The OSU Extension Service Centennial Oral History Collection, May 3, 2008

Title
Bob Jacobson

Date
May 3, 2008

Location
Jacobson residence, Waldport, Oregon.

Summary
Jacobson recounts his youth in North Bend, Oregon and his involvement in 4-H and fishing. He describes his time at Oregon State College, noting in particular his participation on the varsity basketball squad. He then details his entrance into the world of the Extension Service as the country's first Marine Extension Agent, and speaks of the creation of Sea Grant a few years later. In recalling his career, Jacobson comments specifically on his work related to marine safety. He also mentions his position on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. He closes with a discussion of his commercial fishing enterprise in both Oregon and Alaska, and several marine-related activities with which he is still involved.

Interviewee
Bob Jacobson

Interviewer
Elizabeth Uhlig

Website
http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/extension/

Transcript

***Note: Interview recorded to audio only.**

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is an oral history interview for the OSU Extension Service oral history project. Today is May 3, 2008 and we're at Bob's home in Waldport and my name is Elizabeth Uhlig.

Bob, to start with, could you tell us a little about your background. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Bob Jacobson: I was born in North Bend, Oregon on the central Oregon Coast in 1939 and I spent my entire life up until college in North Bend. Graduated from North Bend High School in 1958. I have a brother that's seven years younger and a sister that's a couple of years younger.

EU: What did your family do? What did your father do?

BJ: My mother was actually a school teacher who taught school during my early years; in fact, she was my teacher in the fourth grade, on a two-year certificate out of what is now Southern Oregon University but back then it was Ashland Normal School. She actually went back and got her bachelor's and masters' at Oregon State in the '60s. My Dad was a logger who got hurt very severely in a logging accident when I was just a little guy. After he recuperated he came back and actually retired as a longshoreman working there in Coos Bay.

EU: Were you involved in 4-H?

BJ: I was. My mother was actually a 4-H leader in bachelor sewing and I might add that I took grand champion at State Fair in bachelor sewing in my third year in the classes she taught. Walt Schroeder, who later became a good friend of mine, was the Extension agent in Coos County at that time and in charge of the 4-H programs.

EU: What did you make? What was your project in bachelor sewing?

BJ: We had to patch a pair of Levis; we had to darn a sock; and there was something else – sew on a button. I think those were the three things we did. There may have been one other thing, I forget, but anyway I learned a little, I hope.

EU: Did you ever think you would go into Extension work?

BJ: At that point in my life, no. In fact, I wasn't even really sure what Extension work was all about. I thought I knew what 4-H was about, because I was a member of a 4-H club, but I wasn't able to tie 4-H together with Extension at the point in time. It wasn't until actually I was well through my college years that I began to think about Extension work. Prior to that, I didn't really have much knowledge of Extension.

EU: In your Extension work, of course, it's all been in marine and fisheries. Did you do a lot of fishing growing up?

BJ: Well, my Dad was a very, very avid sports fisherman, a recreational fisherman and so I spent --- every time I could go with my Dad, I went with my Dad fishing. He was a very good mentor; he had great patience, something which I don't have much of today, I wish I had more of. But he loved to fish and he taught me to appreciate the outdoors and what fishing offered and what hunting offered. I never went commercial fishing as a kid, but we did have, I should say my folks did have, very good friends in Coos Bay/Charleston area who were commercial fishermen, so I was acquainted with the industry from a very early age.

EU: So you went down to Charleston a lot?

BJ: Spent a lot of time on the docks at Charleston, watching the boats unload. That was one of my favorite things to do when I was a kid growing up.

EU: So, where did you go to school – university?

BJ: Actually, when I was a senior at North Bend High School, I got a scholarship offer to play basketball at OSU. And as a kid growing up, my Dad and I were very, very avid OSU basketball fans. We had a little tiny radio in the house; sometimes it would pick up the games, sometimes it wouldn't, but we had our ears tuned to that radio anytime OSU played; so, one of my early childhood dreams was to play basketball at Oregon State and as a matter of fact, I got that scholarship and ended up playing there, so I spent five years in the undergraduate program and then went back for a couple of years and did graduate work in fisheries. Without getting my degree I might add. I got tired of school and bailed out.

EU: When you say your degree, you mean your master's?

BJ: Right, my master's degree.

EU: So your undergraduate degree, what was that in?

BJ: I actually started in Forestry, and then my sophomore year I switched to Fish and Game, and my junior year I switched to Business. Actually, at that time it was Business and Technology and that's where I got my degree was in Business. But during those undergraduate years, I took all the fisheries and forestry, and oceanography courses I could get. So I had a pretty good background in fisheries even with that Business degree.

EU: What were you thinking to do as a career at that point?

BJ: You know, I wasn't sure. I mean I really wasn't sure. Extension never entered my mind because I hadn't quite pieced all that together yet. I thought I would probably end up as a biologist someplace with Fish and Game even with that Business degree that's probably where I would go. Particularly after I went back to school in the graduate program in Fisheries.

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EU: How, then, did you make the connection with the Extension Service?

BJ: While I was in graduate school, it must have been in about '65, late '65; my major professor, Howard Horton, was a good friend with a fella who was working for Tillamook County Extension by the name of Bill Wick. And Bill had actually kind of strayed a little bit from his agricultural background when he went to Tillamook, he ended up working with the oyster farmers on some problems they were having there in the marine environment. And Bill recognized the potential of establishing some kind of a marine program where we would work not only with oyster people, as he did but, with those people up and down the Coast who made their living from the sea.

So, I believe it was Christmas Eve, 1965 that Bill Wick and Howard Horton got together and wrote a proposal for money to do Extension work with the marine industry. That proposal was written for federal dollars under the State Technical Services Act and it was about a year later, over a year later, that they got word that that money would be forthcoming and I got a phone call from Howard Horton saying, "We've got the money, we would like you to take the job." No interview, no nothing. Actually, I did talk to some of the Extension people before I took the job. But that was my introduction to Extension and I got thrown in the middle with very little Extension background, but I should indicate that I've always been good with people, got along well with people, met people easily and so certainly the challenge didn't intimidate me at all. In fact, I very looked forward to it. As it turned out it was a huge challenge, but I think I did a pretty good job. Early on, identifying some issues with some of my marine clients that we got them some help on. I ended up spending about 28 ½ years in that program before I retired.

