We are in Aguadilla, today is February 14, 2025 and we are here to talk about the work you do in fishing in Puerto Rico, Aguadilla, could you tell me a little about what type of fishing you do and when you started fishing?

-Well, I started fishing when I was very young. My dad used to take me to the beach as a child. By the time I was 7, I was already on the beach, pulling a seine net. And by the time I was 9, I started going out on boats that fishermen had taken me to when I was little, and from then until today, I'm still fishing.

-And are you fishing the same thing you were fishing when you started?

-When I started fishing, some fishermen had already passed away, right? From the ones I used to go fishing, but the fishing, well, sometimes has ups and downs, so it depends on the currents. We depend a lot on the current. If the current favors us, for example, in Los Rabos. Los Rabos is a fishing spot.

-Can you show me? Can you see it here?

-It's located in... Where would it be here? Aguadilla, Punta Borinquen, where it is. That's located in front of Ramey Air Force Base. Punta Borinquen, where it is, right here. It's located right in front of Crash Boat Beach, about 9 miles away. It's a reef there, located in front of the airport in the sea called Los Rabos. There, when the currents are favorable, a lot of tuna comes in, a lot of bonito (blackfin tuna), bacora (skipjack tuna), which are species we fish for.

-Tuna, so what?

-Tuna, bonito (blackfin tuna), bacora (skipjack tuna). Yes, it's an area where tuna come every year. (Mackerels and tunas, \*Scombridae\*) If the currents are favorable, a lot of them come. Sometimes the currents take a while to change and they always come in. Every year they appear there when the currents are good, well, they appear a lot, you see? They migrate there to Los Rabos. And there we fish for tuna (Mackerels and tunas, \*Scombridae\*), bonito (blackfin tuna), and bacora (skipjack tuna). And there we fish for everything: silk snapper, red hind, all kinds of fish, because being a reef, it attracts all kinds of fish.

[00:03:19]

-And now your fish is with what tool or what type of boat?

-I have a motorboat and a rowboat, the one back here. I have two boats.

-How do you choose one?

-I'm currently going by boat because of the bad weather. It's very windy, and I've hardly been out in the rowboat because of the bad weather, but when the weather's good, we also use the smaller wooden rowboat.

-Does the boat have a motor?

-Yes. I have a motor too. In the rowboat, we use a 40-horsepower motor, which is an 18-foot rowboat, and we get to Rabo there easily because the rowboat is quite fast. It's a comfortable boat for fishing, made of mahogany wood, and it also makes fishing easier for us. When the weather is good, it's very, very good for fishing.

-And are you fishing alone or with someone?

-No, I go with my brother or another fishing buddy, who also fishes with me. We change days.

-And when you started fishing with your dad, how was it different?

-Because before, my dad used to take me to haul the seine, when the seine was thrown onto the shore—that's the net—and it was hauled in. And that's where I started, hauling the net with my dad, and we started hauling the seine, and from there I continued. That's when I liked the sea.

-When did you change to being an independent fisherman? I mean alone, or did you always fish with your dad?

"No, my dad only used to pull seine nets. Later, I went along. Older fishermen would invite me to join them. And that's when I began to evolve, to develop a deeper love for it, and to learn more. And from the age of 9 until today, well, I got my own boat when I was older, I started to grow, and from then on, we continued fishing."

-How old were you, he told me, at what age did you start fishing with your dad?

-When I was 7 years old, my dad used to take me to the beach to pull a hammock.

-More than 20 years of fishing. In the same area of ​​Aguadilla?

-Yeah.

-In the same area.

-Yeah.

-And what is the most important thing your father or the mentors you had later taught you about fishing?

[00:05:55]

-No, what the mentors taught me was the fish marks, how to fish, they taught me how to get to the sites, they taught me how to work when the weather is bad, when the weather is aggressive and the wind is aggressive, all of that was taught to me by fishermen older than me.

-And do you use all this today, what you learned from those fishermen?

-Yeah.

-I ask because there are some things today that didn't exist back then, like GPS...

-Yes, the GPS, but we use GPS too, but what is learned in the mind is not forgotten so easily, which is how to get to places and we use GPS more for specific marks, so that we do not forget where the marks are and they also help with the distance, because before we could not measure the distance very well, but in calculation, well, we were almost right because of the navigation experience, the time it takes, the distance we go, before without the GPS we could be so many miles away and we got the miles we were right, very little difference, but we were always right because that is what we learned.

-And where did your father sell fish at that time?

-When my dad was fishing, he would take me the seine net, my dad would go and bring back the catch for the family, and whatever was his, he would bring home.

-So, you didn't fish to sell?

-No, my dad didn't fish to sell. He took me to haul in seine nets. But my grandfather did fish to sell. Yes, my grandfather was a fisherman.

