Are you fishing?

I went well, I went on Saturday and I went on Sunday. (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) I was going to go at night to shoot for the blonde, because I'm going for a little crowned person that I have there near the outside of the field, and with some very large goatfish.

We'll leave that for the interview.

Oh, okay.

Well, first, thank you very much for agreeing to come here and tell us about your life and the work you do. A little about the project we're working on. It's an oral history project. What this means is that we want to record stories from fishermen here in Vieques and Puerto Rico in general, and find out more, a little about the barriers they've encountered, the change in environment, the economic change, the things that have happened in their life as fishermen. We also want to find out what you've noticed in the maritime environment, if you've noticed any changes, and anything else you can tell us about that. These stories will be posted on a website where anyone who wants to listen can listen. Scientists can also use it for research if they want to use it. At any time, if you don't want to answer a question, please let me know, or if you want to stop the interview. That's all voluntary. I have more information for you here, if you'd like to take the time and read it now.

Ok.

Okay. So, I'll have it at the end of the interview, when you're going to tell me if you're happy with the recording and we can make it public. You'll tell me then. But for now, we're recording. We're here. If you could tell me your name, please.

Yes, my name is Interviewee Interviewee Melendez

Interviewee

Interviewee Melendez

Ok

They know me as “XXX.”

Does it mean anything?

Yes, the name of my ship.

Pumba, is it always?

Yes, I've had that one for twenty-nine or thirty years.

[00:02:58]

Ok.

The thing is, here, at least in Vieques, we have the habit or custom of calling the fisherman by the name of his boat. When we fished in Justicia, my cousin had a boat, and they called us "here go the Justicias," "the mixtils," and they baptized us more or less after the name of the boat.

Is that typical of Vieques?

From here in Vieques.

Oh, okay.

Also in Naguabo, because we have a fellow fisherman, for example, whom we know by the name of the boat, so as not to mention the name of the fisherman.

That's great. If you can. If you could tell me your age, please.

59.

59. And what ethnicity do you consider yourself?

What?

Ethnicity? What do you call it?

Ethnicity. Are you Puerto Rican, Viaquiño?

Oh no, Puerto Rican, then viaquiño.

Ok. And how many years have you been fishing?

I'm the youngest. We were seven siblings. One died when he was little. I'm the youngest. My dad tells me, my dad and my brothers used to tell me, that when they took me fishing, because I said, "I'm a sailor," I'd say, "I'm a sailor." I didn't even know how to speak, I mean, my whole life.

59 years old.

And I remember at school, they used to ask you, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" And I always said what my dad was: a public bus driver and a fisherman. So, I went to the sea, which is what I like.

Have you never been a driver?

Yes, I went, but not often, not like this time, I've been fishing all my life.

Yeah, I see. What kind of fish does he make?

Fishing?

And.

By trap, by rope and with a diver.

With a diver too?

Yes, with a diver. Right now, I have a 17-year-old son who has been going to sea with me since he was 3 years, 1 month, and 8 days old. Due to marital problems, his mother decided to leave him with me, and it was the only way I could continue working, I took him to sea from the age of 3 years, 1 month, and 8 days. That's when he began his life at sea. Today, he knows how to fish with a trap, with a line, and in a diver.

And do you like it too?

I'm already looking for depth, I don't want to fish much with line or trap anymore, "no, let's go diving," and thank God I came out happy.

When he refers to the depth of this, what he was referring to is the cove, the cove is a line that goes to depths of more than 500, 600 feet, and many hooks are attached to it, more than 5, 10, 20.

[00:06:15]

Yes, usually 2 hooks, and that amount is prepared, a lot of weight is added and that's it.

And it is for fishing for deep-water fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*), snapper, yellowfin, trout, moniama, bream, black aline.

Okay, let's talk a little more about his life and yes.

And I have a little girl who is fishing with me too.

Ah, the girl, how old is she?

20

He is 20 years old

He has 2 children and fishes with me.

Since when?

Well, she's been the oldest ever since she was little. She's gone to sea with me ever since she was little, but now since she's not working or anything, well, I tell her it's a way to earn money each month. Come with me, learn, and the day I'm not around, well, you and your brother can continue working together, a family. They're my dad, us, the grandchildren. They're like the fourth, fifth generation of Interviewee fishing.

The fifth?

Yes, because there were my grandparents, my dad, us, the grandchildren, and there is one, I already have a grandson, who would be my dad's great-grandson who is already crazy about the brand when he is very little, but I know that he likes the sea.

And dad is still fishing?

My dad?

His dad

No, my dad died

Did he die? And what kind of fishing did he do, similar to yours?

My father, of the line and the trap. Yes, we learned a lot. Thanks to him, we know what it means to fish, we know what it means to earn an honest living, we know how tough the sea is. We know what it means to respect the sea and not fear it. My father always said, "You have to respect the sea, you don't fear it," and he used a word that I'm going to repeat. He said, "If you go out to sea in good weather and the sea gets rough, you can't get cold feet." That is, you can't fear it, you have to face it. If you get cold feet, you'll lose your way; evil will swallow you up. And that's the same thing we continue to tell our children, our nieces and nephews, and everyone who goes to sea with us. We teach them, we guide them, we tell them that.

Tell me a little about a story you or your dad heard about, about a time like that, when you had to say, “No, I'm going to face the sea.”

[00:08:47]

No, the sea is something very, very mysterious. The sea has a different breeze every day, the sea has different currents every day, the sea has different swells every day. The bad thing is that sometimes you go and we catch a fish, and sometimes you catch a fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*), for example, on a line. You don't know what fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) it is, because today it speaks to you one way, later it might speak to you another way. Usually, a fisherman who has a lot of experience fishing with a line, as soon as the fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) touches the line, he says, "I got a grouper," "I got a colirubia," or "There's a Candilero here bothering me, there's a mulita." The sea is very mysterious.

Every day is a little new.

Yes, there's a lot I can tell you about this experience you're talking about. I went out, not having much to catch, trying to catch sharks (Requiem sharks, \*Carcharhinidae\*), and I left the longline on the day before. The next day when I got up, the sea was so rough it was eating people up, and I went out because if there were any fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) I wouldn't lose them. Instead, I ended up losing them because the sea was so deep that, due to human error, instead of pulling the rudder to one side, I pulled it to the other side and got stuck under a swell. The boat filled with water, and a lot of equipment and half the world were lost, but we tried to drain and drain the boat and continue looking for where the other longline boats were, and when there was nothing, thank God we had no fish, and I came back to the port. You go out to sea, thinking there are times you're going to have a good catch, and there aren't any good catches, and there are times you go out thinking you're going to have a catch, but you don't think you're going to have that good a catch. It all depends on luck, and I have a fishing buddy named Tito Medina, to mention him, and when we go out to sea, when we catch fish, we always say, "Be it a lot, be it a little," we say, "This is what God had for us today," and that's it. And this is what He had for us, and we leave satisfied; tomorrow is another day.

He tells me what he already told me one thing that his father taught him, but what else did his father teach him that is very valuable in his life as a fisherman?

What's up? What's that?

A helicopter

[00:11:44]

My dad always taught us, sorry, that if you didn't fish with a line, you could fish with a pot; if you didn't fish with a pot, you could dive. And he always taught us that when you fish with a pot, you have to have gear in different areas, at least in the south. The platform isn't very large, but you have to have gear outside and gear inside. When the spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) didn't walk in, it walked outside. There are times when you're elevating the gear inside. For example, you're at 70 or 80 meters deep and you're without fishing, without fishing, without fishing. When you finished that line that you turned over and caught the line on the outside, what you didn't catch is that in all the inside gear, you caught it in five or six pots on the outside line because the spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) walked outside and didn't walk in. That's the mistake that many fishermen who call themselves fishermen sometimes make because they don't know what it means to fish with a pot. "No, there isn't any," "there's nothing," "there's nothing," "there's nothing," but they don't have the art as you should have it and another thing they also say is that "I'm catching lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) and I'm not catching fisherman," because the nasillo, the nasillo is the entrance for the lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) of the pot because where the lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) and the fisherman enter. The entrance there, the nacillo, if they don't make it suitable for catching fisherman and lobster, (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) you're going to catch lobster, (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) fisherman, sorry. The lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) came in, climbed up and stayed, but the fish, when it passed under the net and saw that it could get out, turned around and left.