EU: Were you the first Extension....what was your title when you hired?

BJ: Actually, I was hired in June of '67 and I believe, as I recall, my title was a Marine Extension Agent. Basically, what they told me when they hired me was that you are an agricultural agent in hip boots; whatever that means. But anyway, I preceded Sea Grant by several years. It wasn't until I believe maybe '69 that the University actually got... the Sea Grant program came along and the University was designated as a Sea Grant University, and the Sea Grant Program as we know it today actually began. I think I preceded that by a couple of years.

EU: And then, you were the first one.

BJ: I was the first one, that's correct.

EU: And where did you live then? Where was your area?

BJ: Well, I was based in Newport. I worked out of the Lincoln County Extension Office which was at that point in time - it was in the Lincoln County Courthouse in Newport. We later moved to our own building, once again in the middle of Newport as opposed to the Marine Science Center in South Beach. But for those first couple of years since I was the only agent, I travelled up and down the Coast from Astoria to Brookings holding meetings, talking to people on the entire length of the Oregon Coast. I spent most of my time, however in the Newport area. That was my home base and that's where I felt most comfortable and that's where I knew the most people and I think that's probably where the program was the strongest, initially was in that Newport area.

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EU: Because this was a new program, then, how did you decide what things you were going to do? How did you develop your contacts with the fishermen and your clientele?

BJ: Well, you know, I think I had an advantage when I took the job - for a couple of reasons. Number one, a number of people in Newport new me because of my basketball playing days at Oregon State and these were people who followed Oregon State basketball with Slats Gill the coach and so recognized my name when I moved to Newport.

Secondly, while I was at Oregon State I ran into a couple of gals from Newport whose Dad was a commercial fisherman. And even while I was going to school, they brought me over and introduced me to their folks, father and mother and her Dad was Wilburn Hall who is still alive – kind of the "Dean of Fishermen" in the Newport area. Very, very successful fisherman who at that point in time was just getting ready to embark on his career of fishing in Alaska. So, when I moved here I had Wilburn to kind of rely on and introduce me to some fishermen.

In terms of where I focused my energy, Bill Wick said when I started, he said, "Bob, let's just take six months before you do anything and find out what the fishermen need." So I spent basically the first six months travelling up and down the Coast talking to fishermen, talking to processors, talking to Port Commission people, anybody who I could find to talk about Marine Extension, asking them the question, what is it that I can do for you?

Most of them, initially, were or many of them initially, were a little skeptical that Extension really had anything to offer them. But at least I got the Extension name out there. And I think as a result of those early contacts we made a lot of good contacts that paid dividends in years to come and people would call because the recognized the name and recognized that we were there to help. So those first six months were very important, I think, in the development of the overall Extension Program. Not only mine, but the entire Extension program. Because we were able to identify some areas that we could get started immediately and we did.

One of the things that was very obvious was that there was very little communication, if any, between members of the commercial fishing industry and those people who regulated them - the National Marine Fisheries Service at the federal level and the old Oregon Fish Commission employees from the state level. So in that second six months that I worked we organized a series of town hall meetings where we started in Astoria on Monday night and ended up in Brookings on Friday night and we basically packed the meeting room with fishermen interested in talking face-to-face with the regulators that were regulating the industry that they participated in. Those were very, very successful in getting those two groups a little closer together.

EU: They hadn't been talking much before?

BJ: Very little communication between them.

EU: Was there any resistance on their part?

BJ: Well, there was some resistance from the agency people about spending that amount of time doing something that at that point, they didn't feel was very meaningful or very useful. Why should we give up a week of our time to drive from Astoria to Brookings to meet with this group that we have nothing to talk about? I said well you do have some things to talk about because you are imposing regulations on this industry without giving them any due process, basically. And so, yeah, there was some reluctance on the part of the regulators to attend these meetings, but after the first year or so, they were pretty eager and enthusiastic to continue those meetings as a means of better increasing the communication between the two groups. And I think that was the end result that communications were much improved, as they are today. Those meetings were probably the forerunner of the good communications we have between industry and agencies today.

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EU: What other things did you do as far as communication goes - I'm thinking about the newsletter?

BJ: Well, at that point in time, and I can't recall, Elizabeth, whether there was a commercial fishing periodical on the West Coast or not. I don't think there was. But anyway, in getting together with Bill Wick and Howard Horton we all felt there might be some benefit in putting out a bi-monthly newsletter that went to all commercial fishermen on the Oregon Coast talking about different issues, new product designs, meetings that were important that might be forthcoming. So for, oh probably eight or ten years we put out five or six issues of that newsletter a year and that kind of got in front of the industry the Extension name. They recognized that we were there to help and that we weren't regulatory in any fashion and that they should look at that newsletter as a source of good information that may help them in their business.

EU: You talked a little bit about the process of getting accepted by the fishermen. Could you talk a little bit about that?

BJ: Well, it certainly helped having some recognition coming to Newport. Some name recognition, which I did. And I've always been thankful for that. It wasn't something, the recognition of Extension and my acceptance, wasn't something that happened over night. I mean there are a few people that I became friends with immediately and some of those people are still my friends to this day. But for the most part, it was a struggle trying to convince industry that I was there to help, and not only was I there to help but that I had the capabilities of helping when a problem had been identified. You know, it took me a good, I'll bet a good two or three years, to gain – maybe longer than that – maybe five years to gain pretty good coast-wide acceptance of not only myself but of the Marine Extension Program on the Oregon Coast. As a matter of fact, that's something that I worked on throughout my entire career. Because clientele would change from year to year and so maybe the guys in Brookings that you talked to a few years earlier, had moved on someplace else, and so you were always dealing with new constituents and so it was an ever-evolving process in trying to sell the program.

EU: You worked not only with the fishermen, but who exactly were your clientele?

