

Interviewee: Kyle Ibasfalean  
Interviewer: Tina Bucuvalas  
Consultant: Kristin Sweeting  
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Transcriber: Kristin Sweeting

**Abstract:** The Ibasfalean family were originally farmers in Michigan. Ibasfalean's grandfather and his brother moved to Cortez and entered the fishing industry, where his father and uncle worked stone crabbing and purse seining for bait fish. One of Ibasfalean's earliest memories was watching the catch being unloaded. When he was around 8 or 9 years old, he started accompanying his father on boats.

Ibasfalean studied astronomy in college and still harbors a deep interest in the subject—but he has always returned to fishing. When he first started his career with AP Bell, he did purse seining with his father. Now he oversees the essential freezing operation, which encompasses packing, blast-freezing, storing, and then shipping fish. This can be challenging because of the volume of fish they process, including large, impressive catches of swordfish and tuna.

Ibasfalean sees Cortez as one of the last full-time commercial fishing villages in Florida. Although it has had an enormous influence on the area, he believes that as tourism is moving in, it is destroying the Cortez fishing industry. He would like to see the easing of some government restrictions in order to encourage the fishing industry. Ibasfalean also hopes that the public will realize that 90% of the fish they eat at restaurants are caught by commercial fishermen. Because of the problems, he hopes that his children will not enter the fishing industry.

[00:00:03] **Tina Bucuvalas:** I'd like you to first start out by saying your name and where you live, and then I'd like you to talk a little bit about your background, like whether you're from here, but also how did your family get here and who was it in your family that got here, and if you could say the names of people, if it's your grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on and so forth. And then whether they were in the fishing industry. And how you got into this.

[00:00:30] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Hi. Well, my name's Kyle Ibasfalean, and as far as my history goes, my grandfather came from Michigan. He was farmer, George Ibasfalean with his brother. They came down here and got into the fishing industry. Which my father, Brian Ibasfalean got into it from them and then I got into it from him.

[00:00:54] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Why Cortez were they fishermen up there and what kind of fishing did they do?

[00:01:00] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** No, they were farmers before they came down, but they came to Cortez because they were looking for property. So, they owned most of the other side Cortez, the marina and stuff like that, which eventually got sold into, for condos.

But they started with stone crab, is how they got into it. And then my father, Brian, my uncle Nick both got into purse seining bait, so they had bought a boat, lengthened it out, and that's where they got most of their income from.

**[Edited - production crew interjects]**

[00:02:03] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So what is your first memory of fishing and if you have a particular memory how you sort of progressed? I'm assuming from recreational fishing or maybe did you work with your father or, or what happened?

[00:02:22] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** My first memory of fishing was being around the fish houses while they were unloading and eventually when I got old enough, around eight or nine, I started riding on the boats with them, which were pretty slow cuz I'd go out there and sleep most of the days while they rode around looking.

But my, my first memories of being on an actual were definitely out there catching boatloads 40,000 pounds catches with my father.

[00:02:53] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, and is this something you would do just on days off from school or did you end up working after school on their boats?

[00:03:01] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I would do both. I would definitely work on my days off and sometimes I would pretend I was sick and end up going for boat rides, so that worked out about great.

[00:03:15] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Have you lived in Cortez all your life or have you lived other places?

[00:03:19] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I have lived in Cortez all my life. I think I may have left this town three times in my life total, just to travel just for fun. But other than that, I've been here my entire life.

[00:03:31] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And when did you decide to go into the fishing business? Did you think about other things or was this just always what was on the radar.

[00:03:41] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** When I was younger, this was always what I was interested in. It wasn't until I got older, I did get interested in other types of sciences, like astronomy and stuff I went to college for, but I still always got dragged back into fishing. It was always kind of in your blood type deal.

[00:03:22] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So you got a degree in astronomy and everything, but but your, was it that your, your heart was here or?

[00:03:58] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** It's, that's a little hard to answer because, you know, this is, it's kind of a, in your blood thing. It's my heart, it would actually beat more towards sciences, but this is what I know, this is what I have known my whole life. So, it's where I'm comfortable.

[00:04:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Now how about your mom's side of the family? Were they from Cortez too? Were they a fishing family or anything?

[00:04:34] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** My mother's side of the family was actually, military, Air Force on my grandfather's side, and then he met my grandmother over in England. So she's from there. My mother was born over there and then she came around, jumped all over the country as an Army brat from base to base until she finally came here.