-Tell me a little about your grandfather and his work. What do you remember?

-Yes, he was a fisherman, he was a fisherman forever, and I used to go with him too, with my grandfather, and he sold to the fishmonger that was at the Crash Boat.

-Is that fish market still there today?

-Right now, it's not the same as it was before, because the hurricane destroyed it. We do have a wagon there that we want to reopen and another wagon to store equipment, and we're working to see if we can get the permits to reopen there again.

-You guys, I was going to ask him where he sold the fish, but it seems that…

-Yes, to the fish market.

-Is it a Fishing Village or a restaurant?

-A Fishing Village. It was sold to the Fishing Village.

-What was his name?

-The Villa del Ojo fishermen's association.

-And Hurricane Maria destroyed it?

-Yes, he destroyed it.

-And what happened since then?

-Right now, what we have there is a wagon, ready to sell. It has solar panels. Now we're going to apply for the permits again, to see if they give us the permit we need to be able to open and continue selling and working there.

[00:09:06]

-And was that Fishing Village the same one where your grandfather sold?

-Yes, the one that was destroyed now wasn't like that because when my grandfather was there back then there was a wooden one, then it was made of cement, as time went by.

-But the same place?

-Yeah.

-And were the practices of the Fishing Village at that time similar to the practices of the Fishing Village now before the hurricane? In other words, what was the purpose of the Fishing Village back then?

-The Fishing Village was an organization where all the fishermen in our area sold to the Fishing Village. The Fishing Village bought fish from all the fishermen who were members of the fishing association, because it's a fishing association.

Do you know how many fishermen were in the Fishing Village before the hurricane?

–Before the hurricane, there were about 30 of us fishermen. Before that, there were many more.

-A lot more?

-Yes, before the hurricane, we had, I think we had 30, but at the beginning, where our older relatives were, the Fishing Village had many more fishermen. They had, right now the exact number, I don't remember how many, but there were more than 50, there were a lot, there were a lot. Almost all of them from this area, almost all of them sold to the fish market, all the fishermen there.

-Why has the number of fishermen decreased over time?

-Right now, since the Fishing Village isn't there, many people are there, they sell the fish themselves separately, they sell to other people.

-But before Maria, because she told me that…

-It's also because some wanted to sell the fish themselves, so they branched out to sell their own fish. They either found other people, or switched from rowboats to motorboats.

-So, at some point, was it better for the fishermen to sell on their own?

-Yes, they sold it on their own, they wanted to make more money and many of them chose to sell it themselves.

-Sure. Well, you've been fishing in this area for quite some time. Have you noticed any significant changes in the marine environment, or anything that has stuck with you?

-Yes, the heat. The water has been warm, the temperatures have been warmer.

-When did you first notice this change?

-I think it's been since last year. It's been hot in other years, but last year was one of the hottest. We've noticed it in the water.

[00:12:03]

-And how does the warmer temperature affect the bottom, the fish, have you noticed anything with this?

-I don't think we know the temperature that would be comfortable for fish, but I think there are fish that like to be in waters that aren't so warm, and there are others that migrate, that like warmer water. We have dorados (Dolphins, \*Coryphaenidae\*), which migrate every year. I think they adapt to all waters, because they are all over the world, and there are many of them; dorados reproduce a lot. (Dolphins, \*Coryphaenidae\*) Those on the bottom, that's where I have a little doubt, what temperature would affect them, because, as I always tell you, that varies the current. There are specific currents that fish like. When we go out, sometimes there are currents that depend on the area you are in. There are currents that are good for the north, which are for bottom-dwelling fish like the silk snapper and the queen snapper. There are other fish that, if the current is moving in another direction, seem to be reluctant to pull until the current shifts to the other side, and then they start pulling. So, that also influences when they go fishing. But I think the weather can sometimes also be a factor that prevents deep-sea fish from reaching the surface, but I'm not entirely sure because I'm not very knowledgeable about that.

-That's your observation, if you've observed it. Have you observed anything with the reefs?

-Yes, sometimes we see that the reefs, especially when the hurricane hit, were destroyed along the shore, quite a few, and I think the sun and the heat may have affected them. But we have noticed changes in the corals; when you go snorkeling, you can see a lot of them being broken up by the waves.

-When did you notice this change with the reefs?

-After the hurricane.

-From Hurricane Maria, immediately after?

-Yes, afterward. Well, the waves, like a hurricane like never before.

-And I've heard some stories in the south about sargassum, have you noticed anything, what have you noticed?

-Well, the thing about the sargassum, for the south, is that they, here in our area, there was a year, I don't remember which one it was, that they came in quite far towards the shore, but where they are always entering is more towards the south.