BJ: Well, initially, I mean under that first State Technical Services Grant, on which I was hired for the first couple of years, fishermen where specifically the clientele that we were targeting. Commercial fishermen. You know, once Sea Grant came along and provided funding for not only my position, but a number of other Marine Extension agent positions and some specialist positions, we soon recognized that we had a lot of clientele out there that we weren't reaching. Those members of the recreational marine fishing community, port managers, port districts, all the marine suppliers on the waterfront that provide the infrastructure for the fishing industries who were our clients. So the number of constituents expanded tremendously after we got some more people aboard and actually operating under Sea Grant funding. For example, I taught every summer for a number of years, probably 20 years I taught recreational fishing classes in clam digging and surf fishing and so we had a number of different audiences. It was very difficult to meet the needs of all of those, but we gave it our best shot.

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EU: So I'm sure there were times when there was controversy between these different competing groups. Did you always try to remain neutral?

BJ: We always tried to remain neutral, absolutely. I mean looking at the fishermen and the seafood processors for example; certainly there were conflicts between those two groups from time to time, primarily associated with price.

That's something that I always tried to stay out of. I always stayed out of it period. Because it was a no-win situation to get involved in something like that. We remained neutral on a lot of those controversial areas.

EU: Could you tell me a little bit about Sea Grant, how that started and what the mission and purpose of it is?

BJ: I'm probably not the one to talk in depth about Sea Grant. The Sea Grant Program was basically envisioned as one that would closely parallel the Land Grant Program that all the land grant universities in this country were founded under. I think the Sea Grant Program passed Congress in 1969, I believe that's the same year that Oregon State received its first Sea Grant funds. But Sea Grant provided outreach through their Marine Extension program, provided dollars for research as did the Land Grant Program, and it also provided dollars for resident instruction – on campus teaching. So it very closely paralleled the Land Grant Program but it was related strictly to the marine clientele.

EU: And then with funding under that program, Extension was able to add more agents and specialists?

BJ: I was hired, as I said earlier, I believe in June of '67 and I think in '69 we got a couple of agents – Paul Heikkila in Coos Bay, I think went to work in '69; Paul just retired here a year and a half ago as a Marine Extension agent. And then by the mid-70s we actually had a full complement of marine agents on the Oregon Coast. One in Astoria, Jim Bergeron; John Faudskar in Tillamook; myself in Newport; Paul Heikkila in the Charleston area, and in Brookings we shared an agent, Jim Waldvogel, with the California Sea Grant Program. On campus, we had a number of specialists. We had a specialist in Marine Economics, Fred Smith; we had specialists in Oceanography, Ed Condon and Dan Panshin; specialists in communications, Gwil Evans, Tom Gentle and Jim Leadon. We had specialists in communication -- I'm missing a couple there, Elizabeth, I can't remember exactly which ones. We had a very, very solid complement of agents and specialists who worked very closely together.

EU: During your career, you were always in Newport?

BJ: I was always based in Newport. But didn't hesitate to jump in my car and drive to Brookings or Astoria for something in those areas that I needed to.

EU: I assume too that you would be in communication with the folks in Corvallis?

BJ: Absolutely. I think we probably did the best job of any of the Extension groups in getting all our specialists and agents, probably because we were one of the smaller groups, together on a periodic basis. Once every two months we all got together for a staff meeting for a day and a half or two days and talked about what we were doing and what the needs were, where we were going in the future. Did a lot of long-range planning. So we communicated very closely with each other in the Marine Extension Program.

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EU: Did you do your own fishing? Tell us when you got your first boat and how that happened.

BJ: It was 1970 and the Sea Grant Program had hired a commercial fishing gear specialist by the name of Barry Fisher. Barry was a Harvard graduate who had gone fishing - actually when he was in high school he had dropped out to go fishing, was in the Korean War, got wounded, got out, got into Harvard, graduated from Harvard, went back to fishing on the East Coast, then found out that this position with Oregon State as a fishing gear specialist had opened, found out about it, applied, got the job. And one of the first things he did after his arrival here in '69 was to set up a small boat development program and asked me to be part of that, if I wanted to run a dory as part of that program. I said sure. So I bought a small, 18-foot wooden dory, built in Pacific City. We equipped it with all the commercial salmon gear and for the next four years I fished that dory as part of this project that Barry was working on weekends and vacations. So I would fish Saturday and Sunday and I think I had two week's vacation, so I saved that vacation time to fish.

I believe it was 1973 that I went to my boss at that time, a fellow by the name of Ken Hilderbrand who had been a seafood processing specialist with our program and was promoted to the head of the Sea Grant Extension Program when Bill Wick took the Sea Grant Director position.

I told Ken that I wanted three months leave-without-pay during the summer to fish commercially. Ken said, "Well, put together a proposal because I need something better than that. I need something to take to Extension Administration to try to sell this concept. I think it will be a hard sell, but you've convinced me that's probably something that would be beneficial not only to yourself, but to the program." So I put together a proposal. Ken ran it all the way to the head of Extension, perhaps all the way to the President of the University because this was a concept – there was no precedent for this. No one in Extension had ever worked part-time to my knowledge. As it turns out, I got that three-month leave-without-pay.

And I think it was good for a couple of reasons. Number one, it provided an opportunity for some graduate students to come in to fill in for that three months in the Extension office to get a feel for what Extension work was about and kind of get their feet wet, particularly in marine Extension work. Secondly, it gave me the credibility with the members of the industry. I was out there fishing right alongside of them as I'd be walking alongside of them on the beach. So having an Extension agent with a fishing background certainly, I think, helped me in my program with the commercial fishermen. And I guess that was the basis that sold the University on it.

Later on, I applied for and received five months leave-without-pay over a seven month period of time and I worked under that program for - probably the last ten years I worked for Extension. I was working seven months a year and have five months leave-without-pay.

EU: Did you take those five months all at one time?

BJ: No, I took it over a seven-month period. I took it from May 1 through the end of November.

EU: What were you fishing for, then?

BJ: I started out fishing salmon here locally and a little bit of albacore tuna. Let me back up. When I had the small open dories, I fished strictly salmon. In about '73 I bought a 28-foot troller where I could go out and stay for a couple of days. Several years later, I bought a 40-foot troller where I fished salmon and albacore tuna and in the late '80s I had a steel boat built in Toledo, 46-foot steel boat - the late "70s I should say, not the late '80s. In the early '80s I partnered with my brother and a couple other friends on an 82-foot steel boat that we bought in Newport and took to Alaska. I'm still co-owner of that boat along with another 104-foot boat; my partner in Kodiak, Alaska, and I own that. I've had a number of boats. Right now I still have two boats both of which fish in Alaska.