The nacillo has to have its throat, to prevent the fish from seeing that there is an exit and going in, in and out, in and out. My father didn't give me all that knowledge.

And he told me that there are only two families in Vieques that are known

No, not at first

At first

At first, when I was a kid, there was a lot of talk about the Medinas and the Venturas; they were two large fishing families. There were more fishermen,

But when the Medina and Interviewee family was mentioned, everyone said, "Yes, they are people who fish for goods, they are fishermen," although there were more families.

And why?

Because they were from the largest fishing families. My family included my father, my uncles, and my father's brothers-in-law.

Everyone was-

Everyone who joined the family became a fisherman.

And that's women and men, or what?

Not so much in the days of women before, because remember, women used to be the ones who took care of the home and the children, and men were in charge of putting bread on the table, and they cooked for them. It's not like now, when there's a liberation, where women do the work, the same jobs men do, and so on. But today there are many, not many, but there are women who are fishermen as such.

Do you know more than just your mother? Your daughter?

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes, I know, I know,

Here in Vieques?

[00:14:57]

Here in Vieques, I know a girl named Velez. I wanted to tell her so I could bring her here. Her father was a fisherman, a very good gillnet fisherman, he made them, but I couldn't tell her. And she fishes with a gillnet, she fishes with a line, she fishes with a diver.

Well, maybe we do it around the internet. Wilson, does he talk about her?

Yes, about that girl, I told him about her, she is Cardina Velez.

Cardinal Velez?

She is Yungo's sister, Tito's, her father was called Abraham Vélez, he fished a lot with trammel nets,

Abraham Velez? That sounds familiar.

Can we interview her via Zoom, or is it not possible?

I sent her the document. I wanted to call her,

Do you know where she lives?

Yes, sure, I know where she lives. She's very good, very good.

When the interview is over

Can we go?

Could we go?

Yes, ok, let's go

She is very good, she worked as a diver's watchman, as a diver's captain, as a trammel net, collecting balajú, number one in Vieques.

Oh, it's very good.

Yes, very good, a very good working woman, if anyone can be called a fisherwoman here in Vieques, it's her.

Okay, well, when we're done, let's go and talk to her, if she can, if she can't, no.

Yeah.

Well, tell us a little more about your father's teachings. What else did your father teach you or tell you about the sea, about where you are, how to navigate the sea?

Back then, when my dad fished, there was no GPS, there wasn't one, and my dad was one of those who would go and look at a mark we call land marks, which are three points. I don't know if you know what that is. And he taught us how to mark the fisherman's mark here at three points.

If you can do it here for me

An example, here's a mountain with a stick. Here we'll put a stick and here's the shore. For that, you have to know your area. Here on this beach, it's rocky, and here the sand begins, or there's a giant white rock. Then you align this tree with this rock, and this third point is you. And here at this other angle, the same thing happens: a tower with a house that you know. The tower here, for example, here in the light, and this is the tower here, and here's a house. I'm not a good draftsman. So, here you'll put this point. I'll design it here. And when you made this square, with this square, this is the point where you are, and here, for example, you have a crown, or you have a callus, or you cast trap number one, and you arrived, left the shore, and placed the mark. You arrived here. Here the trap should be. I already taught my son all that. The girl is in that process, and my dad and all fishermen who are fishermen should know that. For example, that fisherman down there, he comes out of the water diving. And if you're separated from him and he wants to jump back in, even if it takes you five minutes, because the other diver is far away, by the time you get out, he's already in the same water, the same water, he's already marked where he is.

[00:19:04]

Wow

That man over there.

And that's a tradition, it's a tool that has been lost in many areas, because today we have GPS.

When I was a boy, I wish you could ask Tindo Interviewee, Jesús Interviewee, he had the boat I mentioned to her just now, Justicia. And sometimes, four or five divers would go and throw them—for example, four or three divers here—and he'd go and tell me to throw it where that yellow house is over there.

Ok

He took off from the sun. Yes, I had to be on the lookout. If he stopped, and I saw Tindo stopped, I had to go and mark where he stopped to fish. And if two weeks later he said to me, "Do you remember that day when I was fishing?"—for example, if there was a fisherman who sometimes went, Elías was with us, and I caught so much in the drop like that—"Yes, I remember," throw me to the mark you left me, where I stopped to fish, to that mark. You had to keep making it mind, memory, mind, mind, and those marks had to be there.

Being a fisherman means having a very good memory and always

Knowledge

Knowledge of that.

[00:20:28]

You learn every day, you learn every day. That's why, in my personal way of thinking, if I go with someone and I tell them, for example, on the line, raise the hooks or lower the hooks, or change the line, and they tell me, "Oh, no, I know, that's fine, but tomorrow you're not coming with me." Because if I know what I'm telling you and the way you're fishing isn't yielding results, you're not coming with me. It's not because I own the boat, it's because I know that what you're showing me is that you're a know-it-all and you know nothing. Do you understand? And I'll give you an example. We did it last year, not the year before. I took a person, a relative, fishing. He told me, "Let's not go for a mark that I have, that I caught a good fish last night. Since I left La Esperanza, he said, "Put that mark," one of these points, for example, "Put that mark there and with this and hit it, it's in front of the lighthouse, it's far away, it's in front of the lighthouse." I told him, you tell me in front of the lighthouse, yeah, don't worry about that because the bank, look, the boat has two engines, but that mark doesn't show up. "What do you mean it doesn't show up?" That mark doesn't show up because if I put that mark on the stern where you tell me, when I get to the lighthouse, there's no bottom, because the southern platform is small. And then I said in my mind, this one is lost, if I continue along there, there, there, there, there, there with that stern mind, when I reach that mark that he says in my mind, there are about 2,000 feet of depth because the south of Vieques can go to 200 or 300 feet and at the moment it has gone 800 feet into the ravine, well, that's how it is.

Ok

Then the other day, well, we were looking for that tag, looking for it when we arrived in front of Caño Hondo, which is much closer to where he says, he told me "look at this other tag here", and I told him, you're really lost, you don't know where you are and we had a lot of data to find the tag and the track where he had left it. The next day we went fishing, and I said, not today we're going for another tag, we hit the colirubia very close to the side of the boat, and very close to the bottom, very close to the bottom means that from the tip of the hook, there could be 12 inches, 15 inches, well

He had the hooks high up. There's a bit of current, he has thick line, he has the same amount of lead as we do in weight. So we're veering and veering, catching two, two, two, and whatever we catch, for example, let's say 8, 10, 12 fish, he'd catch one. So I'm telling him, change the line, change the calm, because it's too big to land close to the boat there because they're going beyond where the fish are. And he was telling me, "Oh no, but I'm catching bigger ones," and I'm asking him, how much bigger? Half a fish, plus half a pound bigger? I don't need a fish for every 10, 12 that we catch for half a pound bigger. What I want is volume, because volume is what pays. And this blonde tail we're catching is a blonde tail that passes the mark. It was like that all night. We turned and turned, and with one he didn't look, this one was prettier, and I said to him, "Do you know, like this, half a pound bigger, how much didn't we catch?" What happened the next day? "What time are we going?" I said, "You're not going, sorry, you're not going." Because if you show me that you know more than me, well, I know that what you're doing is doing well, well, I'll let you lead the way. The same thing happened to me with another one. I told him, "Put them up on the floor," and he told me to go down to the back and eat. I told him the same thing, "You're not coming back tomorrow."

[00:24:26]

The people you're talking about, are they people who should learn from you, or what?

People who have gone fishing with me and who pretend and want to pretend that they know what they are doing, and they don't.

Why do they want to go with you if they know, or what is the reason.

Well, there are times when they have a boat and want to go with you because they know that you know places where you can fish well, you know?

Ok

For example, I can tell you that in the south, at night, I move around like this, and I don't use GPS, because I know the houses. I can point out the light from Tazo Sánchez's house with the light from the sports village, just to give an example, and

the light of the Blue Horizon through the earth callus, and there I move and reach the area where I want to go.