[00:15:08]

-Don't they have that much of a problem here?

We haven't had that much. On one occasion, yes, but not always. Where it always goes south, but here, unless the current is directly here, then the sargassum reaches the shore. So, the sargassum on the shore is a problem because oxygen... for the corals, when there's an abundance like that. Outside, no, it's not a problem. Outside, it's life for the fish, for the dorados (Dolphins, \*Coryphaenidae\*) (dolphin), many fish get under them, and there we go and fish where there's a lot of sargassum, we look for it, the sargassum, we know that there when the dorado (Dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*) season starts behind the Desecheo, that's where it starts, to the south, we go there to fish.

-Sargassum is quite common, every year?

-Yes, every year.

-It helps him, it usually helps him…

-Yes, it helps us when dorado (dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*) season comes. It helps us because it brings a lot of fish down there, all the fish, small and large, and there we look for the sargassum when there are any. We call it bayao, which are paths in the Sargasso Sea, very long, so we follow them.

-They're around the sargassum they're fishing for, right?

-Yes, like that, we walked, near the sargassum.

-Tell me a little bit about how Hurricane Maria changed the seabed. How did that change affect your work?

The hurricane affected us, initially, because of the sand it dumped in our area, which was the Crash Boat, where we had the fish market. It took a lot of sand from the sea and threw it up, but after the sand was thrown over there, some machinery was used. So the sea, especially here in the Crash Boat where we have the wagon and all that, there in that area, the sea has done an excellent job again. It has leveled out the sand, it has brought sand that was missing and has been arranging it, and I think it's a place where the sea has done its job. In other parts of the coast, it carries away the sand, but in this area here, thank God, well, no, that's not happening; on the contrary, it brings it.

-And how does the sand help you in your fishing work?

-That helps us, because then, when the sand is back to its previous level, the sea returns to the level it was before. When the hurricane came, the sea carried so much sand and moved feet inward. When the sand resettled, the sea returned to the normal level it was before, here at the Crash Boat. Right now, almost the entire coast has sand on the shore; this weather has thrown up a lot of sand.

[00:18:23]

-How long has it taken until the sand returns?

-There it was, the hurricane was in 2017, I think that in 3 years the sea began to accommodate the sand.

-But in those 3 years, after a while, were you able to fish normally?

-Yes, we went out fishing, anyway, we always went out fishing.

-Immediately, what impact did it have?

-At first, we did have a lot of problems because we had no way to sell the fish there, because of the power problem, which was severe. So we couldn't work the way we wanted to, because there was no power, the businesses didn't have power, and buyers who bought fish couldn't buy them. The impact of the hurricane was enormous for all the fishermen on the entire island. It was a very strong impact, with many losses; losses of the fish market, of equipment, of everything.

-Did you lose equipment?

-Yes, equipment was lost, the ranches where we stored all the equipment were lost, that was completely destroyed.

-Was this stored in the Fishing Village?

-Yes, in the Fishing Village.

-But your boat survived?

-Yes, I brought it here. Others lost their boats because they thought it wasn't going to be that strong a hurricane, so they left their boats there, and the boats were lost.

-And before this, did you sell all your fish to the Fishing Village?

-Yes, everything was sold to the Fishing Village.

-And suddenly there is no Fishing Village, what did you do?

-Well, we didn't have to fish in such large quantities because we didn't have any when the electricity came in. We had to work with the freezers we had. I have a freezer. So, a friend of ours who sold to the Fishing Village, well, he had a freezer in his house, bought another freezer and said, "Well, let's help you. I'm going to help you. I'm going to catch as much fish as I have space for, so you can fish once the freezers are full because we can't do anything else." And he helped us. He still does.

-And where did you sell the fish, how did you sell it?

-So we bring it here or we take it to his house, and he has a few freezers now, and he's still helping us because we don't have the fish market yet, and he still buys fish from us. There are others who also have other clients, they got, who now sell to that client they got, because without the Fishing Village, we could bring in all the fish we wanted. We had a really big freezer, it could hold many pounds of fish. There was a freezer here, we had one, and it was destroyed by the hurricane.

[00:21:26]

-And the person who buys from you now, do they know where you sell the fish?

-Yes, he sells in different areas, to clients who come and buy from him from other parts of the island as well. Sometimes they come here and buy from him, because he's been looking for contacts, so that's how he sells.

-I'm going to read you the names of some fish and you tell me if you have noticed any changes with this fish specifically: schoolmaster snapper, yellowfin snapper, blue marlin (Makaira nigricans XLII\*), red parrotfish, traffic light parrotfish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*), true tulip (True tulip), spiny lobster (Panulirus argus\*), have you noticed any changes with this fish in size or abundance in the last 10 years?

