NS: So, you were about what, twenty-five or so?

JRS: Yes, twenty. When I got out of the service. Like twenty-one, twenty-two. A fellow in Island Park builds me a boat. It didn't come out the way I wanted it and really upset me. I spent all my money on a boat that it was a Garvey, but it had a square front. It just was square. What we did, we used it that way for the one year. Then we brought it home and put it in my pop's garage. We sawed the front round. It was cedar. It was a cedar boat. We planked it with cedar and everything. It was easy. So, my brother-in-law had one and it was square, so I said, "I could fix that for you." So, I saw the front round and planked it. Then I said I could build one. I looked at the boat and I said, "I could make one of these." That's when I built this. Over the winter, I bought cedar and built the boat.

NS: [laughter] Now, how long did you work full-time on the bay or building boats? How long was that livelihood?

JRS: Full-time. I would say that really, I think I went to work for the phone company around 1957.

NS: How come you decided to do that?

JRS: My father made me. He said that the future out in the bay is going to end up not as a full-time job, it's going to end up as a part-time job because again, supply…

NS: What was going on so that…

JRS: Yes, supply and demand. You couldn't hold the nets in the bay anymore. They made laws that you couldn't hold baits there. Then they closed down the bait things even to certain areas. Actually, there was a lot of restrictions. They closed the clamming off certain areas and he kept saying.

NS: When was that?

JRS: In the [19]50s. When I got married, I think 56, he said, you should get a job and you can always work out there part-time. Again, that's what I did. Saturday and Sunday I was on the water at night, I would go jacking at night for crabs, yields. Just was easier to, to have a job because again, you had to have benefits. You have a family. For abatement now I can't believe they would even think about it, because it's so expensive. Hospitalization, no retirement package. If you get sick.

NS: So, you probably were one of the first that made that switch, I am guessing? Or were other people?

JRS: Charlie works. Charlie, he was a Bayman and then what he did, he went to work for Sperry's and then they had a couple of big contracts and Charlie was working, he was doing fine. But he got laid off and then he ended up out work working the Bay full-time again. But he had made a few contacts that he could work during the winter or bad weather, so with other people to make a living.

NS: Was anybody else leaving the Bay at that time when you got your job?

JRS: I would say a lot of fellows left here and went out east.

NS: So, they moved.

JRS: They moved. It became so confined here with boats and rules.

NS: What were some of the rules that were?

JRS: Again, the pollution. For a while the bay was closed down the whole bay. You couldn't…

NS: When did they first start those kinds of restrictions?

JRS: I would say around in the [19]60s. It really became tight.

NS: So, like early [19]60s or?

JRS: Yes. During the [19]60s it was difficult. They closed Jamaica Bay down; they closed the western town of Hempstead. All west of the Long Beach Bridge. They built the Long Beach sewer plant that closed that whole bay down. Then they closed in by Island Park.

NS: Do you know why?

JRS: Pollution. The water went polluted. Sewer plants run off.

NS: Did you see it in your work?

JRS: When you got involved, when I first met you, I would say that if, Nancy Solomon didn't come along, there wouldn't be a bay house, and these fellows wouldn't be claiming to that. I honestly can and believe that. No. I mean, you carried the torch and you had enough spark in you to get to people that could make decision.

NS: Well, let me ask you, when did they first start closing the Bay? I know when I first came, they would close the bay every time it rained. When did that first began?

JRS: A good guess. I would say the [19]60s. At that time, they were burning the bay houses down. The town of Hempstead was sending the game wardens out to do it.

NS: So, that was like in the mid-[19]60s.

JRS: In the mid-[19]60s. For what reason? I don't know. I don't have the slightest idea. I don't think they did that. Somebody just didn't like bay houses and put the word out.

NS: Did you see any of the sewage problems started affecting the water quality in the bay?

JRS: Again, me personally, no. I didn't know.

NS: Did you start seeing less fish in the bay?