You can show us, not by way of how to say, exploit your fishing area, but you can show us further west on the map the areas that are important to you, the fish that you make.

Look, what happens is, I'm going to point out something for you. You have to know that the sea, the sea, is like the land. I'm going to tell you something I learned from my dad: the sea is like the land. What do I mean by this? The land has areas that produce, agriculture produces, which is good for bananas, which is good for bananas, which is good for pineapples. The sea is the same. The sea has areas that produce, and there are areas where nothing is caught, which is desert. There were times when we went with my dad and people who were new to fishing, or who weren't familiar with it, my dad would say, "It's a trap made in the sky, dad, in the sky, because the only thing you're going to catch there are starfish. Why? Because they threw it in the sand. If it doesn't have a place to live, what fish is going to live there? If the sand is made of starfish, of the sand, do you understand what I mean? And if you're a biologist, you can learn about that."

[00:27:02]

No, I'm not a biologist, I'm a social science major, but I'm learning a lot.

My dad had a lot of sayings and a lot of things. And my dad knew a lot. My dad would say, "This is white," to mean sand; "This is track," to mean where there's matter; "This is callus." And we were learning with him, learning with him, and my dad was like a GPS. My dad could have 60, 70 traps, and back then, they used to put one trap per rope. Now they put two, three, four, five, depending on the boat you have, and two points.

What they call the NASA train.

Ah, I don't know what they call it. We call it rowlera.

Linglera?

Ring clay, ring clay.

Ringlera is a trap train, which is several traps on the same rope.

On the same rope, and with the same end here, because if one gets choked it moves away, and it's not hard to find it.

Okay. Ringuera?

Ringlera. And there were times when we were here in front of Medialuna and suddenly he'd make it, damn. I was left with this trap because he usually named the trap. If he came along and a chicken got into the trap while he was making it, he'd name it "the hen" or "the squirrel," a name like "the skirt." If a grandson came along, he'd name him "the grandson" or "Lula," which was my mother. "Lula stayed with me," and that trap is in front of the pirate in such a mark, he had the trap marked, mark by mark. That's what my dad was like. One day I remember I bought these traps for my brother, Héctor, there were twelve traps. I remember the number because of the fishing. Twelve traps, five-year-old wire traps when he was starting out, and he said, let's throw them out here so they can catch some fish, when I think Jaime González was in the department. Jaime González, a big man, dead fish. When they came on the boat from there they had a brutal 42.

A lion was most likely there.

[00:29:47]

Yes, they've been there for years. Daniel Mato (Burro grunt, \*Pomadasys crocro\*) is older than the cold. And when we went fishing for hogfish, we caught 112 pounds of hogfish alone, and he told me, "I told you you're going to catch the hogfish here," that you were going to catch them in that area, that you were going to catch them in this area. There were times he'd say, "This trap is dirty, let's throw it here so the hogfish can clean it, and then we're going to move it so it can catch fish, because if it's dirty like that, it won't catch fish." It would stick to it, and the hogfish would come, eat all the dirty bits, move it to the other side, or throw the crayfish in.

A technique you used: when the trap was dirty, you'd stick it to the key, and the fish themselves would come and clean it. Interesting.

Yes, and when it's dirty you throw in spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) and the spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) is clean. That's why the fisherman knows when the trap has spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) or had it. When the spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) comes in really clean, you say it comes with good spiny lobsters, it has a spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) and when it gets to the top they peeled it, they raised it because the trap, the spiny lobster (Panulirus argus) cleans the trap, making it shiny, the wire shiny as if it were new. That's right.

He told me that his dad, I understood that his dad knew many times exactly if we put the trap here, we're going to get out of it, can you still do that?

Yes, I learned a lot. Yes, many brands, certainly from my dad, and I remember them. What I do know is that fishing isn't like it used to be.

Tell me a little about that. What changed and when?

My dad used to take us along the shore to pick up carts, walking.

Walking on the sand?

In the sand

On the beach?

Yes, we took the cartridges, like saying, Novillo beach, Puerto Ferro, Ensenada Honda, on the board to be more specific that it is an, sorry, an area that is known in Ensenada Honda as "the board."

No, I don't know, because it's my first, my second day here.

In Ensenada Honda Bay, which is right here, and this part right here. You told me about good fishing areas, it all depends. I can barely see the sunfish in black. These areas are more or less.

You can make a circle, however you want.

Yes, more or less here, well. There too, like the reef, you can catch grouper, mutton snapper (Lutjanus analis), and so on. It's an area that produces a lot of fishing. In this bend here, which suddenly forms a half-moon shape, you can catch snapper here, also right here in front of the lighthouse, right here. In this bend here, you can also catch snapper, there's good catch, but you catch snapper in that ravine. And in this bend here, it's very, very close to the shore. They have it marked here, but I'd say it's already quite deep here, about a mile out, I think there's no bottom, what they call Punta Vaca (Butter hamlet, Hypoplectrus unicolor), which we call Playas Viejas.

[00:33:33]

Ok.

Yes, but as I told you, the sea has its areas where it produces more and less fish. In this eastern area, a lot of fish are caught because there are strong currents here and they bring in a lot of plants, they bring in a lot of things, and there's a lot of fishing here, and since the northern shelf is larger than the southern one, a lot of fishermen from the north come to fish this whole area around here because there's a lot of fishing in the north around here. The shelf is much larger than the right one.

Of snake.

Yes, a lot, a lot, this whole area of ​​what we call the teacher here. All of this, yes.

They call her the teacher?

Yes, and it's him, no, if he leaves it there, I'll give it to the girl so that, they call her, she put it, she used it. What do I know? She put it, I think she put it, La Culebra, a very flat area that there is here in Culebra and we call it the teacher, fishermen of Vieques. It's very flat here, the part outside of Culebra Bay, but around here there's a lot of fishing here in Culebra, here in between I saw here in Culebra, here there are a lot of fishermen in that area, there were fish.

If you can make a circle there.

Yes, here, this whole area, here, like this, all this area, all this way around here, Culebra. Yes, around here, Vieques, all this way around here, all this way around here, there's a lot of fishing.

OK.

And here in Vieques, I'm going to mark it more or less like this, almost this entire area. I mean, depending on the area, I'm getting out of it, the depth right now there, yes, there's a lot of fishing, but it's more or less like this.

And, more or less, are the routes they use?

Yes, yes, you can go out, you leave here and go that way. They also fish close by here, but that's less west. We fish a lot now in the south. Before, I used to fish a lot up here and north, and we used to go up to the U of Santoma, but you can't fish in those waters.

Because?

Well, because the government of St. Thomas doesn't allow it, the government of the Virgin Islands. But we have the problem that people come from the Virgin Islands to fish here at the eastern tip of the island. They come to set traps from St. Thomas to the tip of Vieques.

[00:36:06]

Of Saint Thomas and Saint Cross? Only Saint Thomas?

Yes, to cast nets, they come from Santa Cruz because it's further away to fish for chi and cartridges at the eastern tip of Vieques.

Ok. He told me that in the past he was going further south to fish now

More came from the north

In the past

In the past, I now go out more south. Before, I used to go north with divers, like I said, three, four, five divers, and now I fish here in the south with my son, with a pot, with a line, and scuba diving with my son and my son.

Why did the location change?

Well, because I don't have a diving suit right now to go here and since my baby is just starting out, I don't want to risk him going to these areas that are a little further away and maybe we'll have to dive a little deeper. And since I want to keep him healthy and I want to take him little by little, I don't want to risk him going to these areas yet.

Understood, understood. Okay. Can you tell me a little about what you do with the fish? Where do you sell it?

Well, the fish, I was selling the fish to the fishmonger.

What fishmonger?

To the fishmonger, to both fishmongers.

Here? What are they called?

The Soe fish market, and the other one, I know it as the northern fish market, there the sea I think it's called, I don't remember very well, but sales are very bad.

Is it temporary?

Now, this year

Has this year been very bad?

Very, very bad. There's fishing, but no one to sell it to.

Why do you think?

Sorry?

Why do you think there is no one to sell it to?

