

TRANSCRIPT

Series: Cape Cod River Herring Warden Oral History Project

Interviewer: Abigail Franklin Archer, Marine Resource Specialist, Barnstable County Cape Cod Cooperative Extension Marine Program

Interviewees: Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Marian Borek, Herring Wardens for Town of Brewster

Date: February 18, 2014

Location & Setting: Mr. and Mrs. Borek's house in Brewster, a day after a large snowstorm

Abigail: Alright we're recording. It's February 18th and I am speaking with Frank Borek, Town of Brewster.

Frank: Of course my wife's my deputy you know she's actually my assistant. She has all the authority, same as me. They gave her a jacket and a hat and a badge. So she's all set just like me.

Abigail: So she's herring warden as well?

Frank: Yeah. She loves it when she's down there and I love it when she's with me.

Frank: Last week I had a relapse. I had open heart surgery you know.

Abigail: I heard, when was that?

Frank: September

Abigail: Oh my goodness. I know Chris and Ryan were worried about you. That's when I first heard about it.

Frank: They are two super kids. They are both brilliant.

Abigail: Yeah oh I know, Brewster is so lucky to have them both.

Frank: They are so far ahead of me. I'm an old timer. 87 years, well 88 now. Old timer.

Abigail: So when did you first start working for Brewster? What year?

Frank: Oh it must have been about oh maybe 12 years, 12-13 years. The other guy died. He was a nice guy too. Nobody wanted to take it. So I says to Dana, I says Dana, How come, I was on the herring run, I says how come nobody wants to run that mill?

He said nobody wants to do it. He said they just don't think it's worth it. I said hey, if we fix it up I'll run it, my wife and I. And we did, we fixed it up. Not like it is now 'cause we got a grant to do all that, with the bigger wheel. That was a beautiful job. But we don't run it anymore. And the trouble is they've had two or three different couples try it and evidently they figure out it's too much work. We thought it was great. We did it for at least 6-7 years. With the old one. It was tough! It was tough work with the old machine. Of course the machine now is 60 inch, a big 60 inch wheel and we were running on a 24 inch wheel. What they call a farmer's wheel. If a farmer wanted to have a little mill in his own yard if he had water then he would have a

mill build it and he would supply the grinding for all the local farmers and they in turn would either pay him or take it out in trade. Corn or grain. But we only did corn. We did a lot of corn. We used to grind at least 200 pounds a day and we only operated one day. But now they don't hardly operate that. I wish someone else would take it over that really wants to enjoy doing it.

Abigail: I caught it one day this Fall. There were a number of people in there. And it was great! There were people coming in and out, they had lots of participation.

Frank: And good corn. As a matter of fact I still have some in the freezer. I said to my wife I got to make some cornbread. Of course I love cooking. That's my recreation. I make the corn bread. I even make, what do you call it? I'm losing it a little bit.

Abigail: Out of the cornmeal? Is it polenta?

Frank: Polenta. We had an elderly Italian lady come every day we were open. And she would want her bag of cornmeal. I says "What do you do with that?" She says, "Oh I make the polenta" she says, "I make it every day for lunch". I said you do? She says oh yeah - Italian accent. She made polenta and she was 93 years old. She still came down, got her bag of cornmeal and went home. The next week she was all out she come down again. So I gave her a couple bags. Cute old lady.

Abigail: Man I like polenta but I couldn't image eating it every day for lunch though.

Frank: Evidently there's variations. You know. They can put some spices in it or whatever they want to do. But I think it would make a good breakfast food. Like grits.

Abigail: Yeah, actually it world. Stick to your ribs.

Frank: When I had the heart surgery up until I left I lost 27 pounds. I had been trying to get down to 180 like I was when I was in the Navy but I couldn't get there because I like to eat. That was kind of a rush.

Abigail: Yeah, that's the drastic way of doing it.

Frank: But that's OK. I'm getting it back a little at a time now. The doctor says you're looking good so keep it going.

Abigail: Good. Hey there's sunshine!