JRS: No. I can honestly say no.

NS: This is Nancy Solomon talking with John Remsen. Today's November 17th, 2003. This is tape one, side two. So, we were talking about signs of stress in the Bay. What were some of your first recollections of seeing that things were starting to have problems?

JRS: My dad had the mussel business and say I could go out and work on a Saturday, Sunday. I could get twenty bushels in a good day. Not every day, but in a good day. What would happen, it was one year we could do it, the next year we went out and everything was dead. All the mussels again, they grow with the tide. If the tide's low, the mussels are exposed, then the high tide comes in and the covers them, and they feed and take care of themselves and grow with the tide over. But in one year, the whole bay was wiped out. When I say the whole bay, I'll say the whole town of Hempstead.

NS: What year was this roughly?

JRS: In the [19]60s. During the summer, again, we lived out in the bay house for the whole summer with the kids, with my sister and her family, and my mom and dad. Nassau County had mosquito control. They had a boat and they probably had like ten or fifteen guys that would go around and they would spray the ponds and so forth. The mosquito control.

NS: Were they using DDT?

JRS: Using DDT in five-gallon squirt cans that they had on their back. But they never told us that that was DDT. They said that they didn't do anything. I remember my pop talked to a couple of them about the mussels that they were all dead. They said, no, that's just natural. That's a natural thing that they all died and they'll all come back. But the one summer, around the same time at the Bay House, we used to probably have fifteen, twenty, thirty families of mallards and black duck. They would nest and then raise all the little ducks there. One time the mosquito fleet guys came in and they would tie up at our dock because we had the bait station and they'd have a shoulder and talk to the kids, and then they'd go squirt this DDT on the island. Believe it or not, I would say they wiped out probably three quarters of the little ducks in one day. When I came home, the ducks were like little, maybe two or three weeks old. When we first got out there, the end of June, first week in July. All the ducks were dying. My dad really took the French door. He was upset. He told them that if they ever come near the dock again with the mosquito boat, he was going to shoot him with a shotgun. Definitely, he said, "Whatever you're doing, you have to stop." They said, "We are not doing it." They swore on the Bible, they didn't dump anything in the water. They were using vegetable oil. That was their big thing. That was the commissioner and everybody else. But it was actually DDT was later that the county had bought it, and they were using DDT. They actually devastated the mussel. You couldn't find a mussel or sage oysters. Anything that grew in the title line was dead. The ducks, they were dead all over the place. Somebody got after them somehow finally and they stopped. They disband. They got rid of their boats. They definitely backed off that program. But again, it was devastating.

NS: Were there other things that you started to see disappear?

JRS: I would say, again, maybe for years, when I was smaller, I saw a lot of striped bass. Then there was a period I didn't see any. When I say, see, when we used to go jacking at night, we'd get a bass or we'd you'd see somebody catch them on hooking line. Then all of a sudden, they came back. My dad, who really thought about the water a lot, he loved the bay. He said that's cycles he had heard that if you have bass, you don't have fluke. If you have fluke, you don't have

many flounders. The different cycles that they fight each other and so forth, that they don't complement each other. They devastate each other. A bass will eat anything. Bluefish will attack bunkers. You won't see many bunkers, but the bluefish are in the bag. But that's nature.

NS: So, it was like a chain reaction to the other…

JRS: But I would say that when the DDT was around, we didn't have fluke. We didn't have stripers. Weakfish just disappeared. Actually, the bay was really hurting. It took a long while, but I'd say it's back now. I would say that the bay is as good as I could ever remember with bass, weakfish clams, crabs, blue claws. When I was a kid, we'd get blue claws all over the place and now they're doing the same thing. But there was a long period in there.

NS: You mentioned the Long Beach sewage treatment plant. I know there is also one over in the Cedar Creek plant.

JRS: Right. Cedar Creek.

NS: Has that had an effect on the bay?

JRS: I'm sure it has.