Because you go and call the fishmonger, and they don't want to buy. Look, I don't have any sales, I don't have anyone to sell to, and I understand that if they don't have anyone to sell to, they can't buy. It's like you own a butcher shop and you don't have anyone to sell to, the product of one or two cows you slaughtered. How are you going to buy more to keep selling? It's the same thing that many fishermen don't understand and get upset, "Oh, this guy didn't want my fish," and I tell them, but if they don't have any sales, how is he going to be able to keep buying to keep putting in money, money, money? He has nowhere to put more fish. He's already invested so much money, and I tell him, and since there's this power problem, and if the power goes out, all that fishing will be ruined, you took your money and he lost it.

Do those fishmongers normally buy to sell here on the island?

The fishmonger doesn't buy it, but rather sells it. They sell it here in Vieques, but mostly they export it.

Where do they export it?

[00:38:54]

Wherever they order from, that is, to Naguabo, they bring it to Naguabo and then take it somewhere else, there on the farm, to Puerto Rico. I also think that the meatpacking plants have brought fish so cheaply that this is what happened, and it happened to me with the restaurant, and I'm going to mention it. Kenepo ordered a catch of snapper and cartridges, and I went out with the snapper and cartridges all day, from morning until afternoon. And when I arrived amidst the dark clarion call, I arrived and said, "Choose," I took the fish, the snapper, the cartridges, and he said, "I don't want them." "But you ordered it from me?" I said. And he said, "Yes, but I went to a meatpacking plant in Puerto Rico yesterday and bought very cheap fish, and I have my freezer full of fish that I bought for half your price."

And is it frozen fish?

Yes, but they make tourists believe that it is fresh local fish, which is not the case, but there are restaurants here that do buy it from here, to name one, Choli, where when it is like this they always order fish from you, during the season for conch (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*), conch (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*), spiny lobster (Panulirus argus\*), and so on. There are some, there are others too that do it, but to name one, but usually the American one and things like that, they buy it frozen, and I can't make much profit.

The difference in price of fish from the refrigerator to fish?

Yes, yes, sure. Remember, those are wholesalers, and since they bring it from there, they resell it here. Maybe if they sell it in larger quantities, they might get a much better price, but how much is gas here? There are a lot of people here who have fold-truck engines; they save on oil. Not me. I still use my old engines, like the ones from the del—

Of mixture?

[00:41:00]

A mixture of 1900s and something, from 2000, 2010, and the post-sale oil is 9 pesos, to give you an idea. Plus, those engines consume a lot, where they run on 12 gallons. I need more than 24.

In your opinion, because they have very old, hybrid engines, hybrids, they use oil and gasoline together. They use something else, not just gasoline. So because they have older engines, you spend, you have double the expense?

More, much more.

Much more than double the expense?

Yes, I can give you an example: they can use 6 gallons, I can use 18, 20 gallons. Remember, they have powerful, fuel-efficient engines that give them speed, and speed is a gain.

How big is your?

My boat?

And

My boat is 26 feet, and it has two 85 engines, but my boat is a big boat. I think my boat is from an 84. Back then, materials were cheap, and it's a pretty heavy boat. But that's what God has allowed me to have so far, thank God. And I haven't been able to put in new machinery or anything else. They've been fortunate enough to be able to put in good engines, and I haven't had that. When the time comes, God willing, and if not, then let my son do it.

But, he said something last time about the American, buy

The restaurants

Ah, fishmongers are local but restaurants are sometimes owned

There are many restaurants here that are American-owned.

OK

And that American restaurant buys a lot from Puerto Rican meatpacking plants. For example, you see the meatpacking plants come, the pieces from the meatpacking plants come here, you see them unloading boxes of caramels so they can prepare their meals, boxes of red snapper fillets, and so, well, they don't buy that from you, you know? And so, yes, fresh red snapper, whatever they mean, but it's not fresh as such. My dad taught us that once fish hits the freezer, it's not fresh fish. At home, I can take the fish and it goes into the freezer and you don't eat it the next day; it's not fresh fish. I either sell the fish, if it's for my own consumption, or for ours, or I give it away. Our dad taught us that. I have my daughter who goes there with me when we go fishing, if she's going to eat, for example, a red snapper, which is what they call "sea round" in the currency. I can be on the cliff, which is the flat part, for example, 400, 500, 600 feet. And she says to me, "Dad, pass me a red snapper so I can eat it. I know that when I get home, that fish is going to be scaled, because she's going to get out of the car, marinate it a little, and put it in the freezer right there. Because otherwise, and I mean, maybe it's just a mania or just someone's thing, but my dad taught us that. We learned from my dad that my mom tells us that my dad, my dad, when my mom offered him something, he would say no. We would say to my dad, Daddy, do you like that? No, I won't eat that. No, I don't want it, I don't want it either. And my dad would tell me because if the fish isn't eaten right away the next day, it's not fresh fish. My dad would eat fish that day when he arrived if it was nighttime. And the same goes for my kids and all, if they're going to eat a fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) it's right away. There, I have a case of lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) that a friend of mine offered to take the morning we caught it, how long ago was that I remember on Saturday, and they didn't make it on Saturday, and today, tomorrow they won't eat it. I already called my friend who stops by the dock, I'm going to bring you some lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) that we caught to eat here and we won't eat it anymore. And less than that, they weren't good.

[00:45:40]

He had a lot of respect for his father, from what he told me.

Yes, and I ask God and I always thank God, because what I know today I thank him for. And there are times when I'm at sea, myself—I don't know if my brothers told him—and I do something and it's a flash that comes to me from my dad. I learned this from my dad. Or there are times, I'm doing something and I can't do it, I can't do it, and I feel like he's telling me, "This is how it is." And I was making some nacillos for my friend, and I said, "I'm missing something, I'm missing something." And I was talking about it with Prieto about two weeks ago. I was missing that he used it, he would hold the nacillo by the throat, back and front, by the snout, and he would put it in the piro araba and bend it to make the throat. And that reached me, and I said, "It reached me," I said, "It reached me, daddy," he spoke clearly, "I'm missing this," and he said, "Now these are the nacillos Vero made."

Could you tell us, Interviewee, could you tell us about, about the traditional, the tradition of the Virgen del Carmen bullfight.

Look, the Virgin of Carmen is called the patron saint of fishermen. I know that in the days before the patron saint festivities, they always chased her there in the bay of Puerto Mula. But not me.

And is that there?

There in the village

Here where the ferry arrives

Ah, okay. Can you call me?

Look here, right here where this little dot is. This is it, but I only went there once or twice.

It was a tradition before, is it not seen now?

As far as I know, it wasn't as common as it used to be. Patron saint festivities, if I remember correctly, were held on Fridays and Saturdays of the patron saint festivities. They would take them for walks in the bay, throw flowers, and so on. Because before, there were a lot of Catholic fishermen, and it's a tradition of the Catholic Church.

Ok.

Sorry?

No, no, yes.

Yes, it's a tradition of the Catholic Church as such, but right now, as far as I know, I can't tell you whether they paraded it this year or not.

Ok

I really can't tell you. I know there's a virgin, an image of the virgin there, looking out at the sea. But I don't have this, a religion as such. I have a God, and a God, Jehovah the Father, Jesus Christ, Jehovah the Father. I believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In image, but I really don't believe that the saint is merely there, the saint is that, but every time I go out to sea, they ask me, "Interviewee, who are you going with?" With Interviewee, with God and me. There he goes to sea alone, because there are days when I've gone alone, or in the afternoons, I don't go alone, I go with God, wherever I go, I go with God. But I know that before, the Virgin of Carmen was the patron saint of fishermen.

Do you have any memories with your dad of participating in one of those races?

I don't remember going with my dad because they always fished in the north. And my dad, my dad always fished in the southern area. My dad always fished in the Caño Hondo area, which is Mosquito Bay, where there were a lot of fishermen, like 20 fishermen would come from there, from Luján, from El Vestido, from Los Chivos, from Pozo Prieto in Monte Santo, and my dad always fished there. I fished on both sides. Of my family, the one who fished a lot on this side and so on, the only one of my brothers and so on, was me. I fished a lot in that area, on this side here. Whether it was Culebra, Santo Tomas, between Vieques and Puerto Rico, in that area around there. But I don't remember going with my dad to any of the activities for the Virgin's run during the patron saint festivities.