Now when she came here and met my father, that was actually supposed to be a date with my father's brother, and he bailed out, so that's how she ended up meeting my father.

[00:05:04] **Tina Bucuvalas:** That's kind of funny. So can you please tell me what it is you started out doing, what you do now who you work for? Have you always worked here? Have you had other jobs around?

[00:05:22] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yeah, what I started doing was fishing with my father, catching bait in high school. I was about 14 when I started actually fishing, and I would work here when it was slow. Different types of fishing, different parts of the year. So that was, and then on and off here and here, I've been here for the last three years.

[00:05:42] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. Now people aren't gonna know where here is exactly. So we, could we do it over again?

[00:05:48] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Okay. Sorry. So sorry, what was the question again?

[00:05:53] **Tina Bucuvalas:** If you could tell us what you have done and what you do and who you work for and that kind.

[00:06:00] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So yeah, what I started doing was fishing for AP Bell Fish Company as a purse seiner with my father. And then when he turned, he ended up hurting his back and leaving, and he came to work for Karen at AP Bell. I took over fishing for him for about five years as a captain, and then when I decided it was time for me to spend more time down with the family and everything, I came to work for Karen as well here at AP Bell.

[00:06:27] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And what do you do here?

[00:06:29] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Here I am in charge of freezer, so anything frozen or shipping out of frozen items is what I deal in.

[00:06:37] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you can you tell me some of the process or, I mean, do you put the stuff in the freezer or just ship 'em out? What's this forklift for? Things like that?

[00:06:47] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So, what happens is when late boats come in at night or any type of boats that need fish to be frozen, I stay at night and I'll pack 'em for Karen and once they get froze, they go or packed, they go into a blast

freezer, which stays in there for about two days to freeze 'em quick, and then we turn 'em off, everything in the blast freezer off the racks and put into a holding freezer until it's ready to be shipped out.

[00:07:14] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, what would you say, you know, what's, what's, what's kind of the volume of what you do? I, I mean, and, and what are your hours? I mean, it sounds like your hours are just crazy. You know, you say you could be working all night, or you never, you mentioned you hardly have a day off. What's, what's all that kind of like?

[00:07:33] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** My hours are a little extreme, you know, as long as the boats are catching fish or whenever they catch fish, I am required to stay at night till it's done, so I can work till two, three in the morning some nights. And then when it comes time during the fall for a different season, I'm usually working 80 hours a week. So, I'm here all the time.

[00:07:52] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So, so every season pretty much has the, I mean, a large volume, you know, there's, there's not, not, not a slow time of year for you really, or

[00:08:03] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** There really is not because most of the year we deal in bait, which is from February to about November, and then between then is mullet, we deal because of the eggs and when the mullet starts, that is all hours of the night. I have to be on call if I'm not here and then whenever fish come in, I have to be here.

[00:08:24] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Boy, this is tough. That's a tough job. You never know what your hours are.

[00:08:28] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** No, not at all.

[00:08:30] **Kristin Sweeting:** Can I ask a question?

[00:08:31] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yes, go ahead.

[00:08:32] **Kristin Sweeting:** So my question is that even at 80 hours a week, you said your goal was to spend more time with your family. So that's still less than a guy is out on the boat?

**[Edited - production crew comments]**

[00:08:52] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Sorry, repeat the question. I gotta think.

[00:08:54] **Kristin Sweeting:** Yes. So you said you switched from captain to working at the fish house cause you wanted to spend more time with your family. Yes? So if it, so my question is, you work less hours here than you would out fishing or what was the benefit of switching.

[00:09:17] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** The benefit for me of switching back to here was that I don't have to be on the boat 24-7 looking for fish. So when the fish come in, even though I work 70 to 80 hours a week, I'm not out there working on gear or looking for fish on my slow time. So it's not as demanding of.

[00:09:44] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So have you witnessed over the course of the time that you've been working in the industry since you were a kid problems that might have arisen in the Gulf that would've affected the, the fish stocks or and the amount of harvest and, and then even your job, whether, and, and then what kind of things are these? Would it be red tide or some kind of environmental change or the fish going away or, or what?