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EU: So, in the beginning then, you were always fishing just off the Coast here?

BJ: That's correct. It wasn't until about, I think I went to Alaska fishing the first time in 1979 and then several years later we bought that first boat that we took up there. So after that, I spent about five month's leave-without-pay fishing in Alaska. Prior to that time I was fishing here off the Oregon Coast.

EU: What did you fish for up in Alaska?

BJ: Started fishing for halibut and black cod; branched out into king crab, two types of tanner crab; we helped develop a major, major fishery for cod using king crab pots. That's a big fishery today that we are still involved in. We tendered salmon in the summer, meaning we would drive around to some of the isolated fishing locations with our big boat, pick up salmon from the small boat fishermen and delivered them back to the cannery in Kodiak. We've done that almost every year for about the last 25 years. So we diversified considerably after we went to Alaska.

EU: And you say, you are still continuing?

BJ: I don't personally fish anymore. 1999 was the last year I fished. But I still take care of all the paperwork for both boats that I co-own in Alaska. I take care of all the crew shares, make sure everybody gets paid, pay all the bills, and keep all the permits current. That takes me in my retirement years, that still takes me a week and a half to two weeks every month, just to take care of boat business. So it's not a full time job, but almost.

EU: How often now do you go up to Alaska?

BJ: Oh, for meetings and for business, I go five or six times a year. All the fisheries up there with the exception of salmon and crab are management by North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. That's a federal group. The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council has an advisory panel composed of 20 people. Two of those people from Oregon and I'm one of those two Oregon people on the advisory panel. So we meet five times a year, generally in Alaska to talk about fisheries management, regulations, programs and that's....I figure I put one-seventh of my year into those North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meetings by the time I travel back and forth, read all the materials, spend six days five times a year in meetings, it's about one-seventh of my year.

EU: Let's take a break. This is the end of Part 1.

[0:33:45]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 2 of the oral history with Bob Jacobson.

Bob, you had mentioned before about getting the government regulators and the fishermen together. Could you talk a little bit about some of the areas that were regulated, or the areas that you saw that needed to be regulated?

Bob Jacobson: Well, it wasn't a matter as much of the regulations themselves as it was how they were implemented. And I just felt that there wasn't due process, that the fishermen weren't getting their fair shake and their input in these regulations. But in those early years there weren't a lot of fishery regulations, and the regulations that were there had been in place for a number of years.

But about the time I went to work, we started to see more and more regulations on certain fisheries. Particularly ground fish, where trip limits came into effect or monthly limits came into effect because the government felt some of these species were being over fished. And, you know, I tried to play a mediator's role in those disputes between fishermen and regulatory agencies - as a go between the industry and the regulators in some of those issues. As the years went by some of these issues became larger and larger and, you know, if you look at the industry, they've really had pretty much unencumbered use of the ocean floor, or the ocean itself, for fishing for many, many years. There weren't many restrictions on where they could fish.

In more recent times, we have seen the discussion about marine reserves and marine protected areas and now we are seeing wave power generation in parks off the Oregon Coast. And so a lot of this open range mentality that the fisherman had over the years where they could go any place to fish has suddenly been threatened by a lot of these new proposals from marine reserves and wave parks and some of that same type of thing prevailed back in the early years, but on a much lesser scale.

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EU: Could you, as an example of the way government regulated fishing and then how that worked with the fishermen – could you talk a little bit about the halibut and your involvement with your own personal fishing for the halibut and the quota systems and so forth?

BJ: An interesting story, and I'm not sure we'll get to this in the interview or not, but I spent eight years on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. And first of all, it was a great experience. This is a group of seven people that make all the decisions in Oregon on all fish and wildlife regulations. Not only marine, but all fish and all wildlife. I think there was some reluctance on the part of Extension to allow me to do that while I was still working for Extension but I did it anyway. And I don't think, to my knowledge, there were never any big concerns about my membership in that group after I took the job.

During that period of time when I was on the Fish and Wildlife Commission, one of the biologists proposed that instead of having a recreational and a commercial halibut fishery here in this state that we give all the commercial halibut to the recreational fisherman so that there would be no commercial halibut fishery here in the state. He actually brought that proposal to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. I certainly didn't want to see the commercial fishermen lose a

small but very important fishery that they had participated in for years; in fact they developed the fishery. It wasn't until well after the commercial fishermen began fishing that the recreational fishermen started fishing halibut off Oregon.

So, I counted votes on the commission and I knew it was going to be real close because there's going to be some commissioners that wanted to see all that commercial halibut go to the recreational fishermen and just as soon do away with the commercial fishery.

The interesting thing was that right during that period of time there was a commercial halibut fishery here in Oregon. And of course a lot of my friends participated in that so I went to one of them and I said – this was Herb Goblirsch – I said, "Herb, I want to see how many of these commissioners want to buy some fresh halibut right off your boat. And so when you come in next week, I'll have an order list for you for all the halibut I need to take to these commissioners." And obviously my purpose in doing this was to reinforce the fact that commercial fishermen were catching fish for people to eat - for others to eat. All of them ordered , and when it came down to the final vote, I got that one extra vote I needed, I think because we had halibut for all those commissioners and it passed by a very narrow four to three margin that the commercial fishery would be retained here in the state. It could have gone the other way very closely, but it was kind of politics at its best and as a result, today we still have a commercial fishery on halibut here in Oregon.

EU: And how do they regulate how many of the fish can be caught every year?

BJ: Halibut fishery is regulated by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. It's a two-nation Canada/U.S. group that surveys halibut stocks each year very thoroughly. The IPHC probably has the best reputation of any of the fisheries regulatory agencies. They have done a great job over the years in regulating halibut catches, not only in this section of the Coast, but in the major halibut areas in Alaska. So they do their surveys through a number of different methods, and they determine on a coast wide basis now, what the standing stock of halibut is. And from those surveys they basically come up with how much fish can be caught in each of the halibut regulatory areas each year. So those numbers in each area may vary from year to year. They could be the same, but they are probably going to vary a little bit depending what the stock size is in the area.