[00:50:22]

Ok.

And in general, there are some, because as you tell me that your family was in the fishing industry for five generations, are there any rituals or celebrations that the family does around fish, around the sea, something like that?

No, well, it's a ritual like that, the fish has to be eaten fresh, just caught. We go to the beach, and sometimes we leave right there, go fishing, and eat it. There was, there's a beach they called Playa Bombero, which was a black beach, where we were, and so on, stuck there during the fighting, and we were all there. We went out one day, to spend like Good Friday, and the marina surrounded us, and so we decided to stay there on that beach on Sunday (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*).

What beach was it?

Black Leg.

Where is?

This is right here, so tiny. This is beyond Puerto Ferro Bay, I can't even make it out.

More or less.

I think this one, the gringos call it Sacred Beach now. There's a palm tree here, there were some palm trees there—I don't know if there were one or two—that my brother Manuel planted, who was here at the time we went there. We planted it, he planted it. We planted it because during naval training and all that, they had been cut down, and he planted some palm trees there. Then bad weather came and knocked them down. I think there were only two palm trees left. The same as the beaches in Blue Beach, which they call Blue Beach, but it's Bahía Manuel Ki and then there's Bahía La Chiva. That one was planted by a group of people, and among them was Héctor, my second-born brother, with his little girls, during the wrestling there. You can't even pick a coconut on all those beaches around here now.

The goat is now a nature reserve.

Yeah.

Where the navy was.

Exactly. Previously, during a protest, we invaded that beach because my brother brought a bunch of newly hatched coconuts, and they planted them there.

To better understand, they planted it as a way of remembering or marking the struggle.

[00:52:55]

To mark and renew the beach, because it was a beach that had, when they told us I was not there, but they say that there were so many palm trees that a flash light was needed during the day to look for the coconuts, the coconut groves were so thick.

Wow

That's how it was

That the palms were very big

Very large and so dense. So many palm trees. Remember that before, people used to rely heavily on coconut to make arepas, to make oil, and all that.

Coconut was used a lot before.

Yeah

But before what?

Before the Navy was here and all that, well, all that was widely used, it was a food. But then, according to the story I've heard, the godmother arrived, and to make room for them to land, they cut down the palm trees with machines and even threw bombs at the shore.

That before? Is that something you heard from your dad?

From my dad, from my mom and from many people.

Can you tell me a little about the struggle, what is the struggle?

The Navy's struggle? Well, the Navy's struggle began here, and it's not because, as many people understand, we're anti-American, but because we are North Americans, we are American citizens. The struggle here began because of the Navy's abuse of the people and the fishermen. They would come here and carry out maneuvers without saying anything, a landing, and if, through bad luck, as my father used to say, you made a set of gear and threw it into the water, a set of 40 traps. And two days later a Navy landing arrived, and all those new traps that you might not have even given them were lost. Then the time came when the fishermen got tired, the people got tired, and well, they started protesting. My father was the first fisherman arrested during the struggle. The first, he and two other companions. The protest began, and the next day he went to raise the traps; when he finished raising them, he headed for La Esperanza. The Coast Guard blew its siren, he stopped, and they arrested him. My dad was fishing barefoot. I think it took them eight to ten hours to take him from Manoarqui, which is above Puerto Verde, to Ceiba, barefoot, handcuffed to the Coast Guard railing, so he couldn't stand up, he had to come on his knees. When he arrived in Vieques, they went to pick him up in an old garden plane (Black margate, \*Apisotremus surinamensis\*). He arrived with his feet covered in water blisters from the heat of the Coast Guard platform, which fried his feet in the heat. My dad was later arrested again with Prieta, in Bahía Salinas. And then when the fighting resumed, when the bombing that killed David Sane, then the six brothers were arrested. We were also arrested during the fighting.

[00:56:14]

The six?

Yeah.

With your dad too?

No, my father had already died, during the fighting, when David died. When David died, my father had already died, but later we were arrested, and we were arrested in the area of ​​impact, not here at the gate, at the fence. At most, we were arrested, Prieto, me. Forgive me for mentioning myself first, but Prieto, Chelito, and me, my nephew. Today, 10 police officers arrested us on top of the jets in the Yagui area, which were the jets they had for shooting. We were protesting on top of them. We woke up, and they took us north to Puerto Diablo beach. There we got off, walked, and when the sun came up, we were on top of the jets to avoid the bombing that was going to happen that day, and they hit us. We are here with our heads held high.

Did they get on the jets to protest?

Some on top of the jet, and others turned around to where the jets they were targeting were. They were the ones left there for the planes to shoot down.

And what happened?

But we're here with our heads held high, because I haven't gone to jail. I wasn't imprisoned for drugs, for killing anyone. As my father used to say, "After you fight for the well-being of your family and for this town to have peace, you don't have to bow down to anyone." He used to tell me, "You're ashamed if they catch you with drugs, because you killed someone, or because you raped a woman or abused a child." If they arrest you for that and I'm still alive, I'll be proud that you were arrested for the old struggle. (Black margate, \*Apisotremus surinamensis\*)

Can you tell me a little more about what happened after he was arrested?

After they arrested us, they took us to Ceiba. From Ceiba they were going to take us to the Federal Court. They took us to the jail in Guaynabo. We were there for one or two nights. They took us to the federal court. They released us and summoned us for a trial, and they gave us two years of probation.

And what did that mean? Two years of probation?

RESPONDER: We couldn't have a soul, whoever had a weapon, if we were going to leave the country, we had to notify it, all those things.

[00:59:03]

Ok.

ANSWER: But everything was normal. Remember that it was a struggle that was a protest by a people who first consisted of just two or three people, and then there were thousands and thousands and thousands and millions around the world supporting the peace of this people.

How do you see the world of Vieques changing after the army left?

RESPONDER: Well, here at least, we don't have any bombing. Did you hear how that helicopter sounded just now? That was just a little bit when the jetbots were circling the area. This house must have sounded like it was going to fall, it was so quiet. They were passing by here.

A lot of noise.

RESPONDER: A lot of noise. When we were in the fishing area, they would come and tell us, the people who were going to be on guard, that we had to leave. They had personnel guarding the area, working, and they would go in boats to get us out of the area if we were there. So they would say shooting starts at nine in the morning and say, "I'm not leaving until I'm done fishing," "Call the boat or call the planes, I'm not leaving." They would come and if they were going to start shooting, they would say, "They're going to shoot at me, you have to leave," and those who were on guard would leave, those who they had as security for the area would leave. That started after the fighting started because that didn't happen at first, but since the Navy is an intelligence agency, in addition to being abusers, abusing a lot of innocent people and those who can't fight against them, what they did was give them work and turn the people against each other. Do you understand? Those who work go to defend their bread, and those of us who fish, the rest of us, the people, are going to fight for peace, for our bread. So, it sets the people against the people. I was never one of those who thought if you worked at the base, I would have problems with you. My problem was with the Navy, not with the Vieques personnel, because once they left there and went to work, we would find ourselves in the streets, and if they were going to start fighting, we would have a war among the civilians. You understand? I was going to protest, and I was going to protest against the Navy. I wasn't going to protest because you were there. If your name was Carmen, I wasn't "Dirty Carmen," well, I wasn't going to do that. There were people who did and said, look, I didn't come here to fight with them. We came to protest against the Navy, we're going to express ourselves against the Navy. So those jets were going to dive, they came and went first, they went by once, twice, they were coming very low. The worst part of this was that if you didn't notice when they were coming, you realized when they were passing so low, when the pilot pulled the jet up, all that noise of the plane was like it was all that turbulence inside you and you got stuck, and they were going to bomb the area. You went there afraid that a bomb would explode near you, or you left because you couldn't stand the noise, or whatever. That's how they did it. The boats also fired, I had many experiences. One day the boat was there, I could tell you at least two of them. The boat is pulling from the south. Normally, the boat would pull from the south, from the south from outside to the eastern point to what is Yib Beach, where they call Playa Yo, Carrucho Beach (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*), sorry. They call it Bahía del Sur. There are some sunken boats there, there are still many things in the water, bombs and such. I was going down from fishing with two fishermen, one Lázaro and the other Willy Meléndez, and they were already pulling from the bottom. We were coming to the outside of Callo de la Yalí. We were already diving when the boat pulled from the south, the bomb passed over, the ball over the island and fell on the outside of Cayo de la Yalí, on the part inside us, into the water. We're talking about about half a mile, three quarters of a mile, the northernmost parts of the shooting area. And then they continued shooting like that and I sped up more until we arrived, sort of in front of Puerto Diablo, and then they kept shooting there, we followed. Once I was going down in front of the camp, they had a tank, and from the lookout point up above, they would throw this campaign into the water, heading for the water. That tank was at the water's edge, and when we were getting there, they started shooting, and all those bullets hit the water, and I had to run outside, outside, outside, outside, because the further they got, the closer the bullets hit me, so I could later get to the dock here. And this other one, which was also a pretty big scare, was we were rowing in Bahía Salinas. What we call this "la changa" (the changa). It was a ramp they had to launch the boats into the water there to get us out of the area. There we had some traps, Tindo, Elías, and I, if I remember correctly, I don't know if Pepa was there, and there were some maneuvers and we were. And a maneuver began, there was a torpedo boat, we call it that, I don't know if I'm what you call a boat, it came in firing, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, towards land, and all that powder magazine there, we're talking the distance like from that house that other time, from us.