[00:10:19] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I have witnessed a lot of things in my time of fishing as a captain and being here that have affected stocks and amount of fish that were caught. So Red Tide is a major one. Every time you hear about a sewage dump or anything, we end up with about a year of dead fish. So the catches aren't there, everything's not, it's concentrated, so we can't get the amounts we need.

[00:10:44] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Can, can you tell maybe like one visual memory of what, of what it looked like, I mean, at the worst point of having a red tide that you can remember?

[00:10:54] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yeah. My best visual memory as far as red tides go was being down in big pass Sarasota, one year catching fish.

And as we were cast netting these fish, mullet and catching them, they were coming up dying. They, there was a certain point to where the red tide was offshore and the minute they hit it, you would just see fish coming up dead. So once they hit that, we were unable to catch 'em or harvest them.

[00:11:19] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Since you're in the sciences, you know, I haven't asked anyone this, this question before, but I, but I know from some research I've done, things, there have been diseases in the Gulf. Not all of them are red tide, you know, which I think is an algae bloom, but there have been other kinds of, of, I forget the name of, of, of, you know, some kind of fungal disease or

something, you know, that affects fish or whatever. Are you aware of different, of things other than red tide like that, that have affected.

[00:11:52] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I definitely am aware of things other than red tide. I think these sewage spills are not a form of red tide, cuz red tide can date all the way back to the Indians, stories of it. But these sewage spills were problems that we're having now. Back then there wasn't the amount of people, so that wasn't an issue. You didn't deal with so many people that our infrastructure couldn't handle sewage. They weren't dumping it. So, I don't believe that sewage spills in red tide are the same thing.

[00:12:20] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Right. Has that been a, a fairly big issue around here? The sewage spills that have affected the fish stocks and the business,

[00:12:24] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** The sewage spills around here have been a major issue. They have completely destroyed fish stocks certain years. A red tide, normally fish can run away from it. So, if it comes here, they can either head north or south and try to avoid it. These sewage spills are unavoidable cuz they move with the tide. So the fish, either way they run it's right there with them killing them.

[00:12:51] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Right. How would you try to resolve that issue? Or what do you think might be a way to approach it? Approach eliminating that risk.

[00:13:05] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** The only way I could see that you could eliminate that risk is to either rebuild up our infrastructure to handle it, or we would have to stop having so many new people come. You know, they're building new developments, new houses, nonstop. And as long as you have that, I don't think you can ever get this under control.

[00:13:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you, do you have any insight into whether there are environmental changes in the Gulf due to climate change or is there a sea level rise that you've been able to observe or, or do you know anything about projected sea level rises or anything.

[00:13:48] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** That I have not noticed an any of my time. Sea level rises have always been the same here. We always have our tides and nothing has been noticeable. The only thing that I think people mistake for sea level rise is development because you don't get the mangroves and everything that would normally help keep that stuff at bay. And people are just building into sea walls and stuff that don't protect you from any type of rise.

[00:14:13] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What about like the BP oil spill, are the Piney point spill. Has there been any, any effect on fish stocks down.

[00:14:17] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** With the BP oil spill. I believe there was a major effect. I was fishing at the time, stone crabbing. And stone Crab, I think took a major hit from that. You know, we have hard crab, which you know is a crab that hasn't molted, and then you get floaters, which are crab shells that had molted and they haven't quite filled up.

The years after that BP spill, we had large amount of floaters of crabs that were not getting hard and we think that had a lot to do, that BP oil spill had a lot to do with why we weren't being able to catch those hard crabs.

[00:14:58] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Is this something that was reported to scientists or, or government regulators or anything? Was anyone been made aware of that? Do you know?

[00:15:10] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I'm not, I'm not sure if anybody's been made aware of that because a lot of people just counted into, oh, it's this certain year so these crabs are different or you know, that I don't think anybody actually wants to admit that it's from that stuff as far as government or scientists or anything go they're trying to cover that up, I believe.

[00:15:35] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Have, have, has there been any overall difference that you've observed or that you've heard from older people about the general quality of the water or the underwater environment in the Gulf.

[00:15:49] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** There have been major differences that I have heard from the older generation to now, and it started all the way back with oh, sorry, I'm trying to think of the name of it, Mosaic, which spilled up in Tampa and I believe that was in the nineties, which actually destroyed the whole fishery up inside Tampa Bay. You know, before that they were going up in Tampa Bay catching boatloads at a time of Shad which you still don't see to this day at all in Tampa Bay. And other than that, the sewage spills and everything, the water quality here has become very toxic almost. At any point, you can go up into Palm Solar Bay, as in right now when this is being filmed, and they have notices out for bacteria related to sewage. So the water quality has definitely taken a big hit from environmental factors, but from pollution.