NS: That you have noticed.

JRS: Yes. Long Beach and Bay Park. Actually, Nassau County, other sewer plant is Bay Park. That's right across from the Long Beach out there. They worked together. How bad, I don't know. Cedar Creek goes out…

NS: Did you notice anything once they constructed those plants?

JRS: Yes. Believe it or not, my dad had that Garve again in the late [19]40s and [19]50s. It was a pretty big boat. We took some of the Board of Health people for water samples all around the West Bay on the boat. We used to take them. I think we got like $20 a day for the boat to drive them. They would sample the water and put it in bottles and in coolers and mark where we got it and everything. I didn't know what they were doing, but that's what I took them around. So, they definitely knew they were impacting.

NS: When were those plants constructed? Do you know? A rough guess.

JRS: I would say in the late [19]50s, early [19]60s.

NS: That early.

JRS: Yes.

NS: Wow.

JRS: Freeport had…

NS: Now was that when they started building a lot more houses?

JRS: Yes. Actually, all of a sudden like the Mera Cove was all flat. Belmore Bay was all land and it was shallow. You couldn't get a boat up in there. But once they started to develop, they dredged the sand all for that landfill. Was out of Merrick Bay by the golf course, Belmore. They made the canals over there, and that was all dredged over here on Cal Meadow. That was all marsh and sand and everything. But they dredged it up and they started developing it. I think for a while they were out at – they just let them do what they wanted to do, but now they control them. I think they're doing a good job. Me personally.

NS: Have you seen methods change for catching things like clams and Achilles. Has it always been pretty similar to?

JRS: Not clams. Clams they rake, now they go in wetsuits they don't tread. I used to go with my socks and my dungarees and that was it. Dry off. But now they use wetsuits for clamming. Killian, again, when I first went Killian, I think we had twelve or fourteen pots. Now I don't fish probably over twenty-four pots.

NS: At a time.

JRS: At a time, a day. You pick them up maybe once or twice a day. But there are some fellows that fish seventy-five, eighty pots for Achilles.

NS: What kind of boats do they have that they can carry seventy-five or they keep going back and forth?

JRS: They'll go back and forth because you have so much power and you can go show fast. You can get in, out, in and out. It all depends where you dock. Where you're fishing. But it's not unheard of. Probably more fish seventy pots than like, I'm stupid I fished twenty-four. What I feel is that if I put twenty-four in the right spots where I know where the Achilles are going to be I'll do as good as they will.

NS: Has that been the case?

JRS: Yes. It has been. People will say that. They say, "Oh, he knows where they are. He knows where they live or something." They tease. But again…

NS: Now I heard this past summer was a horrible summer for Achilles.

JRS: It was zero.

NS: What do you think happened?

JRS: My personal opinion, I think they sprayed something.

NS: For the West Nile Virus maybe?