[01:05:15]

That white house?

ANSWER: The yellow one. And when it's abarca, when that torpedo boat was going to take off from the shore it turned and sweated the inside part where Cayo Alcatraz is, which we call the coffee pot there, go to Salina, Monte David where the beach that was Rubén Berrío, Playa Carrucho. (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*) When he was leaving, she was shooting, she turned and when she came out she turned and when she came out she turned, she also went out shooting there at the things that had the targets that she had on the shore, two helicopters arrived to shoot at the shore, one shooting and then another one didn't go away at water level and wherever we were moving, that was like aiming, aiming, they were also using us as practice. When we finished raising the little pots that we had, here we played. Do you know what playing is?

The rope is not visible, it is sunken.

ANSWER: Not us, but then it was just a rope at the bottom, nothing more, and they caught it with a garapiña.

Oh, it's worth it, it's worth it.

ANSWER: Scraping. It's an anchor made here.

For understanding, garapiña is a homemade anchor.

With four ducks, five small ones so they don't get stuck too deep in the sargassum and grab the rope at the bottom of the trap, and that way we prevent people who aren't the owners from finding them, taking them, stealing them, or taking the catch from the west. Because there are good ones, but there are also crafty gangs. Well, when that started, the jets arrived when we went there and they hit us, dropping bombs from Bahía Salinas all the way to Sinaloa Deep. If I understand correctly—and correct me if I'm wrong—the Navy had its official practice area and everything, but it wasn't just there. Is that what you're telling me? The Navy, the Navy had its area, that area where we were that day, yes, it was the Navy's practice area, but what happens? Those are the areas where there's fishing. So we had to bring food to the family. It's clear here, if I'm not mistaken, that when the practices came, this was the only area that is demarcated here where we were allowed to go out to fish, leave the hope and reach the tip of the bull.

Nothing else?

RESPONDNET: Nothing more. From here up you couldn't fish, and from here down you couldn't fish.

In the south, but what about here?

[01:07:57]

The same thing happened in the north. In the north, you couldn't get past a beach they call Cayo Colorado here, which would be further west minus this little loop here, which would be further west minus the same distance from there to there, and these are the areas where there was fishing. In other words, going fishing here was like wasting your time.

I get it now.

We had where.

Was this the area where they had always fished?

Always. This was the area where the Navy bombed, all this around here. And down here were the bunkers, where they stored the bombs. That's where the bomb storage was, and this is where they dropped the bombs. So all this was, they arrived here, then they put the boats with the ships.

And where is the area now where it is still closed, because there are still active bombs?

this same thing

He has locked everything up.

I was here in that area, and they exploded a bomb, in that area, in Bahía Salina. When it exploded, I got scared. I saw the mushroom cloud of smoke that came out, and I was right there in that area fishing, and they exploded on land. That plane I'm talking about. These planes took them, dropping cement bombs on us, which are bombs like marking something like that from there, because the map here is small. From here to here, everything is in the area. Dropping bombs on us. I told my cousin, who was the captain (Hogfish, \*Lachnolaimus maximus XXXIV\*), either look inside or look outside. There are bombs in the water here, there are metal edges in the water. Here is the barrel ship that they say was sunk by bombing. A barrel ship that no one knows has people in it. I don't know my story, but my brother can tell it to you, he can tell you.

must have counted

Yes, I think he said something.

And that's there, and everything that's back and around it, the fallacy is what that fallacy is called, all of that is dead. There's a pump here, the fishing buddy caught three lobsters in it.

On top of the bomb?

I went under the bomb. Here in this area I told you about during the campaign, where the Navy was firing, and I had to retreat far away from the shore. There, that's it, that's a, what can I say? In a word, it's all bricked up from so many bombs there. Like mortars and all that, in the water.

[01:11:10]

How does all this affect you, how do you think it affects the fish?

Imagine where there's so much pollution. Oh, I'll tell you. One day they took me out of Bahía Salinas from Carrucho beach (Queen conch, \*Strombus gigas\*) and I went to catch the carnal to go out there and catch snapper and throw them to the mountains and they told me I had to leave. I said until I catch the carnal I'm not leaving because I fish for example Saturday, Sunday (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) and I came back Monday and that day they didn't have practice, but when I went Monday they had practice west vice versa, as I say so I fished two days when I went on the third day they didn't have practice and I said no, I'm going to catch the bait when I catch the bait, I'm leaving there are times when you get to catch the bait and the bait and you can catch them in a moment. If he's lucky, he makes one catch, then goes two, three, then goes, but sometimes he spends hours catching bait. You know how it is. I'd been looking for bait for days everywhere and couldn't find any, and on Sunday (Blackline tilefish, \*Caulolatilus cyanops\*) I managed to get a few to go fishing yesterday, but because of the condition, I couldn't go. There were thousands, thousands, and thousands of sardines. (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) For example, Monday morning when I went, they told me to get out of there. I didn't want to leave. When I went Tuesday morning, there were thousands and thousands of sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*), but they were dead on the shore. For what reason? What could they have said? If the problem is the sardine, for them to come here and stop the shooting, what they have to do is kill the sardine, drop a bomb on two of them in the water, imagine. And that's what happened. A bomb fell on them, they threw it and killed all the sardines. When we arrived the next day, there were thousands and thousands of rotten sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) floating there, and from there they had taken a mania. If we went to catch sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) in those areas and they sent us to sardine and we didn't leave for the sardine, for the, we didn't leave until they caught the sardines. (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) When we went the next day, all the sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) were dead. That was the remedy they used. The thing is, back then there were no cell phones. It's very different now. Look, me telling you—maybe some people won't believe me—isn't the same as me being able to document it. Look, yesterday there was a sardine, today they killed them all. They sent me packing; they've already killed them all. And this happened, for example; we're in October. This also happened to me in July. The same thing, you know?

[01:14:00]

The work would have been very different. Do you believe in the current times?

Sure. We had no way to document. Now it's my word against what they say, and what you want to believe about me. But what am I going to do by lying to you now? We did part of the purpose, which was to remove the Navy so that it would stop polluting this place and so that our children, our grandchildren, can have peace? They're still exploding, like I told her. I was there four weeks ago and a bomb exploded. I was inside Salinas Bay and a bomb exploded and they were there. They didn't tell me to leave. They were there on a big raft. They left, and after about 15 minutes they chased me. I stayed there, boom, and it exploded. And they didn't tell me, look, so-and-so, they're going to explode a bomb. No.

He showed me an area where they fish, where they're fishing, which is important for fishing. Are there other places that you think are important to reserve for the future of fishing?