Frank: Yup, it's been spotting back and forth but, this afternoon it's supposed to snow.

Abigail: It's supposed to snow again. This morning when I got up it looked like it would snow any minute. So did you start the mill duties and the herring duties at the same time?

Frank: On the what, herring duties?

Abigail: So did you become chief miller and herring warden the same time?

Frank: Oh yeah I was the miller. Nobody wanted that and nobody wanted to give it to them either. We handled it so well with the old machine that the Selectmen come down and said, "Hey you do it. You and Marian are doing a hell of a job. We don't want you to leave." They say the same thing now even though I'm having a hard time. I'm trying to recuperate. I want to get back into the groove. They say, "We don't want to lose you we want you here." I said, "Well, I'll try." Of course the shellfish is my number one priority. So, I do that.

Abigail: So you do enforcement for shellfish as well?

Frank: Oh yeah

Abigail: So you do shellfish, herring, and the mill?

Frank: Two hats. And we did run the mill but we don't do that anymore.

Abigail: That's a lot.

Frank: It was great. She'd like to be there with me. After we close we'd go out to lunch somewhere. My wife loves to go out for lunch. She says it gives me a chance to rest. I don't have to cook.

Abigail: It's always good to get a change of scenery too.

Frank: I love cooking. To me that's... I cook a lot of stuff and have it prepared. Like I made last week I made a beef soup, not stew but a soup. Using the shank beef which is the best for soup. And I made 5 quarts of that soup and I made 5 quarts of chicken soup.

Abigail: I'm getting hungry now.

Frank: We stack it so that when things happen, things come up. We have people get sick in the neighborhood. That's why they were all so good to us. Cause I always made their soup, chicken soup and stuff and spaghetti sauce and spaghetti. It paid off. Because boy they took care of my wife when I was in the hospital. I was in there 7 weeks. They were right there to take her to the hospital and drive her back and forth every day. They did it. You can't knock neighbors like that.

Abigail: No, that's so important.

Frank: Terrific. As a matter of fact one of them had a birthday party yesterday. Sunday? Is yesterday Sunday? Yeah.

Abigail: Yeah, or no! Yesterday was Monday.

Frank: We couldn't go because of the storm, number 1. I called him. He's Italian and he loves asti spumante. So I says, "Tony I got you a bottle of asti spumante but we can't get over there. I'll bring it over when it clears." He said, "Don't worry about it." He's the head fishmonger in Chatham. The big market. Fish market. Oh about once a month he brings me in a big bag of knuckles, lobster knuckles. And that's a lot of meat. I sit there and I cut 'em open and take 'em all out and I freeze it.

Abigail: That's a lot of work.

Frank: Yeah but they're so damn good. Every month he brings me a big bag of them. And anything else we want. If we want the big scallops he'll pick 'em up. He knows my wife loves scallops. But Tony's a good egg. He's Italiano.

Abigail: So did you ever prepare herring, did you ever cook herring?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Abigail: How would you prepare it?

Frank: Oh you mean cooking? If you cook 'em you gotta broil them or do it outside. You can't do 'em inside because they smell so, they're so oily. I tried making pickled herring, and ah it didn't work too good and I couldn't understand why. But I found out from a couple old Swedes that it's because there's not enough fat in them. They're thin. One guy that makes it he says you oughta try my recipe. I've got it now. Because we both love herring. Both pickled.

Abigail: My family is Scandinavian we have pickled herring, herring in sour cream at Christmas.

Frank: I love pickled herring. I love pickled herring. As a matter of fact that's what we had for lunch yesterday. I cure my own salmon. I make my own lox. All of that stuff I just love to do. I just finally this year I finally got her to eat some smoked salmon, lox. She never would eat it she never wanted to try it.

Abigail: It is a distinct taste.

Frank: I said honey someday you'll try it and you're gonna say how good it is. Well the end of last year she tried it 'cause I made some nice ones. She tried it she says, "You know honey I've been missing all that all this year and it's really good." You know on a bagel and cream cheese. But she don't like it unless she's got a thin slice of onion on it which makes it real good. But we enjoy it. Everything we do we enjoy. This morning she come over, she says, "Honey honey come here, come here". There were 3 or 4 deer in the backyard. She gets such a kick out of seeing a deer.