JRS: I would say that if they said that they were using some sort of an oil on top of the water Achilles, lay their eggs on top of the water. They lay them and they free spool in the water, and then they go up on the grass. Then the high tide comes, their eggs hatch and the little fish go back in the water and so forth. I think with all the spraying that they actually killed the set. They wiped every. I can honestly say killing more than fifty years and never short like this year. I put twenty-four pots out and maybe got two or three quarter. Five or six Achilles in a pot. It was unheard of. Maybe two years ago. One time I was killing a by Zach's, and the helicopter came over with the tubes out the side. He was spraying and actually they sprayed right where I was killing it. I felt I felt like it coming down, but I couldn't get out of the way. So, I came home and I was like really hot. There was a couple of guys fishing by the bridge and they said, "We got sprayed. " I said, "So did I." So, I took their names and we exchanged names and so forth. This was again, by the [inaudible] Parkway. The third bridge up in that area. When I got in, I think my first call was the DEC point lookout, the Bay Constable. They said they had nothing to do with any spraying. You would have to get a hold of the state. I called the state and they said that they had nothing to do with it, so maybe you better call the Board of Health. I was on the phone about forty minutes and finally ended up with the Board of Health. She said, "Wait a minute, let me check." She came back, she was nice. I made sure I talked to the head of the department and she said, "No, we have no spraying going on whatsoever." I said, "Well, I will tell you where I was." She said, "Well, I really would not know." But I said, "I was by Zach Space." He said, "Maybe Jones' Beach." I called Jones Beach and they said, "Yes, we sprayed the beach." I said, "I am on the Bayside." My nephew had called because I had called him and he is a bay man, and he was working over this way over by Freeport. I was out by Zach's. I said, "Did you see a helicopter out there?" He says, "Yes it sprayed me." He said, "I was working down by the inlet, he was by Short Beach. Then we wanted to talk to somebody to see where they sprayed. So, he hooked us up with somebody." The guy said, "Well, maybe I did wander off, but I was spraying state property only and you cannot do anything about it." I said, "I do not want to do anything, I want you to stop or get the Newsday or talk to your boss." I said, "What you are doing you are killing wildlife, you are spraying people." He said, "If you see, then you should get out of the way and no one else knows." I said, "If I am in the creek the only way, I could get out of your way would I pull a shotgun out and shoot you helicopter" I mean, if he is going to be stupid, I am going to be stupid.

NS: I will return this [inaudible] on the tape.

JR: Again, nothing ever came of it, but it did stop. They told me the only thing they sprayed was the vegetable, but I do not believe it. Because they told us…

NS: So, you have seen them spray lots of different things.

JR: You could ask him; he will tell you where they spray. You go out in the morning, very early in the summer when you get up 5:00 a.m., they do a lot.

NS: Now, let me ask you, when did they first start closing off the bay after it range? They have

had those closings.

JR: Maybe in the [19]70s. I would say the town of Hempstead has done a great job on the bays. All bays are clean, believe it they are. In fact, we went out to lunch three or four weeks ago Al Grover and Freddie Ska and [inaudible] and we went down to Shinnecock and we were going over the new Shinnecock Bridge there. We looked out and we saw a couple of guys muscling. Freddie stopped and said, "There is not much activity in the bay here." I said, "Why?" He said, "Believe it or not, it is not like Freeport where you could have crab pots, you could have a guy catching spearing, somebody getting Achilles, somebody clamming, somebody muscling." He said, "Here the only thing we have do is mussel a couple of guys." He said, "The bay it is almost dead." Around here, there is twenty, thirty guys clamming at low tide, all the clamming fleet. Our bay is in good shape.

NS: How many full-time bay men do you think are here in Freeport now? Full-time Batman slash fisherman? Some people work on the dragon boats.

JR: I would say twenty-five.

NS: How many do you think there were twenty years ago?

JR: Forty, fifty, and again, rules and regulations a couple of them could not get their clamming licenses because they live on boats.

NS: Yes, I know too [laughter] who you are talking about.

JR: Some moved across the line for a short time and went out to [inaudible] or something, and he moved back in. They would not give him a clamming license that is Gordon Lean. The guy was clamming his whole life. His father was, his brother is, and again, I feel that they should be able to make adjustments on those guys because again, they followed the bay their whole life. Maybe they did not make enough money to buy a house. Maybe they had to rent the house, they do not have a good income, that is for sure. Again, they are still good people, they are working people. They would work if they had a license, but that is not for me to say.

NS: Do you know, I know dragon fishermen who have been kind of separate from bay men for a long time. When did you see the two start to come together?

JR: I am a dragon fisherman. I had a dragon.

NS: I know, that is why I am asking you.

JR: Believe it or not, I would say there was always respect because they were all working people. Right. If you go out and you had a beer, you bump into somebody that had just come in or going out or clamming and I do not think there was ever any hatred. There is always respect.

NS: Definitely.