### **[Production related conversation]**

[00:18:32] **Production crew question:** What's it like growing up in Cortez?



[00:18:36] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Growing up in Cortez was very fun as a child, I was still able to run around. We played outside. Everything we did was on boats. You know, that has also changed lately with the more tourism. Kids now, it's not safe to go outside and run around and play. There's too many people, too many cars. You know, it's totally different from when I grew up as a child in the last 30 years.

[00:19:03] **Production crew question:** And what was your most fun memory growing up in Cortez as a child with boats? Like anything like a fun memory come to mind of like you were, you could just take a boat out with you and your eight-year-old friends, or is there anything that's different here because you grew up around boats and Cortez than other kids.

[00:19:21] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** There are things that have become a lot different from when I was growing up. When I was growing up, we were young and not very smart, and we would go out on the boats and mess around, do stuff that we probably shouldn't have done as kids. Dangerous stuff, which now you can't do because anywhere you go, there's another boat running around you within a hundred feet. You can't get away from it. So you can't hit these spots to go play around in like you used to be it's become a lot more dangerous.

[00:19:53] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you feel there's a lot of younger people, especially from this area, still going into the fishing industry, or are you sort of unusual do you think, in that regard?

[00:20:05] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** In my generation, there was a lot of people who grew up into it, you know, and some of them have dropped off and completely got out of it. The generation under me, I worry there's going to be nobody who's getting into it. New kids, the new generation does not want to get into the commercial fishing industry. It's a lot of work for not a lot of money.

[00:20:29] **Kristin Sweeting:** So follow up question to that.

[00:20:35] **Kristin Sweeting:** So why, do you have a specific moment that hooked you so, to this, I think you made an important distinction between like your comfort and your heart. Because even though you're super passionate about science, like that, that comfort level is super important, like, as well. So where am I going with this? So is there a point where you realized you were hooked into this industry, like experiences where the younger generation isn't getting that opportunity to get hooked and what is it, is that making sense? What I'm asking?

[00:21:26] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** A little bit. Okay. Sorry.

So, like when I got hooked into it for me, I was fortunate enough to be born into it. So that's where my comfort has come from.

Nobody else is being born into it, cuz I can list maybe three or four people. Who in my generation have stayed fishing. We're just now starting to have children and our children, I don't believe there's gonna be anything left for them by the time they're old enough to realize it.

[00:21:56] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you think that is because, do you think they won't be able to go into it because of the changes in the fish stock, the changes in the regulation, the other, or other things in the world? Why? Why is this?

**[Edited – Production comments. Asked to start again]**

[00:22:14 - 00:22:42] replaced with [00:23:55 – 00:24:26] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So the biggest problem I see with new people trying to come. Is regulation. Regulation is running certain fishermen out and certain fisheries will not exist as long as new people get into it. So, for instance, stone crab, when a new person gets into it and wants to buy tags, 10% of the tags are automatically taken away.

So with every sale that 10% goes to the state and will never come back. So regulation is a major hit on this industry.

[00:22:42] **Tina Bucuvalas:** So they're decreasing by 10% every time someone turns it over, the number.

[00:22:49] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Every time, yes. Every time somebody trade or sells stone crab tags, the state takes 10% right off the top. That 10% will not come back. So they are dwindling that fishery down with every new person who gets into it.

**[Production comment. Asked to repeat due to sound. Repeated answer edited into original answers placement.]**

[00:24:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** How, do you, do you see any way to solve that problem?

[00:24:32] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** The only way that problem would be able to be solved is different regulations. You know, the state would have to loosen up or somehow open it up more to welcome people instead of dwindling it down.

[00:24:47] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Yeah, do you, do you fish recreationally too? Is this something you also do as a hobby? And if so, are you teaching your daughters or I guess you can't teach her two month old, but do you have plans?

[00:25:07] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So I do not fish recreationally. You know, I've done so much of it in my lifetime that being on the water has kind of, when I'm on land, I want to be on land.