Yes, there are places you think are important, where the currents reach, where the waters are always clear. Well, very clear because of the currents that are very strong and so on. This is an area that worries me a lot, the bioluminescent mosquito bay. The mosquito, the mosquito bay, the bioluminescent, the bays are fish breeding grounds. There, the fish are born and raised and raised and then go to bad places outside, at least the mulatto stage, the mosquito bay, the mosquito bay. I'm going to write about it, the mosquito bay. Yes, a lot of tourists go there when, when, when there were many fishermen, there were gasoline and oil engines, there wasn't the problem there is now with fish and dinoflagellates. And I'll give you an example of what I think. I'll mention a couple of fishermen there. The Sánchez family fished there. That's where the Fuentes de los Chivos fished. That's where my dad fished, my divine uncle, Uncle David, godfather, little friend, Tolo, that's where the Hernández family fished, Claudio and Felo, that's where Ciro fished, to name a few, I mentioned 10 in terms of age. The Petersons were there too. There were lots of fish there, what you call palgo, mulattoes, jarea (White mullet, \*Mugil curema XXXVI\*), machuelista (Mama pigeons), Sama pigeons (Mutton snapper, \*Lutjanus analis\*), and so on. There were always sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*), and nowadays you go there and you hardly see any fish at night. So they blame the fishermen who go in there with the boat and that the gasoline is harming the bay, when before there were more fishermen and the bay always had fish. I remember we would go out at night and Papi would turn around in the boat and the guinea pigs would go crazy jumping and falling into the boat. And if you don't believe me, call Prieto or Mamenca, you have to have the number to see if I'm telling you the truth. Now you don't see jumping, there's a guinea pig (White mullet, \*Mugil curema XXXVI\*). There, what you see are little pools of fish and such, because that bay is relentless with tourists. That's keeping quiet day and night, keeping quiet day and night. You call yourself that, they say, the dinoflagellates are disappearing, the dinoflagellates, that if the motors there, I've had to leave screaming at times. And especially the Americans who are growing there, "Out with the boats!" I say, get out, because the greatest enemy of the dinoflagellates is human urine. And don't tell me that when you get wet here you don't feel like peeing. And don't tell me that you're not going to look for peace and quiet, that if you're living next to a place where they're all day long, boom, boom, boom, commotion comes, commotion goes with those paddles, giving those kayaks a go, aren't you going to leave? And the kayaks are harming our tourism. I'm not against tourism, what I would like is for them to have some control, which they don't have because that means commotion comes, commotion goes day and night, day tours and night tours of the bay. And think about it if it's true that I tell you how much, how a noise doesn't sound in a boat, you do that up high and how it can be heard in the water then and the sound is duplicated, I don't know how many times, a lot of times. So, when I'm catching bait or sardines, my kid knows that he can't step hard in the boat because I'm calling his attention. I've been a little bastard because he knows that sounds really harsh, and the one with me, don't move, don't move me at all, at all, at all, because when I'm getting close to the sardine to throw the cast net, before you know it, a rock hits the boat or a footstep moves a tank, and that's it. The sardine leaves. You're not going to live where you don't have peace. Because you're in that bay looking to live in peace. And that boom, paddles and kayaks. Where there was no fish, for example, in the bays, now there's what there isn't there. But it's said that the fault lies with us fishermen who went in there to choose a mate, whatever. When there was one there, like I told you, about 25 fishermen who came out of there, there I learned to swim in that mud, which I remember was relaxing. At least I have a mustache when we have wool in the water, so much mud that it stuck to it, so I have a mustache. If you have a mustache, I have a mustache now, much more than now, much more than now.

What is mud?

The mud. It's a bay that has mud in it.

[01:21:11]

Back in the days when I was with your dad, were there dinoflagellates?

Much more so than now. It was all spectacular, incredible, incredible. Before, they used to say they were whitebait. People would go there to throw the transmayo, and when the night was dark, since they didn't know anything about it, they would say, "Chacho," the whitebait is too weak and won't let you in because the transmayo is lit by whitebait. The first person who took tourists there was my dad, who took the kids and boys when they were yokors. I remember my dad had a little card, so they had even put a hood on the boat and everything. He took the papers there in a 22-foot wooden boat called The Crin.

You mentioned that there were a lot more fish in the past, but not so much now. That's what I understand, can you tell me?

From the bay? Yes, I'd say so. The areas have shrunk. In some areas, it's also because the traps and other things, as people are making them, aren't fishing either because some fishermen say no, there are no fish. But there's a fisherman I made in the nacillo, as my dad used to call him, and he'll go with, for example, 200 pounds of lobster, and he goes and catches 80, 90, 100, 130 pounds of fish.

Could you tell me roughly how much the number of fishermen has changed since you started fishing with your dad? And what's the difference now?

Look, I'll give you an example. In the north, when I was fishing, I'd say about 10 to 15 fishermen, who were called pinteros, would come out to catch my pintos every day. As far as I know, only one or two are coming out.

And why do you think that happened? Well, he told me on the side.

[01:23:32]

Many fishermen who used to fish in that area have died. Another thing is that sales are really bad. It's not worth it for me to go out and catch 100 pounds less and when I get there, I won't have anyone to sell it to. It happened to me on Saturday, we caught 52 pounds of lobster. (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*) So we sold them to my son-in-law's aunt who went with us and my son. There's a guy who owns a restaurant and they stopped there to talk and buy something, and the guy tells him that Mérida fishes, they didn't catch any, yes, and no, we've already sold it. Oh, well, whatever you catch tomorrow, bring it to me. I was going to go fishing for another type of fish. (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) I was going to catch shells and snappers, and the kid says, "No, let's go diving, we've already sold it." And when I brought him the catch, he says no, I don't want it, I bought it from so-and-so very early this morning, luckily the guy from the Chinese restaurant had called me the day before in the afternoon and I said no, we already sold and he said I want to eat some lobsters, they're my family, if you catch them, bring me 5, 6 small lobsters, and my son brought him 17 pounds, and he caught them.

And what did he do with the catch from the day before?

We sold the fish from the day before to my son-in-law's aunt.

That has a restaurant.

Even, she told me I have to buy 30 pounds, we had caught, 51, 52, and then to give her the way I said, well look at this tell her to take tithe and pay me them later, so I can sell them, then she. And a friend of mine who was a captain, (Hogfish, \*Lachnolaimus maximus XXXIV\*) and when they are big captains (Wrasses, \*Labridae\*) I give them to him, and he said I have a captain, (Hogfish, \*Lachnolaimus maximus XXXIV\*) come and get it, and when it is a small lobster, I told her I am selling it for 8, pay me 6, then she said ah, well let me see and I sold him I think 12 pounds for 60 pesos, that is to say I sold like 5. That's how you have to be dancing.

You've always sold your catch to the fishmonger, but now you don't? Is there no more, or why?

They're really bad, really bad across Puerto Rico, really bad, really bad. I don't know if it's the economy, I don't know if it's the restaurants and meatpacking plants that are taking this toll, people have stopped eating fish, lobster (Spiny lobster, \*Panulirus argus\*), something, something, something, something is happening, and we don't have any government support either.

Who do you think should help him?

I don't know, but if that were the reason for the meatpacking plants, the government should try to prevent them from bringing in so much fish from abroad, in order to help the local market. Because if they keep bringing in so much fish from abroad, how are we going to do it? And we don't catch as much as we used to. Before, here, we would catch 3,000 or 4,000 pounds of redfish in a week. All of that was a sale. I remember years ago, a fishing buddy of mine died in an accident. In three nights, I caught 1,136 pounds of redfish, and they were redfish that I would move around at night. Everyone followed me around because I have this habit: if I fish, they ask me if I'm fishing, because I think what's good for me is good for me. There are people who won't fish if they've caught 200 or 300 pounds. What I tell him is, you can anchor next to me, but don't anchor behind me, because then how am I going to be able to fish and so on.

[01:28:00]

In your relationship with other fishermen, how is it?