JR: There is always respect. Again, we went up to Maine and they say that the lobstermen, they do not like to dragon men and this and that because they get in their pots. But again, we do not have that many lobstermen. We only got two or three boats here, they fish out of restricted areas and so forth. So, as far as the fights in the bank tradition or the ocean or whatever you want to call it, I think everybody gets along pretty good.

NS: Has that always been the case?

JR: I would say, "Yes". Growing up, I knew a couple of guys, Dick Abbott, and those fellas, and like to go out in the ocean, they were like heroes to me. [laughter]

NS: Are there fewer dragon fishermen now that?

JR: Yes.

NS: How many dragon fishermen were there when you were first growing up? When you were a teenager?

JR: When I was a teenager, there was not that many. Maybe, maybe say, eight or ten boats. But then in the [19]70s and so forth, there was quite a few.

NS: How about how many?

JR: I would say twenty, twenty-five.

NS: How come there was such a lot more than?

JR: I am sure the fishing was better.

NS: Why do you think the fishing was better?

JR: Well, let's face it, it was probably over-fish because the smaller boats would work in shore and the larger boats would go offshore. The larger boats would always do much better, only for the simple reason they could get offshore. Because there is only going to be so much fish and if everybody works the same area, eventually you are going to catch them up.

NS: So, there were a lot more dragon boats in the [19]70s.

JR: Two or three out of three. That is Tony and Charlie [inaudible] and Timmy and Charlie's Obo, Tom with the, [inaudible] but before there was a lot of dragons in Ballwin and Freeport.

NS: Yes, I got you.

JR: [inaudible] We had awful too. Point Lookout had eight or ten.

NS: How come you got out of the dragon boats?

JR: Restriction.

NS: What started happening and what were some of the things that remember?

JR: [crosstalk] When we first fished, you just went fishing and that was it. You sold your catch and you paid your taxes and everybody.

NS: About how much would you catch, for instance?

JR: Depends on how long you want to stay. [laughter] But it was actually a profitable business. You could make, you could make a good living.

NS: What would be considered a good catch in a day in the [19]60s or [19]70s?

JR: I got my boat in the [19]80s, which was pretty good, twenty, thirty boxes of fluke a day.

NS: About how many pounds was that?

JR: Three thousand, two thousand. It was good. Again, the price was not like it is now, the price now is like two dollars a pound, maybe down there. At that time, it was maybe sixty cents, seventy cents, you know. But again, fuel was very cheap, fifteen, twenty cents a gallon if you want.

NS: Plus, you could catch a lot of fish.

JR: It was a business where you could say, if you want to go in business and make a buck, but you are going to work hard, you could do it, it was feasible. Now, you could not make a living fishing, there is just too many restrictions. I got the boat and we fished maybe two years good. Then like all of a sudden you had to have federal permits and,

NS: When was that?

JR: About [19]85, somewhere around in there. Then all of a sudden you had to have a federal permit for every species like fluke, a black pomfret, flat fish, scup, squid, everything. You had to have a different permit and if you did not have that permit, you could not go for that catch and fish changed. So, you really start restricting your boat and now they have days you can only fish so many days. I still have my permits. I always have in the back of my mind, even though I am getting to be an old man to buying another boat, [laughter] it would probably be the worst investment I would ever make. They are a large investment for a decent boat, you are talking almost a couple hundred thousand dollars. There is no way you are going to get your money out of it. Again, getting somebody to run it is tough. You would have to have a full-time captain crew and it is so expensive.

NS: What kind of boat did you have?

JR: A North Carolina. We had the Miss Renee. It was a wooden North Carolina boat. It was fifty feet, it was a nice boat.

NS: It was a day boat as I recall.