And you know, I would rather my daughter not get into it or my children not even bother getting into the fishing industry cuz I don't believe that it's anything they could succeed in.

[00:25:34] **Tina Bucuvalas:** But do you feel that just, are they living in Cortez?

[00:25:35] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** They live here in Bradenton.

[00:25:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Oh, Bradenton. Do you feel that just living in this area, they will though some be exposed to things and, and develop an attachment to the industry or the water.

[00:25:55] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So I do believe living in this area that my children will end up getting attached to the water in some way. You know, beaches are amazing and stuff. As far as the fishing industry goes, though, I don't think they'll ever get the chance to be attached it. I believe by the time they're old enough to be able to realize it, it's going to be so far gone that there's not gonna be much left.

[00:26:19] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you expect to be working in this industry most of your life?

[00:26:25] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Most of my life I do expect to be here. Once again, it's what I'm comfortable with. It's definitely what I know, but just in the 30 years I've been alive, you know, as a little kid watching my dad fish and joining with my father. It has gone downhill tremendously. You know, the amount of fish being caught has become less, the laws have become stricter and it's becoming more and more expensive to even get into it.

[00:26:52] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Any, any other questions?

[00:26:57] **Kristin Sweeting:** Two. I was here when you guys were processing the confiscated shrimp, so I was wondering if you had any. Interesting stories about where you've been called in to process something that Karen bid on that was different than you weren't expecting for that day.

[00:27:22] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** That was actually the only one I can tell you. That's the only one I've ever had to deal with that was confiscated, was that live batch of shrimp.

[00:27:30] **Kristin Sweeting:** Then my other question are, are there any misconceptions that the public has about commercial fishing that you'd like to clear up?

[00:27:39] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** The biggest misconception that the public has about commercial fishermen is that they think they go out there and kill everything, which is actually completely wrong.

Commercial fishermen when it comes to small fish, you know, sports fish, all those fish survive, we are able to get 'em out, release 'em to where they live.

Now, a sport fisher, once he reels that fish in on a fishing line, it's been so stressed out that most of 'em have issues once they are released, especially with speckled sea trout around here in Florida.

They're such a fragile fish that once they are reeled in, they have no energy left.

**[Production comment. Asked to repeat. Edited to include additional comment]**

Okay. So yeah, once they reel in the speckled sea trout and after they're done fighting 'em, the mortality rate is very high.

[00:28:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Is there anything else really important that you feel that the general public should know about the fishing industry, and particularly in this area that, that people just don't know?

[00:29:02] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So the most important thing that I feel the public should know about the fishing industry is that 90% of the fish that they go and eat at these restaurants around here were caught by commercial fishermen. So, they, everybody is so against commercial fishermen, or most people are, but yet they're happy to go to a restaurant to eat grouper that have been caught by a commercial fisherman. So it's kind of, doesn't make a lot.

[00:29:26] **Tina Bucuvalas:** It's, it's pretty ironic.

[00:29:31] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yeah.

[00:29:39] **Tina Bucuvalas:** I had a question now I can't remember.

[00:29:40] **Production Crew question:** Do you have any scary memories of being commercial fishermen out on the water or anything where the storm came up and this and that, or any story? I mean, good or bad, I guess that comes to mind when you're being a, when you were a commercial official, just anything that. You know, you know a lot about like a, like a real story, A story that impacted you in any way.

[00:30:05] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So one of the scariest stories I've ever had was we, me and the four other perse boats that we have here, who Perse bait went out up off Clearwater ahead of a cold front, and we all went up there, struck our nets, and caught our fish.

And by the time we got 'em on the boat, we were coming home. Upwards of eight foot seas with fish all on the boat. Now, as we were coming in, one boat had stayed out there, struck with their nets, who was a little further behind us, and I remember their boom broke. So a bunch of stuff on their boat broke. It was hard for 'em to get their nets back in.

We had people calling 'em the whole ride home thinking we were going to have to turn around back into that sea to. now. Luckily they were able to get everything up and contacted us about an hour after we tried getting hold of them, but we were all ready to turn right back around to go try to help 'em. That was about the scariest I've ever been.

[00:31:06] **Tina Bucuvalas:** And I guess something like that could not have such good consequences and I'm sure that, are there examples around here of people that have lost their lives at because of.

[00:31:18] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yes, it's, we have a lot, quite a few people who have lost their lives, especially regarding mullet fishing during the fall because when we mullet fish, the fish move on these cold fronts.