-Fish, for example, snapper, those are like at night, I don't fish at night, but those who go fishing, sometimes they have seen, they haven't seen a decrease in snappers, (Snappers, \*Lutjanidae\*) because sometimes they go and catch quite a lot. Where I think it may be is in the parrotfish, yes, because before you saw them a lot, but we don't catch them, we don't catch many parrotfish here, that's for the other area over there but we catch snapper here, as well as groupers (Sea basses, \*Serranidae\*) (sea bass) all those fish like that, but we're not really into catching parrotfish, but before you saw a lot of them on the big banks, So now you hardly ever see them but the quantity...

-Of the parrots, were they seen on the shore?

-Yeah.

-And now no more?

-There are, but not that many.

-And when did they start to become less, you know, more or less?

-In recent years.

-Just years?

-For me, it's because they stay on the shore, now we have jet skis, we have every aquatic thing and they are on the shore, and the parrotfish always like to be very close to the shore, they lie there in front of the base, on the pebbles there you see parrotfish, pretty ones like those, those blue ones, and now we have so many jet skis on the shore, that has also driven the fish away from the shore. Before, near the Crash Boat there were many yellow snappers (Snappers, \*Lutjanidae\*), there, before there were no jet skis, now the jet skis go close to the stones, very close and that commotion of the jet skis, well that also drives the fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) away from the shore, it drives the food away from the shore, the sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) that are always sometimes on the shore, so much jet skiing up and down, drives the fish away from the shore, the jet skis.

[00:24:10]

-Since when are there so many jet skis on the shore?

-In recent years, there's been an abundance of jet skis. Now we have people who rent jet skis, who have tons of jet skis, tons of them, plus everyone who has jet skis. The entire Parque Colón is full there. The breakwater where we launch, you can see that, all of that is jet skis. So, sailing along the shore, up and down. So that's a problem, because fish like sardines and cetí live on the shore. So, with so many devices here, they don't let them get close to the shore, the jet skis.

-What do you think is happening with the small fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*)?

-It scares them. The fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) eat small fish, the fish's food are the little ones: sardines, (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) cetí, you see that the sardine likes to come right up to the shore, so sometimes they come, but sometimes there are those jet skis, they come and scare them, because they think they are fish, so that noise, all that, well it keeps the food away from the coast, the jet skis.

-In your career as a fisherman, have there been other disasters or similar events that have interrupted your life as a fisherman, or changed it in any way, besides Maria, Hurricane Maria?

-No, I don't think anything like Maria has happened. We've never experienced anything like that hurricane. Because in other years, a hurricane would come and we'd leave the boats there on the shore, and the hurricane would pass and do nothing; we'd tie them up right there. But Maria was disastrous. That hurricane was very disastrous for the entire country, it destroyed everything. I think that's the worst part, because the earthquakes, for that area, over there, were the worst. In the south, Hurricane Maria was everywhere.

-And how did you get on during COVID? How did COVID affect your work and the community?

-That didn't affect us much either, because we used to go fishing. We were authorized to go fishing, but people were afraid, so they also limited themselves from going out to buy fish. That also affected us, during that period, at least that year. The trajectory of COVID was also a problem, because of people's fear of getting infected. That was also another nightmare.

-At that time, did you sell fish the same way you do now?

-We sold fish, yes, fish was sold, but not the same amount, because of people's fear.

-Not that much?

-Yes, because people couldn't go out. So we could go fishing, but since people couldn't go out to get fish, it was a little difficult for us to sell them. But anyway, we went out because they authorized us, we had permission to go fishing.

Do you think that after Hurricane Maria and COVID, the fishing community in this area is better prepared to face something similar in the future?

-Yes, I think so. If a hurricane comes now, no one wants to go through that experience again. And now, as soon as a hurricane hits, we're going to be prepared, because we're not going to wait for the hurricane to hit. Not now.

-What kind of preparations are there?

-First of all, you have to have, many people didn't have electricity because they thought nothing like that would ever happen here, well now you have to have electricity, you have to have solar panels, which are an advantage because if there's no gas, there won't be electricity either. I have solar panels, I have rolls of wire, which I have stored there, which I bought, in case it comes, to tie the panels up, so they don't blow them away. I have that stored in the room in case a hurricane comes, before the hurricane hits, I prepare. I have it stored, because if someone buys it later, there's no way, when an emergency comes. I would hold it there, I would secure the panels, because here, nothing close, could affect them there on the roof or blow them away, something, since there isn't any, I'm not going to take them out, but I secure them with some cables that I have, which I call guy cables. And I would have that and like the others, it's stored here, well, that's where I'll have light when the poles fall down. If they fall, because they will, because the power isn't fixed yet, you know, there are still loose poles, there's a lot of work the authorities have to do. If a hurricane comes again, this will go down, there'll be no power for a long time, and so I'm going to be prepared with that, have more gasoline stored, because I saved gasoline for the hurricane that happened, but if another one comes, we have to save more, too. And what's more, I have solar panels that I didn't have before. And then one prepares to spend time until the power is restored and everything returns to normal, well, I think I'll be prepared for however long those take, stable that we hope to God that nothing comes, in the Lord, but I think the experience wasn't easy and many people don't want to go through that again, because many people suffered, many people.