So, that's a very closely, very tightly, very well managed fishery.

EU: And so then, as the Extension agent, you worked between these different groups with communications, etc.?

BJ: Correct.

[0:41:45]

EU: Could you talk a little bit about your involvement with the survival suits and that whole safety issue?

BJ: One of the things that I realized pretty early on in my work with industry members was that probably the last consideration for many of them was vessel safety. That's not saying that they didn't maintain their boats well, because the good fishermen always maintain the boat. But back in the late 60s early 70s if you were to take a survey of a hundred commercial boats tied in Newport, there probably wouldn't have been ten to fifteen percent of those with life rafts, for example. And even if they had life rafts, there was no training available for how to deal with an emergency at sea.

At about that same time, there was the manufacturer that came up with something called, initially, a survival suit. We later changed the name to an exposure suit. Survival suits were basically big cumbersome oversized neoprene suits that you climbed into with a zipper that came up the front all the way to your chin that were waterproof. And if you ever had to ditch at sea, in other words, leave your vessel at sea, you could get into these survival suits and the theory was that it would protect you from the cold water and would improve your chances for survival over a longer period of time.

So, I became very interested in these survival suits. I went to one of the local retailers in Newport and I said to him, "Are you going to carry these survival suits?" And he said, "Oh yeah, I've ordered some." Well, as it turns out he put a price on them that I thought was prohibitive for a lot of the industry members back in that era. So I made a few phone calls and found a person in Washington that I could buy these suits from for about a third of the price if we bought in volume that the local retailer was charging. Over probably a five or six year period in the mid-70s I literally ordered, financed, and sold hundreds of survival suits to our local fleet and to the guys locally that were headed for Alaska. In fact, I had orders

coming from all up and down the Oregon Coast for these survival suits. So, we were basically taking advantage of an opportunity to make the vessels and the fishermen aboard those vessels, a little bit safer place to operate.

We followed that up with actual training sessions in local swimming pools, where we would travel up and down the coast putting on these sessions on how to use survival suits, how to inflate life rafts, how to get into life rafts once they are in the water. We got the Coast Guard involved in how to operate and talking to fishermen about how to operate emergency pumps that could be dropped to a vessel when a vessel was in trouble. So, we would fill the bleachers in the swimming pools at these sessions. Guys were very interested in trying to become safer. So that was something we identified early on as one of the areas where we could make a difference and I think we have made a difference in that area.

EU: Do you think there were instances when there were accidents that people then survived...?

BJ: You know, I don't have any solid documentation of that, but there is no question in my mind that there are boats that went down where people were saved with survival suits that probably came either from those that I ordered or at least they had a better understanding of survival suits and they got them themselves based on the work we had done.

EU: Are they required now?

BJ: Survival suits are required on all vessels as are life rafts. Fishing Vessel Safety Act of a few years ago really put in motion a safety program for fishing vessels that was long overdue, first of all and it's been very, very effective in reducing vessel and crewmen casualties.

[0:46:35]

EU: Are there other examples of safety regulations and/or issues that you worked on?

BJ: Oh, I can't think of other issues with regard to safety. I mean I think we worked on a lot of issues over the years and I don't recall any specifics.

Well, we could stray a little afield here that one of the things that always concerned me and I think concerned most fishermen, talking specifically about those involved in the trawl fishery trawl - TRAWL, as opposed to troll - TROLL. Trawl is net; troll is hook and line. We are talking about trawl now. Vessels tow these nets behind their boats. Some of these nets are as long as a football field; the mouth is being held open as they are being pulled by these large steel doors, but it is a very complicated, very complex fishery. Fishermen really have no opportunity to see how that gear, when it's in the water, is working. And it is amazing to me that they were as efficient as they were, but I always thought we need to do something so that we can give the fishermen a better idea of how that gear is working.

Then I found out about a school that was operating in Denmark and this school provided one-week training sessions for fishermen on using scale model trawl gear in these flume tanks. These flume tanks had water running in the tanks; they had these scale model, exact scale model nets and trawl doors. So I started talking it up around the Newport waterfront and pretty soon I had 25 fishermen ready to go to Denmark for a week. And by the time a month or so was up, we had 50 fishermen. So we ended up taking two groups of fishermen to Denmark; 25 in each group with their wives or girlfriends and spent a week at this training session in a little place called Hirtshals. And I think to the last man; they all felt it was very, very worthwhile to have been there. Some of them actually went back for a second go around on their own. I think as a result of that, the industry became a little more efficient.

One of the things I always worried about in a situation like that was, we have to remember the resource because when you become more efficient you are going to catch more fish, regulators then are going to have to implement more regulations on you to keep you from – either reduce your fishing time or somehow reduce the amount of target species you are taking because most of them are managed on a quota and when that quota is reached... So when you become more efficient, you know, you catch them quicker, you're going to have shorter seasons and so while efficiency is great, sometimes you have to think of the other side and say, well maybe we'd better back off a little in trying to improve this efficiency. But that was a good example of when the industry was getting started in the mid-water trawling business and I think it was very useful to just about everybody that went.

[0:50:15]

EU: And what kinds of fish were they fishing for?

BJ: Well, it's all ground fish. Its rock fish and Pacific whiting. Whiting was a fishery that was just coming into vogue in the late 70s early 80s. That's a mid-water fishery where the net is towed someplace in the water column between the surface and the bottom, has very specialized gear and very specialized electronic equipment. And learning how to use all that was just part of the purpose of these training sessions in Denmark.

EU: You talked about that you would need to set quotas so you wouldn't over-fish certain ones. Could you talk a little bit about how that worked, I mean for all the different fish, for salmon or ground fish, whatever? How much money was spent to study these fish?

BJ: You know, Elizabeth, I couldn't give you a dollar and cents figure on the exact amount of money spent, but you know... First of all, the ocean is a tremendously complex, tremendously diverse environment. We've got commercial fishermen fishing all the way from the beach out to a thousand fathoms, the entire length of the Coast, the entire length of the West Coast and that environment is constantly changing, depending on currents and water temperatures and amount of sunlight and just a whole bunch of factors. And so trying to get a handle on stock size of a particular species in a particular area is very, very difficult. First of all, the money simply hasn't been there to do the necessary research. As a matter of fact, and the fishermen have always argued and they were exactly right – we know more about that environment than you researchers do. You know, we spend a hundred or a hundred and fifty days a year out there trawling for these different species; you guys might spend a couple weeks out there on a research cruise and we just feel we know more about what's happening out there than you do.

