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Robin Stuart, Salmon Farmer Robin Stuart operates a salmon farm at English- town. The business is in its first year. It's a high risk venture. Still, something like fifty people • mostly Cape Bretoners from a wide variety of |' " backgrounds • pulled together to take shares and JHm make the business possible. We wanted to know more about the background of the person and the busi? ness those investors decided to support. Robin Stuart: I don't think there is such a thing as a normal day, especially in the starting-up process. You have to set your priorities. And the first thing you have to do, you've got live animals out there and they've got to be fed, just like cat? tle or anything else. And they should be fed 3 times a day to get the best growth out of them. So at daybreak--and this is just when the sun's coming up--I take the boat out and feed the fish. That usually takes about an hour to give them a good feeding--the 12, 13 cages I have there. (You don't have a machine for this.) No, it's hand fed right now. Down the road, if the business works out, I think I'll be able to use some me? chanical feeding. I think there'll always be that element of hand feeding in there. Because you want to have that touch with your crop, you want to have that daily com? munication. You've got to check your cages, make sure the fish are behaving the way they should be, whether they're eating, make sure the ropes are in the right place, that nothing has let go. You have to pre? ferably live on the site and check your cages at least 2 or 3 times a day. Your next feeding is probably going to be after lunch sometime. So you've got 3 or 4 hours. Perhaps you might- be changing nets. They get dirty, fouled with algae and sea? weed, and you've got to put a new net in so that the fish won't be deprived of oxy? gen. Maybe you're going to be doing some inventory work on your stock, you want to know the size of your fish in the cages. You may be doing weight sampling. There are days in the peak summer when you're going to have mortalities, especially with the youngest fish, regardless of what you do to alleviate mortalities through vaccin? ation and antibiotics. It's standard, in any husbandry. So I may have to go diving in the nets to remove mortality, in the morning there, between feedings. I'll swim to the bottom of the cage. If there's two dead fish there, I'll pick them up, and I'll put them in the record book. You may spend some time shooting the birds, or keeping the birds at bay--cormorants and blue herons. I have bird covers over the cages, but the cormorants are swimmers. I have predator nets now, around the cages--they're double-walled nets. The cor? morant will hit the predator net before he hits the fish. Still, I've counted numer? ous fish with stab wounds. They're too big to go through, so all they do is skewer the fish. The fish bleeds to death. If you notice that the mortality is exces? sively high, then you have to start seri? ously thinking of taking the fish out, do? ing autopsy work on them, looking for any kidney damage, spleen, or abnormal inter? nal structures. I'm trained in that. As far as doing viral work or bacterial cul- turing, I don't have the lab ability. I'll send fish samples to a Halifax lab, and within 48 hours they'll have a full analy? sis back to me as to what the problem is, and suggested remedies. Scuba diving is a useful tool in this busi? ness. There's no better way to appreciate how the fish live than



being in the water with them. Fish health--there's no better way to see how fish are behaving than when you're down there with them. I couldn't survive without diving. I have to go down and check my moorings occasionally to make sure that things are snugged up. So I routinely go in the water at least once a week to check underneath the cages. I like to check (for feed beneath the net) and make sure that there is no waste. If we have exceptionally low tides or if the thing happens to swing in, I want to make sure there's no obstacles under the water. And I help the fishermen out. At the wharf in the lobster season, they're continually (30)