JR: Yes. Day boat. They would go overnight three or four days. She had good quarters on it, we had good bunks, we had a nice coach. It was actually beautiful; it was pretty nice boat. But again, when you put your crew on, you had to have everybody's social security number, you had to call and tell them you were leaving to go fishing. When I say them, you had had to tell the national Fishery service where you were going, how many trawls you made, what you caught, what you discarded. It was no more mom-and-pop operation. No matter if the boat was two hundred foot long or twenty foot long, you had the same report and you had to fill them out every day. If you fished today at the end of the day when you came in, your paperwork had to be up the [inaudible] and you had to submit them monthly, how much fuel you used. If you had somebody, note you had to have somebody assigned to removing the garbage off the boat. It is a nightmare of paperwork and I still have all the licenses and permits for the Miss Renee. The permits are regulated by the length of the boat, the weight of the boat, and the horsepower and that limits you to the quantity,

NS: Much do you spend on permits?

JR: I went from zero when I first bought the boat to probably about $500 to $400

NS: A year for all the permits.

JR: Yes, maybe $600.

NS: That is for all the permits that,

JR: That is Clamming, the clamming license like a hundred and fifty maybe more, maybe a little more. Under $ 1,000 which is good, if they're going to administer it and take care of it. It should be watched.

NS: Who were your customers when you had the dragon boat?

JR: We would ship to New York

NS: To Fulton?

JR: Fulton Fish Market, again, around here to ship fifty pounds of fish from point lookout to New York. It is $9 and fifty cents.

NS: For how much?

JR: Fifty pounds box a carton. That is very expensive. That is why the boats do not stay here. You cannot afford that. My nephew fished last week and he had, there was striper fish and he

had a box of blue fish, fifty pounds of blue fish and he sold them in New York market. Actually, they called a return, that is what you get back after the Fulton Fish market takes the commission and the 950 for the fifty pounds and so forth, he got $11 for fifty pounds o, blue fish for a box that is what they call a cargo. Actually, it is not worth it to take them from the ocean at that point. What they should be worth, I do not know but it is tough. Clams this year, I would say like the economy is hurt because clams right now, they should be about twenty-three, twenty-four cents apiece for one clam that is what they get and now they are not much probably around eighteen cents. Although it is just a few pennies, if you that is your living a 25 percent.

NS: It is 25 percent.

JR: I would say that the economy is hurting, with the fellows that were with tuna fishing, they were getting $10 a pound. Now all of sudden they are getting $3 a pound. You cannot stay in business. Again, when they go tuna fishing, they buy spearing, from the local guys here. If they cannot make any money tuna fishing, they are not going buy spearing, they are not going to buy fuel and the economy is down on the waterfront.

NS: Do you think there are some solutions to some of these issues in your wish list?

JR: I would say there probably are. If people made the decisions that were in the business and knew what was going on, the federal government, the congressman from Iowa votes, or yes or no. He does not care if he votes for fishing in North Carolina or New York. People are making decisions that really should not make a decision. They should say that and let the coastal states, the farmers, I know we have friends that are farmers and they grow corn and soybeans in Nebraska. Chuck tells me stories he says, "Sometimes I get a check for 25, $30,000 from the federal government." He says I have to call He has a rep that he calls a federal rep or something that takes care of his area. He said, "I call and they say, this is what we thought that maybe we did not have, four inches of rain, we only had three inches rain, so your corn is not going to be as."

NS: So, do you think there could be something similar for fishermen?

JR: I would say that if you just had a rep that said, "Hey, the price of fuel cannot be $2 a gallon." If you are fishing and you are going to catch the same as you caught last year and you were only paying a dollar a gallon it does not add up, you got help them somewhere along the line.

NS: There should be some sort of subsidy for fishermen – ¬¬

JR: Somebody just know what is going on and aware and able to make a decision. Should they give them the fuel, "No. Make them work, everybody should work." But again, I do not think they will ever get to that point.

NS: Part of this festival is to also provide some avenues of discussion. Are there some other things that you think might?

JR: A friend of mine has a boat. Bob Harter, he has, North Sea. It is out of Shinnecock now.