So, there's always a need for more money to do more sampling, to do more research to try to figure out what's going on to try to figure out stock sizes, whether a depressed stock is actually making a comeback. You know, if you lined up salmon against all the other species that we are talking about in our commercial fisheries, the amount of money spent on salmon research far, far, far exceeds the combined total probably of all the other research conducted on all the other species. The amount of research in the ocean, however, has been very, very minimal and we know very little about salmon in the ocean.

EU: Why is that?

BJ: It's just tough to get a handle on just like it is with any other species that lives there. It's just such a dynamic ever-changing environment and there has been such a lack of money for ocean-related marine fisheries research that we just haven't done much of it. And I'm not sure that's going to change. We're always hopeful there's going to be more dollars available but those dollars aren't very often forthcoming.

EU: So the money spent on salmon research then is all done on freshwater. I know, well, I've read in the paper this year about the salmon fishing. There is no salmon fishing this season off Oregon, is that right?

BJ: It's unprecedented, no recreational or commercial salmon fishing south of Cape Falcon in Oregon. Cape Falcon is up near the northern Oregon border. You know, we've had really the commercial and recreational fishery off the coast of Oregon has been over the years, consistently very good. We've had our down year cycles and we've had our up year cycles. Most of the Chinook salmon that appear off the Oregon coast during the summer are not of Oregon Coast stream origin. Most of those fish are from the Klamath and the Sacramento Rivers in California. And they come out of those streams in the spring, they actually migrate north and spend many of their years in the ocean here off Oregon and then migrate back down south as they get ready to go back to their streams to spawn. The fish coming out of the Oregon streams for the most part, at least from the Siuslaw north, end up going north and spending most of their life in the ocean off the coast of British Columbia and even some of them as far north as the Bering Sea in Alaska.

With the almost complete failure of the Sacramento River stocks and the Klamath River stocks, the regulators this year, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, said "we can't in our best judgment, give anybody a fishing season off Oregon because these stocks are so low that we would be remiss if we opened the fishing season for the recreation or the commercial sector. We are all hopeful that's going to turn around and I think it will. You know, with the tremendous snowpack in the mountains this year and one of the biggest snow packs ever and certainly water quality in those streams

and the amount of water is a tremendously influencing factor on the survival of salmon and so if we get a big snowpack we are hopeful those streams will come back.

[0:57:05]

EU: One more question about salmon – have you worked much with Native American organizations?

BJ: I have not. Very peripherally on some of the issues dealing with the Siletz Indians and some of their tribal fishing rights, and that happened during my tenure on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. But to answer your question, no.

EU: Before, you talked about going to Denmark and some of the things you learned there. Could you talk also about the black boxes and then the hook and line, troll fishing.

BJ: Well, I guess it's just another example, Elizabeth, of where you hear something that initially you think well, I'm not sure that has application in Oregon but then the more you look at it, the more you think it has great application. That was what happened in the case of the black box. I had heard via the grapevine that the Canadian Salmon Trollers - TROLLERS - were using this piece of electronic equipment that actually established a positive voltage on their stainless steel fishing lines. It didn't make much sense to me, but I made a couple of phone calls and the guys I talked to gave me and oh I think there were six of us, myself and five salmon trollers from the Newport area, an invitation to attend the Canadian Salmon Trollers Conference; this was back in the probably late '70s. So we did.

We went to Vancouver or just out of Vancouver and spent about three days and while we were there, we heard a presentation from Bill Russell who had Russell Electronics in Victoria about the black box. It was his concept, he developed it, he experimented with it on some of the trollers up there originally and I said, "Bill, in just talking to your constituents, the trollers here in Canada, they speak very highly of you and what you have done with this black box." I said, "What would it take to get you to come to Oregon because we have fishermen down there that would love to have you come down and talk to them. Because we've heard rumors, but we want to talk to the big gun." He said, "Set me up. Help me get organized; organize some meetings down there and I'll come down." I think we might have paid his expenses, I don't recall, he was very anxious to come down and chat with the fishermen.

So we did, we organized town hall meetings, started in Astoria, ended up in Brookings and filled the meeting rooms everyplace we went because his reputation had preceded him. And as a result of that very early report that I had heard and I had followed up on, we went to the troller's conference and met Bill Russell and he came to Oregon. As a result of all that, 95 percent of the salmon trollers here in Oregon now use that high voltage concept with positive results.

But once again, Elizabeth, it gets back to this making fishermen more efficient. You know, if they catch more fish, they shorten .... So I think it was helpful at the time. In retrospect you kind of look back and think, well, was that really the right thing to do? Do we really need to be making this industry more efficient using government dollars to do it?

EU: Let's take another break. This is the end of Part 2.

[1:01:25]

Elizabeth Uhlig: This is Part 3 of the interview with Bob Jacobson.

Bob, when you've talked about fishing and the fishing industry, you've always talked about the men. Could you talk a little bit about the women? Are there many women involved in fishing?

Bob Jacobson: No, there are not, and I've often wondered why. There's a gal in Coos Bay that has her own salmon troller; she's been involved in the business for a number of years now. Over the 40 years I've been on the Coast, there are very few women involved in the actual catching part of the fishing industry.

But, a tremendous resource has been the fishermen's wives groups up and down the coast that have formed to lobby for the industry's cause. Actually, I am proud to say that we probably got the first fishermen's wives group together her in Newport way back in the early '70s. And they have done just an outstanding job in pushing some of the issues when the

fishermen were gone fishing, didn't have time to work on it, and the wives got together and said, "We can do this" and they did it.

The best example I can think of is we were lobbying the Coast Guard very hard to put a helicopter base in the Newport area so that when we had a vessel sinking off shore and the need to get Coast Guard on scene right away, they didn't have to come from Coos Bay or from Astoria with their helicopters. And the Coast Guard, basically, was very cool to that idea. We got the Fishermen's Wives here in Newport tuned into that issue and within six months or so, plus or minus a month or so, after they got involved, we had the Coast Guard committing to establishing a helicopter base in Newport.