So when it's raining and blowing and real stormy is when we're catching these fish. And we've had people who go offshore catching fish with a group of boats and end up trying to be the last boat to load up. And everybody would come in and you would never see these guys. Mark Rankin was one of the biggest ones

back in the nineties who decided to stay out, load a boat, and by the time we all got in unloaded, you hear that he had sunk out there.

You know, we have watched many boats come in the past and have to go right up on straight onto a beach because they were sinking on their way in. So it is a very dangerous fishery for sure.

### [Edited Production conversation]

[00:32:28] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Anything else?

[00:32:33] **Production Crew question:** What comes to mind when I think of the word fisherman? What comes to mind is these guys who are out catching fish to put on people's tables to help feed the public and who are honestly risking their lives to do it. You know, if somebody is out there fishing with a fishing pole for fun, I don't consider that under the word fisherman, Fisherman has a certain applied safety factor, you know? Everything. A fisherman provides for the people.

[00:33:11] **Kristin Sweeting:** Okay. I think that was it.

[00:33:12] **Tina Bucuvalas:** That's a good story.

[00:33:13] **Kristin Sweeting:** That was a good answer. You got anything else?

[00:33:18] **Production Crew question:** When you think of, when you think of Cortez Village as a whole, what do you think Cortez Village has brought to the southwest Florida and Bradenton area? Like how, you know, Is it a gem? Like how do you think it's impacted the local area just because it has existed?

[00:33:40] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So, Cortez Village, I look at them, Cortez Village, when you hear about it as a hidden gem, you know, it is one of the last full-time commercial fishing villages in Florida.

You know, we have fishermen here who have been generations into fishing, like I'm third generation myself. You don't have very much of that left. And you know, as tourism and all these people building and moving here, it's come in. It is destroying that more and more. Our fishermen are having a hard time even surviving out here anymore because of the amount of people that are coming in.

[00:34:19] **Production Crew question:** What are your greatest hopes for Cortez Village?

[00:34:24] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** My greatest hopes for Cortez's Village are that they will lighten up a little. On restrictions and maybe get our fishery back to where we are able to survive. But that is not up to the fishermen as much as is up to the state. You know, as far as money goes fishing, commercial fishing brings in a lot less money than recreational fishing and tourism. So we, I am afraid that eventually commercial fishing is gonna get shoved on down.

[00:34:57] **Production Crew question:** What's the most impressed you've been by a boat that's docked here, or a most impressive catch that's come in here? Something that really has impacted you?

[00:35:09] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** I believe the most impressive catches I have ever seen come into AP Bell Fish Company have been some of these swordfish boats, such as the Eagle Eye, who's parked out back right now, who had over 15,000 swordfish the other day, which is pretty impressive and certain fish, like blue fin tuna, which is their blue tuna was 436 pounds itself, which is very impressive.

[00:35:34] **Production Crew question:** And, and why is it impressive? How much, how much do those tunas go for? How much do those swords fish go for? Like, I've heard like in Japan, like a, like a tuna like that goes for like 2 million, like a tuna soul for like \$2 million. Like what, do you know any of those?

[00:35:51] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** See that, I'm not sure, I'm not big on prices with that type of fishery cuz I was never into it. But I do know, like said, Japan, the blue fin tuna go for a lot of money in Japan and even here in the United States. I know people have seen shows like Wicked Tuna and stuff and the people who catch the first tuna in those shows get the biggest money for it. Now swordfish is a different story because here in the. We're not a big, huge swordfish fishery. All our swordfish, once they come in, go straight up north to Massachusetts and all these bigger sword fishing communities.

[00:36:32] **Tina Bucuvalas:** What about the stone crabs? Is that a, is that a big money maker, essentially? I mean, I think, it seems to me, I mean, stone crabs are a really big thing, at least in Florida. I don't know if they are in the rest of the country. Can you talk about that?

[00:36:48] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yeah. Stone crab here in Florida, it is a big thing and as I said earlier, it was much bigger before they started taking the tags. So as everybody got in, you're losing tags, but it, the price is getting so high as these tags are disappearing and it is a major fishery. It has become a major one. I do believe they catch 'em in Louisiana and Texas as well, but they're not as

many, you know, they're different quality of crab, different type of crab, stone crab. But here in Cortez it is a huge fishery.