[00:30:27]

-How many years have passed since Maria? It was 17, right? It's been quite a few years, and the Fishing Village hasn't been rebuilt yet…

-No, it's not.

-Why does it take so long?

-The Fishing Village isn't operating because, sadly, there's a person there who built hotels and apartments.

-Next to the Fishing Village?

-There. And he's been against the construction of the Fishing Village all the time. And he has contracts with the government, which is sad, and he's been the obstacle. If it hadn't been for him, we'd already have it there, because for us, from the first fishermen until the fish market left, that's like 100 years of history, the fish market there.

-Do you know why he doesn't want the Fishing Village to continue?

-Because he wants to keep all that there.

-What recourse do fishermen have now to maintain their Fishing Village?

-We're fighting. We now have a contract there with Agriculture, which belongs to Agriculture, for 10 years, and now we're going to fight to see if we can get some permits there. The only thing we're missing is that, if Natural Resources gives them, then, but man interfered so that Natural Resources wouldn't give them to us.

-And do you have the funds for the Fishing Village? Where would the funds for construction come from? I assume you have to rebuild it again, right?

-To build, what we're looking for now is to open, because we have a structure and a wagon prepared, to be able to sell fish, we can sell fish there, we have a wagon, it's prepared to sell fish and everything.

-So almost ready.

-It's ready.

-The only thing is that they can't officially sell there...

-Yes, the permit is what we need.

-And when it was operating, were there people from the city who came to buy fish for the family? Like a fish shop.

-Yes, always. Yes, people used to come there to buy their fish.

[00:33:00]

-What was the most sought-after fish there?

-There a lot of people loved it, well, different ones, they came to look for chillo (silk snapper), dorado (Dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*) (dolphin), mero (sea bass), everything, carita (king mackerel), bonito (skipjack tuna), well, everything, all the fish was sold there, all kinds of fish, pargo (snapper), sama (Mutton snapper, \*Lutjanus analis\*) (mutton snapper), so each person came to look for fish, they came from other towns to buy fish wholesale to resell, because we stored, we had the capacity to store a lot of fish and they came from San Juan, from Cabo Rojo, different areas to look for fish here.

-When you were fishing with your father, and also when your grandfather was fishing, was this town the place? Was the community here in Aguadilla seen as a fishing community? I'm trying to understand how important the fishing economy was to the city.

"It was good, it was renowned. The Fishing Village was one of the top fisheries in Puerto Rico. You can find the data, Jannette herself can get it. It was number one in all of Puerto Rico. It was up to date. Lots of fishermen came, they had all kinds of fish, and we helped other fishmongers. If they didn't have any fish, they came here to get fish."

-What years more or less was it that it remained one of the greatest?

-It was always like this. Thank God, it was always like this. Because we had a very large space, we also had a cafeteria, which sold food, fried fish, tostones. People would go there to Crash to get fish at the cafeteria. The cafeteria was always packed, looking for fresh fish.

-How has the community, or your fellow fishermen, changed since the Fishing Village disappeared?

-Well, many of us are sad because we're desperate to reopen, and we haven't been able to, due to the circumstances I told you about this person. And many always say: 'Well, what if we reopened and they gave us the permits, that's historic, the Crash Boat fish market.' And they wonder why that man came with that bad faith of wanting to have that for himself, and they feel a little sad to see that the fish market hasn't reopened. Many people ask when we're going to reopen. They're desperate for us to open again and wish we were there again so they could go buy fish and eat there. Even people from outside, tourists, really liked going to the fish market.

[00:36:10]

-Who cooked in the Fishing Village?

-We had fishermen who cooked, his grandmother also cooked there, his mother.

Does your wife have any role in your business?

-No, not my wife, not her.

-But are there fishermen who work with their wives?

-Yes, there are fishermen who fish, they have wives who fish with them. And they've gone fishing with them from time to time, yes. There are.

-And most of the Aguadilla fishermen who belonged to the Villa, they fished with boats, not scuba divers, right?

-By boat, yes. Most of them by boat. The one who used to dive, there's one who's still alive, named Moncho, who lives there. He did dive and fish. Then there was another one, a cousin who also used to dive, but not anymore because they're older now. But there were two or three of them. The rest used to go by boat.