As a matter of fact, one of the Fishermen's Wives who was very instrumental in that, shortly after the base was established here, actually had a boat go down where the helicopter rescued, so it was very important. But they now have coast-wide fishermen's wives associations and they really have proved very, very helpful to the industry over the years. Not only in safety matters but in working within their community with a lot of different issues. Just a very very strong, forceful group that has the ear of a lot of politicians, quite frankly.

EU: How do they do that? How do they do their lobbying and their organizational work?

BJ: Well, obviously, you need some strong leadership from within. I think Sea Grant, and this is what I tried to do clear back when we got the first group started, was to kind of provide the focus for them to get started and identify some projects in which they could work and provide some administrative support, but the leadership has to come from within. And so, obviously, and certainly I can speak best for the Newport group, they have some very very strong leadership from within that group that has in each successive year seemed to have gotten stronger. They are just a very, very good group that has done a very good job of representing the needs of the industry.

[1:05:30]

EU: In addition to the Coast Guard helicopter, what were some of the other projects they worked on over the years?

BJ: They are always the first in line if there is a casualty at sea. If somebody is lost at sea, they are always the first at the front door of the relatives of the person lost at sea trying to help. If the husband's lost, providing some money to make sure the rest of the family has food and income for a short period of time. And so a lot of their community activities have just been huge over the years.

They have been involved in such issues as, oh, there has been a big riff between the salmon farmers; there's a salmon farming industry, particularly in Washington and British Columbia and Norway and South America, where those fish are on the market with wilds and troll caught fish, for example. So they have done some work there in lobbying for the wild salmon over some of these farms. I can't think of a lot of examples right now, but they have been in the forefront of a lot of these issues that come along. And the politicians have learned that they better listen to them, that's the bottom line.

EU: Do you think in the future there might be more women actually going out fishing on boats?

BJ: Certainly the opportunity is there. It's a male dominated industry and it will probably, not probably, it'll definitely always be a male dominated industry, but yeah, I think there's more opportunity.

In Alaska we have in a lot of the smaller salmon fisheries inside waters, we have a lot of husband and wife teams or family units operating on a boat – husband, wife and a couple of kids. And so you see a lot more women involved up there than you do down there. A lot more women involved. In fact, a real good friend of mine who serves on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council Advisory Committee with me, she's fished since she was in grade school with her Dad and still fishes today.

But we just don't see it down here. To answer your question specifically, will there be more as time goes on, I don't know. The opportunity has been there for them over the last 30 or 40 years and just very few have chosen to make that their profession.

EU: What about with the Extension Service now. I know in other areas, there have been more Extension agents that are women. How about in the fishing?

BJ: Well, you know, our initial group of Marine agents were all guys. And then as I was telling you earlier today, when I retired in 1995 I was replaced by Ginny Goblirsch. Ginny actually has an Anthropology degree, I think from the University of Hawaii and she had worked for Sea Grant in several capacities prior to her taking my position full time. Actually, she had filled in for me for several years doing the time I was on my five month leave-without-pay time away to fish. When I decided to retire she said, "I want your job." I said, "Well, I'll certainly support you." So she went through the entire interview process as did several other people, and got the job. She did a wonderful job in continuing the Marine Extension Program in Newport. A great job.

When Ginny retired....so Ginny was our first full-time female Marine agent. When she retired they advertised the position, they selected three or four candidates for interviews; during those interviews they found no one satisfactory so six months later they reopened the advertisements for that position and my daughter decided to apply. As it turned out she got the job. So, first of all, I'm extremely proud of her for getting the job, because I wasn't quite sure she was ready for it. And secondly I'm proud of the job she's done over the last couple of years since she's been there. She's done an excellent job; had the background because she's been around her Dad for a number of years growing up, fishing and Extension, and so she probably had a better understanding of the Extension concept at an early as than I ever did, because she was around it so much.

EU: What's her name?

BJ: Kaety Hildenbrand is her name. She lives in Toledo, based in Newport, doing a helluva job. And there will be other women who apply for and get agent jobs and I think that's great. I think that's wonderful, as long as they are willing to work and understand that it's a male dominated industry that they are working in.

EU: But they've been accepted then?

BJ: They've been accepted. That's right.

[1:11:55]

EU: So you worked for the Extension Service for 28 years?

BJ: About 28 ½ years. And one of those – actually, about nine months of one of those years in '72-73, I took the position in Alaska. The Extension Program Leader up there who was in Japan on a year's sabbatical. So I spent from September of '72 until about June of '73 based in Fairbanks but got to do a lot of travelling at the time throughout the entire coastal region of Alaska. There weren't very many coastal communities I didn't visit during the time I was there. Great experience for me and I wouldn't trade that experience for anything. It was just a wonderful nine months and I'm glad for the opportunity.

EU: Were their issues different than the ones down here in Oregon?

BJ: Well, pretty similar. When you asked me earlier about my work in Native Americans on salmon issues, I spent a lot of time when I was in Alaska in the native villages working on various projects. We started a boat building project in a little town called Bethel, which is due west of the town of Anchorage. We had a halibut long line fishing program in Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island for some of the native people there. So that's just a couple of examples of types of things that I did when I was up there. Up there I spent a lot of time working with some of the native people on fisheries related projects.

EU: And towards the end of your career with the Extension Service you said you were on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission?

BJ: I spent eight years, I believe I was appointed first in '87 by then Governor Goldschmidt and reappointed in I believe '89 by Governor Roberts and again in '93 by Governor Kitzhaber. So great experience. As I indicated earlier, I'm not sure I had total support from Extension for taking that position, but I wouldn't have traded it, experience-wise for anything. It was a wonderful experience.

EU: And you were the chair of that commission?

BJ: I was chair of the Commission for two years, either one or two years, I don't remember which. But it was a great experience.

EU: So there of course, it wasn't just the marine fishing but it was statewide?

BJ: Statewide, both fish and wildlife.

EU: And you're a hunter I take it?

BJ: I'm a hunter.

[1:15:15]

EU: So you're retired in 1995.

BJ: I retired in 1995.

EU: And you stopped working, I suppose.