Abigail: It's been fun with the snow seeing what animal tracks go through the yard. I'm pretty sure I saw coyote tracks.

Frank: Coyotes don't move too much in the heavy snow but the deer do. But these three were playing out there they were so funny. We've had as many as 7 or 8 deer eating her shrubs out front. They eat it.

Abigail: I see the tracks in my neighborhood I haven't actually seen any deer.

Frank: Dana gets 3 or 4 deer every year so he muscled me a little bit of it. Because I love venison. My kids were brought up on venison. I used to get an average of 3 or 4 deer a year. It makes good sausage. Good hamburger.

Abigail: So where did you grow up?

Frank: In Auburn

Abigail: In Central Mass?

Abigail: So when did you come to Brewster?

Frank: Yeah. I taught there at the high school for 30 years.

Abigail: What subject?

Frank: I taught wood shop and drafting. I had a good deal. I was never, I never sent a kid to the office. Yeah. I handled all the discipline myself. And you know they had more respect for you for that. Cause I never had a bad, I never had what I would call a bad kid. He came to visit me out here, when one of them found out I was sick, that I had open heart, he was here the next day. He brings me a big bunch of kielbasa. He knows we like it.

Abigail: That's a good get well present.

Frank: He goes to the Polish Market in Worcester. He told me "I got something for ya." He's the head director at the big hospital in Worcester. What's the name of that?

Abigail: Is that the Umass hospital? The University of Massachusetts one?

Frank: Oh yeah, that's it. He's in charge of all of the maintenance. He's got a good job. And he says if it wasn't for you. Cause when he, his father passed away, his father said, "Frank make sure he gets to college and gets a good education." I said, "Don't worry." He passed away the next day after I was there. But a super guy and his kid's a super kid. I have no problem with him. A little rascal at school but hey all my kids were rascals but they were good kids. Good kids.

Abigail: That's great they stay in touch.

Frank: One thing I used to do all the time you know if a kid had to go to the office or go to the bathroom you had to give a slip. So I'd sign a slip and hand it to him and say you make sure come right back and they never any problem with them. But one kid said to me, "Hey Mr. B that's not your name." I said no I never put my own name on there. I'd signed it Abraham Lincoln, George Washington. The kids got a biggest kick out of that. But you know I never had a teacher question it. Ever. Never. They'd just say oh you got a slip OK. It was a fun thing like and a secret, you know.

Abigail: So when did you move to Brewster?

Frank: Well we bought our land in '73 and a couple years after that we built our house. So we've been here now about 12-14 years. But we've had our land a long time. We're lucky we bought the land early because we paid \$8,000 for our lot and right now it's valued at \$160,000 cause it's on, all that land up there is conservation land.

Abigail: And it's a nice neighborhood.

Frank: Oh it's beautiful. I've had people come down and say hey you own that land up in back and I say no, but I kind of lease it. It's all state town property. But it's beautiful. We see the deer and we see the fox. We love to see the animals.

Abigail: So how did you get recruited to work at the mill and be herring warden?

Frank: Well I tell ya. I'd go down there and there was nobody, when I was there, there was nobody on there except Dana. And I'd go down and chat with him. Just volunteer. Never asked for anything never did anything extra. Finally Dana said to me, "Would you like the job?" 'cause he was Chairman of the Board. I said yeah I'd like it very much. He says, "Well, I'll tell you what I'm going to put it before the board and see what happens." And he did and they all approved because they all knew what I was doing there. I was a stickler. My wife was a good good good combination. Because if she went down and saw somebody doing what they shouldn't be doing she'd go right down and say, "You don't handle the fish." One woman gave her a bad time one time. So she come up to me and says what do I do? I tell her if she can't listen to you then get out. It's as simple as that. She was letting her two kids play with the fish. She said, "Well I did it when I was a child." I said, "When you was a child there wasn't any problems and now there is. Every fish you handle dies." (She said) "Oh I didn't know that." I said, "Well you should find out before you let the kids play with the fish. Because the minute you take that slime coating off of them, their body, they're now susceptible to a fungus." (She said), "Oh I didn't know that." But I said, "I think you owe my wife an apology, the Deputy." She says, "Well I don't think so." I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. Why don't you leave and don't come back." She says "Why?" I said, "Because you're not honoring the system." She says "Oh." So she left, never came back. You know you have to be, there are times you have to be rough and times you have to be easy. Now if she was any kind of a nice person she would have said I'm terribly sorry it won't happen again. I'll watch my kids.