For me, I feel very loved. My dad taught me that you have to give yourself the love of others. Let's hope I don't get a lump in my throat. In 2015, I had throat cancer. This was on a Tuesday, Tuesday, July 21st, if I'm not mistaken, as they told me. He called a biochemist and said the problem had to be treated quickly because if it was like that, since the esophagus is moist, it could quickly spread to my esophagus and stomach, and that sort of thing. He said treatment had to start on Thursday, that he was leaving for Spain on Friday, and that the deposit was 5,000 pesos. I told my brothers not to leave it like that, take care of my kids. I had already been a cancer patient. I've been a cancer patient twice, twice. Mamey, a cancer patient. Prieto, a cancer patient. Héctor, my brother, a cancer patient. Of the six, five, four of us have been cancer patients. The first was me, and the two of them and me, but both of my cases came before me. Well, I remember it was Tuesday afternoon. My brothers came home and started supporting me. My nephew and my niece posted on Facebook that there was someone they loved and needed a donation to start cancer treatment. And I'm doing it because you tell me how I feel about the fishermen and the town. And then, this Wednesday morning, around 10:00, my niece posted my photo and said it was me. I remember posting a photo of myself in a red sweater with a red cap and white glasses, from a graduation group gathering at the beach. That was Wednesday. They needed $5,000 by Thursday. Where I lived in my little house, that's how I raised the number like that, but I had no way out. People started arriving, people, a fellow fisherman arrived with a bundle of money like that. There was a lot of money, my hug gave it to me. Here's the catch from the whole day today, from all your fishing buddies, and he told me, and there were many who didn't even pay the expenses. If one of them sold, take it, take it, take it, take it, because I told him even before leaving that I wanted them to cooperate. I don't know how long, I know that when we gave it to my niece, I'll tell you about it, she ran out screaming, "We've had it, we've had it." There were $7,500 with what had been collected first and with that, he arrived. And many people from the town paid for the treatment, it cost $13,500, and the town paid for it. That's why when María came to me, many people called me anyway, "Come here with the kids, come here with the kids, because by the way, I'm a single father." Fourteen years ago, my children's mother decided to leave me when the oldest was six, six years old, six years and a couple of days old. The youngest was three years, one month, 12 days old, one year old, one month, 8 days old. And I told the children, "Do you want us to go there?" But when I got cancer, this town helped me, and I'm not leaving. I'm going to help rebuild this town because maybe many of those who helped me need my help now. And Daddy taught me that we had to be grateful, and I stayed here, but if it hadn't been for my belief that we had to be grateful for what helped us, I wouldn't be here. But I do feel that this town loves me, and I love this town.

[01:32:58]

Well, it made us all cry. I'll leave you with just one more question: What do you think the future holds for Vieques and fishing in Vieques?

Here we should have more help from the government; here, the government doesn't help us. We are a working class that has existed since the time of Christ, and here, the government doesn't care about us, neither the central government nor the local government. Here, when Fiona hit, the Pier of Hope became encumbered and is there because some people—I don't know if they were tourists or private individuals—built some metals there, some planks and things, like with holes. Now, when it's in good condition and since it had holes, well, it didn't break them. But some contractors and others who work in construction were organizing to build it with cement and so on. But then those people came and did it. But we don't have the support or the help. I can tell you that when Hurricane Maria hit there, I think it was Hurricane Maria, the person from Santa Cruz—I have some cousins ​​in Santa Cruz, and they gave them a good amount of money so they could continue moving forward, buy motors, and things. But they didn't give us any help. To the Puerto Rican government, we're like a zero, because they don't care about us and they don't take us into account as they should, my way of thinking. Plus, they should also be giving people guidance and so on, and things are happening in the government that shouldn't be happening. There are people here who have fishing licenses and have never gotten their feet wet in salt water, as my dad would say. I don't know if you're aware of it, but I think those comments have been around for a while. Yes. Those comments have been around for a while for them.

Yeah.

[01:35:21]

And what is the reason that they have the license but they don't go fishing?

The reason for?

Because he thinks he has the license.

I'll ask you one: when the Navy here tried to give money to the fishermen to pay for the days they were fishing, which we couldn't hear. There were, you could say, more women with licenses than men, seeking to accept that financial aid. And I understand that they should help all the people, but the fishermen's part should be entirely outside the fishermen's part. If the Navy wanted to help the others, then it should help them in their part as a people, but it shouldn't take away our part as such. From us, yes, everything about us is expensive; everything related to fishing is expensive. Today, a motor isn't worth two, three thousand pesos; today, a motor costs twelve, thirteen thousand dollars. If the government doesn't help us. In Puerto Rico, there were parties that gave motors, that gave boats, they didn't give us anything here in Vieques. Nothing.

Well, is there anything else you'd like to tell me about this or in general about the things we talked about? Any things you'd like future generations to know about?

I think that at least I've always spoken to my children and I've always told them to conserve, and I'm always one of those who, when I take someone fishing, I teach them what my father taught me, and I do it like this. I always try to be like this. I tell them because my father taught me that, and based on what I learned from what he taught me, I like to teach. I like to teach because if you teach a person, as the saying goes, to fish, then they can eat every day. And I have a saying with my son, I say, the day I die, I'll leave in peace because you're seventeen years old and you know a lot more than old people who call themselves fishermen, because he knows how to throw a cast net, he knows how to dive, he knows how to fish with a net, he knows how to make a net, he knows how to fish with a line, he knows how to captain a boat. And I say to him, and you're going out there with that cast net? If you have your family there, and I say, when I'm gone, you're going to have your children, your wife, you're going to have a home, you go out there, things are really bad, you go with that casting net, you throw it out and catch a couple of sardines (Sardines, Herrings, \*Clupeidae\*) and with that you arrived you made a broth and with a package of rice, your whole family ate even if you have five or six children you made a broth and they ate rice with fish meat, you won't die of hunger. But I've also told him, now the day I'm gone, if you want to throw his head into the mountains, do you know what that means?

No, no, explain to me.

[01:38:34]

If you want to start doing things you shouldn't do that I haven't taught you, that's your problem. And the people aren't going to misjudge me, because they know that when your mother left, I took it upon myself to teach you and lead you down the right path, just like you and your two sisters. It's up to you, the day I'm gone, which path you'll follow. But I taught you that life must be walked cleanly, as I said to myself. Walk cleanly so you're not in trouble. And now I can help you, but the day I'm gone, I can't help you. And I tell the people I take fishing the same thing. I take you fishing, and you go with me, and I teach you, and I tell them, "I'm teaching you this for your own good." If you want to continue doing it this way, do it, and you'll keep learning. If you don't want to learn what I'm teaching you, which I'm doing for your own good, that's your problem, and I can keep bringing you there. But the day I tell you this is like this, like this, like this, don't tell me, 'Oh, I know,' because I'm not telling you anything else. That's why my son, people talk to me and say, 'Can I tell your son this?' Because he's a good baseball player. And I tell him, tell him whatever you want, because I know he'll listen. Because I've told him, the day someone's going to tell you something and give you advice about anything, even if you know it, stay quiet. Don't say, 'Oh, I know.' Listen. Maybe he's telling you something I didn't tell you or that you don't know. And I do like to teach. I take people places, I teach them, I tell them how to do things to the best of my knowledge. I don't teach them what I don't know. I'm not going to make things up; it's done like this, like this, like this. No, not me. At least what I'm sure I'm teaching well, I teach them. That's what I teach for myself.

One question, why is it quite- Well, I could stay here much longer- There are many young people among the people who take fishing or learning, are there many young people among them?

[01:41:02]

Well, look, there are people who have dedicated themselves to fishing. There are people who say the first day I went fishing was with Pumba, the first fish (Blue Marlin, \*Makaira nigricans XLII\*) that I caught of this kind was with Pumba, my friend says, a friend of mine says, my son-in-law says, if anyone can teach you it's your father-in-law, because what he tells you he tells you in good faith. I can tell you the name Manolo Maclard, my friend Manolo Maclard tells my son-in-law, if you want to learn, you have the best teacher there, because what he teaches you, he tells you, you tell it to me in good faith, because he knows it, and it's not him who knows more, but what he tells you is because he knows it, because what he told me, I've done it and it's true. I've realized that what he told me, he told me because it's in good faith. Daddy told me that things were given in good faith or they weren't given at all. And Daddy always said this too: it's better to give than to have to receive. You give without expecting anything in return. And I learned to be my dad. My dad is my pride.

[01:42:12]

Well, that's a good note to end on. Thank you so much for taking all that time out of your day to tell me about your life, your father's life, your children's life, and Vieques. Thank you so much.

Well, I hope you liked my answers and here we are, for whatever is within our reach.