-And most of them are men?

-Yeah.

-And roughly the ages of the fishermen in this village, in this place? Are there many young people? I'm trying to understand.

-Now? There are a few young people now, yes. But of those who are there, well, older ones too.

Do you think young people have opportunities to enter this business today?

-Yes, they do have a chance.

-The same as when you started?

-Yes, they do have the opportunity because now it's a little easier for them. As I told you, now there's technology, now there's GPS, Fish Finders, all those things, so it's a little easier for them, because of technology.

-How does this help you? Does it take less time to learn to be a fisherman with this technology?

-Technology won't teach you how to be a fisherman, but it will help you, to get to the places, to mark yourself, to know the routes, when someone taught you and told you the route, you get there easily. Before, there was no technology because it was in the mind. And we marked ourselves on land, we went out and marked ourselves on land and we arrived at the point walking, like saying: we wanted to go to this point, well here, at least, there was a tree, that we knew, a mountain, that we identified, we see the antenna over there in Aguada, I say: well, when we are here and the antenna is here, at this point here, well, that's where a fish bit us, (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) then we come back and we came back and we did the same thing, when the land is clear, because if there is fog, then it is difficult because you can't see. When it is so 'Saharan dust' that you can't see anything, then it was difficult for us to get exactly to the point.

[00:39:27]

-What is the most important quality to be a good fisherman, in your opinion?

-Don't be afraid of the sea, even if there's wind, don't be afraid, because fear, boy, with fear, you turn back. We go out, and when there aren't any really big boats, and we go out with our small ones, we go out with the rowboats, for example. I have an 18-foot rowboat, and we go down a 20- or 25-mile wind. And there are people who have a 40-foot boat and they don't go. It's risky, but we go out, we're not afraid.

-Do you have a story at sea that has scared you or something that at least made you think?

-Yes, but… Once many years ago, a swell knocked our boat over. A wave knocked us over there.

-And what happened?

-There were two boats together, so we climbed onto the other boat, but then we looked for others who were in the area and we took out the boat, the motor, we lost the equipment, the fish, because we had a lot of fish, it was dorado (dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*) season (dolphin), we had quite a lot. All that was lost, but we took out the boat and the motor, but we lost the micas, we lost the fish.

-Does that happen a lot with fishermen?

"Well, in our area, it happened. One happened with me, with another cousin of mine, and his grandfather, or uncle, I think he is, also got spun around by a gust. The weather was bad, so we got spun around because the guy with me had his engine off; you never turn your engine off at sea when there's wind. I asked him why he turned it off, and I still remember that."

-Were you trying to save some gas or something or did you just not listen because you knew better?

-Apparently, so he wouldn't use too much gas, and it went wrong because he swerved on us. Because if you have the engine on, you can escape when a wave comes, because the engine is made of cabuya, as soon as you turn it on, the wave grabs you, and that's how it grabbed us and pfffft.

[00:42:11]

-Well, I'm glad nothing too bad happened to you.

-No, nothing.

-And, if you remember, I don't know if you remember, when your grandfather lived as a fisherman, that was his job, do you remember yes, can you say if he earned a good living for his family and for himself, from the life of a fisherman at that time?

-Yes, I think so, yes, because he caught a lot of silk snapper, and although the fish isn't worth what it is now, things weren't as expensive as they are now, at that time.

-Could he be characterized as a commercial fisherman at that time?

-Yes, he was a salesman, he sold all the fish to the fishmonger.

-And do you make a good living from this work these days?

-If you're a good fisherman and you have it, because some are a little luckier than others, you do earn well.

-Can you say if the fishermen who were in the Fishing Village here in Aguadilla, most of them have a good life or what do you think it is like?

-They have a good life, yes. I think so.

-But do you think it's easier or harder to be a fisherman today, compared to when you or your grandfather started?

-Now that the winds are a little stronger, it's sometimes a little more difficult, but it's not impossible, because as I told you: if a fisherman is lucky, he lives well, he does well.

-What does it mean to be lucky? What are some things you might say: 'Oh, that fisherman is really lucky'?

-Sometimes there are streaks, for example you go today and you caught a lot, and you go tomorrow and you caught a lot, everything varies, there are times when you have some ups and some downs.

-That is, luck referring to the abundance of the sea.

-Yes, yes.

-In your opinion, what is the biggest threat to the sustainability of fishing here? Is there a threat?

[00:44:48]

-There's a threat to the fishermen, and sometimes the government wants to remove us from where we are. That's a threat, because right now, they don't want the fish market here, like that person, and the government helps them. Well, the government also wants to eliminate the fishermen, and that's a threat. I don't know where they want to move the fish market, Jannette. Where do they want to move the fish market?