BJ: Well, you asked me earlier whether I was retired and I told you, like I tell everybody else, the word retirement is not even in my vocabulary. So I've remained very busy. I was still fishing in Alaska at that time when I retired. And I didn't quit fishing up there until '99 but I was just thinking this is probably the longest I have ever sat in one place in my life.

EU: You mean doing this interview?

BJ: Doing this interview today. I've been in this chair for what, a couple of hours?

EU: A couple of hours.

BJ: I don't generally sit.

EU: I'll let you go soon!

BJ: But I've kept real busy. I'm still real active in marine-related activities. I'm currently chair of a little group we have in Newport called FINE – Fishermen Involved in Natural Energy. It's an advisory committee to the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners put together specifically to talk about forthcoming wave energy projects. The purpose of the committee, the commissioners didn't feel through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which is the federal licensing agency for these groups that are putting in wave energy buoys. There was not a good opportunity for the public to get their two cents in, so they wanted a committee to advise them and a committee for the public to come to air their views on wave energy. It's kind of a fun thing. We meet once a month. The group has put together a 13 or 14 page document on just a little background on the fisheries and policy. It's kind of a fun thing to do.

I just spent a couple days last week on a little five person group that was in charge of hearing appeals from salmon fisherman who applied for some of the federal money, disaster money, from a couple of years ago. If they apply and are turned down then there has to be a means of appealing the first rejection. So I'm the chair of that five person board that hears these appeals. And we heard twenty cases last week and ended up, I think four of the 20 cases actually gave them money that we felt they were entitled to when turned down the first time.

Four or five years ago I got involved in a little project with the Legislature that I'm pretty proud of – I've got a lot of friends in the Astoria area and they said to me five or six years ago, "We would really like to see Oregon with a shellfish license program." They said, "All the residents of Washington can come to Astoria or to Seaside, dig all our razor clams, not pay a thing, while if we wanted to go to Washington to dig, we would have to buy a $17.50 license. We don't like that; we think Oregon ought to have a shellfish license and we ought to dedicate those funds towards more enforcement, some money for agriculture to do their testing for paralytic shellfish poisoning and domoic acid poisoning and some money to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for a couple more biologists."

So, I got enthused about the project and thought, "I'd like to take that one on, just kind of personally." So I went to a friend of mine Jim Markee in Salem who has been a long time lobbyist in the Legislature and a long time friend of mine and between Jim and his son, Matt, they agreed to help me in this kind of single-handed effort of pushing through this shellfish bill. I shouldn't say single-handed because there are some other people from Astoria that were pretty influential. There's a fellow from Mt. Angel that was pretty influential, but for that session, I was in Salem about three days a week for probably five consecutive months. Drove back and forth between here and Salem and there had been a shellfish bill introduced for, I think it was 12 consecutive sessions and it had never made it out of committee in the past.

And by golly, with Markees' help, and it was primarily them, not me, we pushed that shellfish through and the Governor signed the bill and the next year we had a shellfish bill which we still have. And I think it raises about 2 million a biennium and that money is going for a couple of new biologists, testing at the Department of Ag and for law enforcement.

Just an example of the type of thing, where I've tried to stay involved in the industry that I just love, and it keeps me busy. And of course, I still have my boats in Alaska and that takes me probably a week and half out of every month just to take care of all those things.

[1:21:25]

EU: And you still go fishing locally?

BJ: Oh, I'm still an avid sports fisherman. Catch a lot of Dungeness crab. In fact, you just had for lunch today ling cod that I caught yesterday.

EU: That's just as fresh as can be.

BJ: As fresh as could be.

EU: When you look back at your career with the Extension Service, what do you think were the highlights? What has given you the most satisfaction?

BJ: Here's the highlight – I can sum it up real quickly. There are very few jobs, my guess is, there are very few jobs where people could say, "I never once didn't want to go to work." I can say, "I never once didn't want to go to work." I always wanted to go to work. I always looked forward to going to the office, generally a couple hours early and staying a couple of hours late. It was so dynamic and so ever-changing and I had so much flexibility to really call my own shots. You know, identify the project, fan out to try to figure out how to identify how you are going to respond to that project. I mean it was just very, very challenging and I loved the job.

I guess in my later years, well, I didn't get along with the program leader, frankly. I didn't think he was providing the leadership that our program deserved and I just said I'm not going to sit here and listen to this and I retired early. I'm glad I did. It's given me a chance to do a lot of other things that I wouldn't have otherwise had a chance to do. But, overall, Extension administration was wonderful, I totally believe in the concept; I was totally committed to it during the time I was working. I think I did a pretty good job in delivery the Extension message.

You know I often thought, "Are the taxpayers getting their money today?" There are some days when I had to say, "No, they probably didn't, but there are a lot of days that I said, they got their money today."

EU: I'm impressed with the impact that you can have on lives, with the exposure suit project and impacting so many personal lives and their livelihoods.

BJ: The other thing you do when you are involved in a small town like Newport is – I mean I could have gone off and strictly been commercial fishing-oriented. I mean I love people, love to be around them, you immerse yourself in the community so it was Chamber of Commerce, it was Lincoln County Planning Committee, it was Port Commission for ten years, it was all these other satellite things that you do. It was taking on a project with the Newport Boosters' Club to build a new track at the high school, just all these other things that you do, in addition to your Extension job that benefit the community and I'm real proud that I had time to do some of those things while I was working with Extension. And I

think if you're going to be a good Extension agent, you have to immerse yourself in the community in which you live and get involved in some of those other things. You can't be one-dimensional.

[1:25:40]

EU: Okay. Are there any other questions I should have asked or things that we didn't cover?

BJ: I think we did a pretty good job. How are you going to cover 28 ½ years in two or three hours? I think we did some of the highlights anyway.

EU: And what are you doing tomorrow morning?

BJ: I'm going razor clam digging tomorrow morning and then your microphone is sitting on about five big thick books of house designs and I'm just actually getting ready to start a brand new house up the Alsea River. Probably start in the next couple of weeks sometime, so I'm looking through the house plans to find something that fits.

EU: So you'll be moving up river a little bit.

BJ: I'm just building it because I want to build it. Something to do.

EU: Thank you very much.

BJ: It was fun.

[1:27:03]