[00:37:24] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Did you talk about why specifically you left the world of college and sciences to become a fisherman?

[00:37:31] **Production Crew question:** Were there, like, I know you talked about it a little bit, but that's like, that's huge. Like you had your life planned in a way, at that age you wanted, you were going to college, you were in just astronomy and other sciences. But like, what was that one moment that you were like, no, I am not doing this anymore. I'm, I'm going to go work as a fisherman for the rest of my life. Like, was there a moment, was there a story? Was something happened to you?

**[Edited – production comments]**

[00:38:23] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Okay. So yeah, I decided to quit going to college for sciences because growing up here, working with my family is, that's always gonna live with me and that's always what I'm going to want to do, you know, here at AP Bell Fish Company, I still work with my father, who is an employee here. So even though we're not fishing, that feel of family and security is still there. You know, and I'm still doing what I know. Dealing in fish, working for Karen Bell.

[00:38:57] **Production Crew question:** Was there anything like, like, I'm being specific now. You were like, I remember, I'm making this up so you don't, you're not gonna say what I say, right? Yeah, but I'm, It was like a Tuesday. I was in class, I was watching the talk, the, the, the clock tick away and I didn't feel the sun on my arms.

Like I remember growing up and I realized this is not what I want to do for the rest. Like was there, like what I was getting at, was there like one moment or was there a story or Unfortunately something like this, people were dying. You had a grandfather that you were fishing with when you were a kid and he passed away or something, and you were like, look, I want to be.

I wanted to have a life like him because I remember fishing with him and I want to live that place. Was there any story specifically? I'm not trying to get you to make it up. No, I'm just saying, was there a moment where you realized this is why I wanted to be a fisherman?



[00:39:51] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So when I was in school, I was working here at AP Bell at the same time to fund me being able to go to school. Now as I was working here, one of my best friends needed a. He had, he had lost his crew and decided he needed somebody to go fishing. So I decided I would take a week off and I'd go fishing. Well, once I did that, I was hooked back into it. I had decided that I didn't want to sit at a desk. I didn't wanna study all the time. I wanted to be dealing in this industry. I wanted to be out fishing. So that's what I ended up doing, and this is where I've stayed since.

[00:40:31] **Production crew comments:** Reeled back in. That was real.

[00:40:49] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Do you see any potential changes here in Cortez? I mean, like, there's like two distributors now, basic distributors. You think this is gonna stay the same in the future, you think there's gonna be, do you foresee any, any changes in the structure of, of the fishing business in Cortez

[00:41:10] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** For the future of the fishing business in Cortez? The structure, I believe, will stay the same that, but it is getting weaker, you know, with the loss of fish stocks through red tide, environmental conditions, and the loss of people who want a. I believe it is getting weaker, even though it will stay the same, they will deal in the same fisheries, but I, I can't tell what's gonna happen in the future, you know? It looks bleak to me.

[00:41:48] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Anything, yeah.

[00:41:49] **Kristin Sweeting:** That made me think of one more question. What if your daughter came to you and said, guess what dad? I'm going into the commercial fishing industry.

[00:42:05] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** If my daughter ever came to me and said, Hey look, I want to be a fisherman, or I want to get into this industry. I would fully support her. You know, I am anybody who wants to get into this industry. I would fully support it.

But I would have to say, be careful. I'd have to say, know what you're doing because the laws are so. That's so easy to get in trouble and for any minor violation you can get in a lot of trouble. So I would just have to say be careful, but I would fully support it.

[00:42:37] **Tina Bucuvalas:** Okay. And do you use this forklift?

[00:42:42] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** Yes, I do use this forklift many times around day.

[00:42:44] **Production crew comments:** Okay. Can you just talk about what you're sitting on specifically and just a few examples of how you use it and why you love it or why you hate it.

**[Edited – production crew asks Kyle to repeat.]**

[00:43:43] **Kyle Ibasfalean:** So here at AP Bell, I'm sitting on this Nissan Forklift, which is very important to what we do here. This rotates, this forklift in particular has a rotator and we have two that are able to rotate, which picks up our batta fish and dumps it over sideways for us to be able to unload it.

So if we lose either one, then we are kind of in a tight spot, cuz multiple times throughout a day we have people needing to dump VAT's of fish.

**[Production team conversation]** [00:44:23]