-(Jannette): How was it?

-(Interviewee): They want to close the fish market in Cabo Rojo.

-(Jannette): Take out the fishermen?

-(Interviewee): Yes, they want to take away their fish market.

-(Jannette): Where, in La Parguera?

-(Interviewee): In La Parguera they want to remove the fish market and that is a threat to the fishermen.

-Is that also because of the development thing?

-Yes, for tourism development. That's what this man who has made our lives miserable is doing. A millionaire who has so much and wants more.

-Is that man Puerto Rican?

-Yeah.

-And in general, are Puerto Ricans the ones who want…

-His wife isn't Puerto Rican, she's Canadian. I think she is.

-Is there technology that you still use today? By technology, I mean things that your dad or grandfather taught you, or your mentor taught you early on. It could be anything, from a way to set up a trap to what you use to fish.

-I use line, we use line. Prepare the nibs, they are prepared here, nibs are prepared for fishing.

-Do you do it by hand?

-Yes, by hand.

-Just like how you learned in the beginning?

-Yes, as those who traveled with us taught us, feathers were made at home. (Porgies, \*Sparidae\*) Many people buy them, but you can make your own; buy a small stick and make them, and prepare the weights here too. We've learned all those things. And we buy rod, for example, we make weights with rod, because if you buy regular lead it's very expensive. And to prepare to fish for queen snapper, for example, and silk snapper in the deep, we need weights, a 6-pound weight, you see, it's heavy. And a 6-pound lead costs a lot of money.

-How much is it?

-It's worth about $15, I think. And we bought a really big rod and chopped it into 6-pound chunks, bigger pieces.

-It's better to buy more and share, at once.

-You buy a rod and chop it into pieces, because if you're going to buy lead, it's very expensive. So you lose a lot. When it gets tangled up, it gets lost, it stays down, the lead is lost.

[00:48:02]

-I understand. Do you use or are you aware of various scientific products used by the Puerto Rico Fisheries Management Council, for example, the assessment of fishing stocks, things like that? Do you look into this?

-I've noticed, yes, I've read comments where they appear, yes, since they've been doing these studies and things like that, I sometimes start observing them.

-And when you observed them, what did you think of them?

-Like laws they put in place, sometimes they even want to put in place laws for fish sizes, things like that.

-Do you think they are right to put in place those laws or…?

-There are some.

-Or are the studies good, in general?

-There are some that do, that we sometimes accept, we support, we put a measure on, sometimes there are fish that catch them very small.

-In the past, when the association was operating, did you have any role to play with the council, such as mediating between the council and the fishermen? Did you get involved in that or not?

-What if I got into…?

-Not you personally, but for example, the leader of the association or the president was involved in finding out more or giving advice to the board, things like that.

-Yes, yes.

-He got involved.

-Yes, we had meetings, they came and laid out the points and what we thought, meetings were held beforehand.

-And now that the Villa is gone, that doesn't happen?

We haven't had any concerns about them coming like that, no, not right now. Before, yes, Natural Resources itself would come, if they imposed a ban or something. There was a ban on silk snapper, which was requested by fishermen because they wanted to impose a size restriction, but small silk snappers rise from the depths dead. So, a three-month ban was imposed, and the ban on silk snappers has worked.

-And have you seen that the silk snapper returned after those 3 months?

-Yes, the ban worked.

-How do you think fishing will change if, for example, there's pollution or contamination, or since you told me that the water temperature did rise, how do you think fishing will change if the water warms up, as you told me at the beginning?

[00:51:14]

-It depends on the temperature, I think everything will depend on the temperature.

-If it keeps growing, what do you think?

If it continues to grow, I don't know if the fish might go deeper, because the deeper the water, the less warm it is, so the heat won't affect them, I think. It's the same as if they were on the shallows, because we bring the fish up to the depths, and they come up very cold. The queen snapper and the silk snapper, at a depth of 250 fathoms, come out very cold, meaning the temperature down there is cold.

-If that happens, how do you think your job will have to change if the fish move deeper and deeper?

"We had to keep going. If they're the ones at the bottom, we'd have to keep going on more fathoms of mica."

-Do you have that ability now?

-Yes, because we have a lot of fathoms in the reels we use for fishing, so we have more capacity to cast deeper.

-In your opinion, what does it mean to have a resilient life as a fisherman?

-Have a life…

-Resilient, that is, strong, a good life as a fisherman, what does it mean?

-Having a good life as a fisherman is like living a very happy life. For example, I love the sea. I'm happy with the sea, and as long as the sea produces me, I'd be even happier. Because the sea helps us, and then we'll be able to sustain ourselves better.

-Do you have sons or daughters?

-No. I don't have children.