He is Freeport guy. He had, little puff in. He had the puff in here in Freeport. He built the North Sea and his son wanted to be a fisherman so they built a bigger boat.

NS: This is a dragon or…

JR: A dragon. He built a nice boat and I saw him a couple weeks ago and I said, "How are you doing?" I had not seen him in a while and we were talking, and he says, "Chris, his son is going to try to get a job on the tub boat." I said, "What do you mean get a dragon job." He says, "We are going to lay the big boat up." He said, "We are going to put her up for sale." I said, "Why?" He said, "Restrictions, fuel costs, insurance skyrocketed on a boat," and he says, "We cannot make money no matter how we add up. We cannot make money and he's fishing trips. He is fishing five or six days offshore. You are looking in the trade papers and there is loads of boats for sale." Like the lobstermen on the North Shore, probably every lobster boat that was on the North Shore is for sale. These guys are trying to get out of it.

NS: Let me ask you, I know that, here in Freeport, there have been various plans that seem to always overlook the fishermen. Do you think there are some things that could be done locally to help?

JR: I would say yes.

NS: What are some of the things that come to your mind?

JR: I would say have a commercial dock and you do not actually need it on, a nautical mile or anything. One time I remember I went to a couple meetings and they were talking about the Naval Reserve property, which they only store town of hemp and old vehicles and stuff like that to make that a commercial dock, charge them rent to tie the boats up. But put a fish dock in there where the local people could buy good, fresh fish at a good price. Buy their bait, buy everything there, and push for it and everything is in place. But you would have to get everybody to agree. "Yes, I will tie up there and sell my fish." Somebody having a nice fish market. Control the bar, let the kids come down and see the boats coming in, unloading, and things like that. We went up to New England and every town has that, Freeport had years and years of that.

NS: Is there some reason why we do not have it on Woodcliff?

JR: Probably, Woodcliff they gave away to Honky Tonk and let's face it.

NS: We were talking about local revitalization efforts. I know, I see what is going on with Freeport, every restaurant in town is setting up shop on Woodcliff.

JR: Again, if that is what people choose to do–

NS: Except I am thinking that it is somebody who chose to do this. Do you think that they should try and make more of an effort to keep the commercial fishermen on wood cliff?

JR: I would say to me personally, "No." I would say develop another area. It could be Freeport Creek over here.

NS: How come? How come?

JR: Woodcliff is very confining. It is a narrow channel. When I came in with my big boat, like on a Sunday, it is difficult, you have a lot activity.

NS: Because there is a lot more traffic.

JR: You should not put them at risk either. People are coming down to look and, and they do not pay attention, you know, and if are trying to back a big boat in, you need a little room. But there are areas, Freeport Creek would be perfect for me. I could not believe that they would ever even say, "No. Do not do that or we do not have the money." I know they did studies. No one ever said another word, but to have a nice fish market, it would pay and the local people would benefit by getting fresh fish at a respectable price. We should not have to pay New York City prices for fish out here. We are right next to the boat, we are one step off the boat, when the boats used to sell off the boat when they came in. There was nothing wrong with that. That was good for the people.

NS: I love that.

JR: People like to see what they are going to buy and buy.

NS: There used to be a lot more fish markets than in Freeport. How many fish markets were there when you were growing up?

JR: I know that for a fact, seven because my wife and I, we go down, we have coffee every morning down on Woodcliff and they used to be seven fish markets. Now they are two. Three.

NS: Well, there is [inaudible] and Captain Ben. So, there are three of them.

JR: But there were seven that were actually busy. There were a couple boats. Timmy was back then St. Peter, the St. Peter. Apache had the fish market and the boat.

NS: Larry Mueller had the place.

JR: Larry had the trucking the fish out.

NS: George Street had a market of some kind–

JR: Bills, there were a lot of places where you could get good fish. But the has changed change maybe the ladies do not like to cook fish. They smell their houses they buy packaged fish.

[end of transcript]