The only disaster we had there is we had 3 kids fall in.

Abigail: Oh my goodness.

Frank: They slid off the rocks and that's ice water.

Abigail: I think my Mom was always worried that was going to happen to me, but I don't think I ever did fall in though.

Frank: The kids are so frisky, they're running around. They get up on the rocks and the rocks are wet. They're slippery! All of a sudden they can't stop it and (noise) right in.

Abigail: We have a picture of my brother and I at Stony Brook and my Mom's got a death grip on each of our collars just preventing us from falling in.

Frank: We had so many things happen, so many funny things.

Abigail: What are your duties as herring warden?

Frank: What do I do? On the herring run?

Abigail: Yeah. For herring warden, what are you duties?

Frank: Well, what you do is you make sure they've got their permits. And you make sure when they can take the herring they can take their limit. Most people that fish there, take the herring, they usually take less than what they need so they can take another day to go striper fishing.

Frank: Don't go away honey. Don't go away.

Marian: Huh? <laughs>

Frank: You can get in on this too, you're my deputy.

Abigail: Absolutely

Frank: And you know, there are so many things that you do that people don't see. You know like handling the kids that are running around. I don't like to see them up on the railing, split railing bouncing up and down because those have broken sometimes because those are old. And you have to tell them to stay off the fence. And they take sand and throw it in at the fish. All these little things that you have to kinda watch them.

Frank: Like I said she don't take any baloney. I was telling them that you don't take any baloney honey.

Marian: Oh yeah.

Frank: She's a tough bird.

Abigail: So did you both start off being herring wardens together?

Frank: No I was first. I was first.

Marian: I would just go over to help him.

Frank: She's a super super deputy.

Abigail: It's more fun to do things together.

Frank: It is, it is. People say how can you stand it? We get along fine, no problem.

Abigail: My husband and I started counting herring at Brewster a couple years ago. And it was fun to have him come with me.

Frank: Yeah. It's a nice thing. We got some questions Marian maybe you can help too.

Abigail: So who was herring warden before you guys?

Frank: Just Dana, Dana and oh what's his name. He owns a big Cape house out there. Oh jeez. I can't think.

Marian: What?

Frank: Across from Charlie.

Marian: Across from where?

Frank: From Charlie, that big house across from Charlie the Town Manager.

Abigail: We're trying to think of who was herring warden before.

Frank: There was no warden, just volunteers that did the work. And every Spring they have a clean up. And they get some older scouts, they get people that are interested in the herring. And they come down and what they do is they go out, and ah, well I'm kind of a loss for words here.

Abigail: That's when they clear the run? Cut back branches?

Frank: Yeah they cut back the brush. They cut back the, any slimy weeds that are in there they try to rake them out. We try to open it up all the way down. It really works they do a nice job.

Abigail: And does that happen every year?

Frank: Yeah. And then when they're all done at noon time Dana has pots set up. He's cooking hot sausage and hot dogs, kielbasa. No alcohol, just plenty of soft drinks.

Abigail: Boy I bet that tastes good after being in a cold river all day.

Frank: Oh yeah, yeah.

Abigail: So how do you interact with the Alewife Committee? Do they...

Frank: They just check me when I never know it. But I know it, I see them down there. But they're good people. You know, you're going to have to excuse me.