-If you had sons or daughters, would you recommend that they…

-I would teach him how to fish.

-Yeah?

-Yes. I would teach him how to fish.

-Because?

-Because it's a passion for the sea, a passion for fishing. My father taught me that from a young age, and it has stayed with me, and it's something I'll never let go of, until the Lord says so.

[00:54:03]

-And do you think it's the same with the other fishermen you know here in Aguadilla? Are they happy to be fishermen?

-Yes, they do. I have a cousin who's about to retire, but he's not retiring. And so he goes fishing, really old.

-How old are you?

-Oh my! I think he's over 80. Around 80, I think. So he doesn't get better. I've taken him fishing, and then he's sick, his whole body shakes.

Do you think that, given the current situation, fishing will be a source of livelihood and income for the Aguadilla community in the future?

-Well, maybe so, because we want to open the fish market there, and I think so, because there are a lot of people who want to buy fish. A lot of people ask: 'When are you going to open the fish market?' 'When will you be there so I can go there?' I think so, that we'll move forward.

-Well, thank you very much. Do you have anything you want to tell me before we finish? Is there anything you want that people listening might want to tell you?

-For those listening, well yes, let's protect our seas, the shores, especially the manatees and pelicans. And for those who ride jet skis, don't do it along the shore, go out to sea, because the shore is the habitat of manatees and all the food that comes close to the shore for fish, such as sardines (Sardines, Herrings, Clupeidae) (herring), cetí (Sirajo gobies), many small fish, and what jet skis are doing is scaring away all that marine life from the shore. Let them do it, ride jet skis, but further out, out to sea, with great caution. And let's protect our environment, our coasts. Let's not litter, let's not throw anything polluting into the water. The water belongs to everyone, we all enjoy that sea. And may God bless you all.

-Thank you. One more thing, if you could show me on the map if there are any places that are important for the marine environment. Since you told me there's a lot of this fish here, there are places in the marine environment that are very important for fishing or for the health of the marine environment.

-What are they good for fishing? We have the Desecheo.

-Can you call me?

-This is the Desecheo. In these areas here of the Desecheo.

-Just up front there?

[00:57:00]

-No, all these areas. In these areas here, there's a lot of abundance, there's silk snapper, there's sea bass. In the Desecheo, there are some spots where there's a lot of grouper (Sea bass, \*Serranidae\*) and Nassau grouper (Epinephelus striatus\*) (red hind) there, an abundance of fish, and as long as the currents help, the gar stays there. All of this has an abundance of fish. We also have other spots where we're going, which is for the Southern Crown. The Southern Crown is, I imagine, for here. This is the Desecheo, the Bajo de Sico…

-You can show me more or less, it doesn't have to be exact.

-I don't see the letters, I don't see what it says.

-What are you looking for?

-The Crown, this one here, over here, is also where there are places like this where the depth is not that much and there are many fish, many groupers (Sea basses, \*Serranidae\*), Nassau grouper (Epinephelus striatus\*) (red hind), silk snapper, blackfin snapper, all these areas.

-And what are the most important areas for small fish to grow or multiply?

-Where the reefs are. Where there are reefs, well, that's where they spawn, they stay there, and reproduce, because where there's sand, well, no, life is different. Where there are ledges, where there are reefs, that's where the abundance of fish is, you see, because where there's sand, there isn't much. There are fish that live in the sand, but they're not the ones we go after, or the species that live in the sand, like mollas, guabina, sand fish that we don't fish. But the reefs are where they're most abundant, and the reefs that are in the depths, where the cachuchos (queen snapper) and the chillos (silk snapper) live, are large ledges, where there are rocks below and all that.

-Where did you tell me there is more sargassum, does it come from the same place more or less?

-When they start, we go looking for them in the south, behind the Desecheo, then the sargassum starts coming in from the south. So we start fishing in those areas. When September starts, we start going to those areas to look for dorado (dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*).

-For September?

-Yes, and they pass behind the Desecheo, inside the Desecheo, sometimes it depends on the current, the current can bring it this way, it can bring it this way, and as we know, we go looking for them there.

[01:00:11]

-And how long will it be in September, from September until when?

-September and December follow. By then, the currents begin to change, and then sargassum begins to appear from above, or from the outside in.

-How from here?

-It starts like this, it starts coming from around here, also the Santo Domingo sargassum (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) starts coming in here, from Santo Domingo (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) inland, it all depends, as I say, on the current. It's all about the current. If the current keeps bringing us sargassum from this area in September, then we can have a good run of dorado (Dolphin, \*Coryphaena hippurus\*) (dolphin), if the current is favorable. Almost always the current starts here at that time, they start moving towards here.

-Well, thank you very much.

-OK.

-I'm going to stop.

-OK.