BREAK

Frank: Greenest lawn in the neighborhood. (Referring to the house next to the Stony Brook herring run)

Abigail: I know he does!

Marian: Now we've got a nice brand new one. Gonna be completed.

Frank: You talking about the hill? She's talking about the old house.

Marian: I think they sold it didn't they?

Abigail: I was wondering, it looks there was a lot of activity over there.

Frank: We think somebody bought it, but we're not sure.

Marian: They made little apartments in the house. There was a family I guess that lived there.

Frank: Old man Mahoney he did that.

Marian: Huh?

Frank: Old Man Mahoney.

Marian: Yeah, right.

Frank: He did it because he wanted his daughter living there, he wanted his son living there. He divided that big house into 3 little apartments and he did a nice job. But I think the kids didn't want it anymore. They just gave it up. It's too bad. But, there's no parking there number one.

Abigail: Right. And there are so many people in there in the spring. And I imagine that house takes a lot of maintenance.

Frank: It does. It does.

Marian: We used to run the mill grinding the corn. And ah, traffic. We made a lot of terrific friends from all around the world coming to get the corn.

Frank: Yeah, cornmeal.

Marian: We were there when it was not fixed like it is today. We had the old wheel, it was facing the other, the back wall. And that wheel just went 3 horsepower, really slow you know. But we did it and we sold a lot of corn, and it was a lot of fun too. But now they have this new wheel, and I asked the one that put it in, how fast does this go? He said I think about 11mg or something. I said boy that's fast, you gotta really move with that corn 'cause it's coming down through the shoot and you gotta pack em.

Abigail: I visited in the Fall. They had about 4-5 volunteers there, or maybe three or four. But everybody was busy.

Frank: They had the corn bread there, and the corn pudding.

Marian: Indian pudding.

Abigail: Ooo that's what I have to make. I just made some cornbread with the cornmeal that I got this Fall. But I forgot about Indian pudding.

Frank: If you like molasses Indian pudding is delicious.

Abigail: Oh I love it, my Dad used to make it.

Frank: We both like molasses.

Marian: I think we make the best ground corn meal.

Frank: Yeah.

Marian: Cause it's all natural.

Abigail: I like it's got some substance to it, it's not all uniform.

Marian: You can grind it either fine, medium, or course. We used to do medium. I could feel it. It's funny I saw it on TV and they were explaining about the mill and he says you know, how do you know whether it's fine, medium, or course? He says right here. And it's true I could feel it.

Frank: Yeah we could adjust the machine, if it's too fine we adjust it so it's a little coarser.

Marian: People liked it medium. Did you tell her about that Italian woman?

Abigail: Yeah, about the polenta?

Marian: She was so cute. Yeah she lived to 90?

Frank: 93

Marian: So it didn't harm her. You know?

Frank: One of her kids would drop her off. And she'd come walking down and get her bag. Every day, she says, "I have the polenta everyday." Well hey there's nothing wrong with it. The Indians survived on it and they were healthy as a bull.

Frank: So OK what's the next question?

Abigail: So let's see, herring duties. So have your duties as a herring warden changed over the years? Were they different when you stopped from when you began? Or have you pretty much been doing the same thing?

Frank: Well I don't do it anymore so.

Abigail: When did you stop being herring warden?

Frank: Oh good night, we haven't done it for what, 5 years?

Marian: Not quite.

Frank: When did the herring run, when did the ah..the herring..

Marian: When Stanley and Sandy took it over that was about 2 years ago, 2-3 years ago.

Frank: Oh no it was longer than that honey.

Marian: No, it wasn't.

Abigail: The moratorium on harvest started in 2006.

Frank: Yeah, see that's a long time.

Marian: He hurt his back and he had to quit. We thought they were going to stay there but...they just couldn't.

Frank: Well he tried lifting those bags like everybody else does. I'd say about 6 years, since they built, since they started to build the new one. But then again you know they were still running it until they finished the herring, kept going. And now that they've got that opened up beautifully up there.

Marian: They did a beautiful job up there.

Abigail: It is beautiful, I know.

Frank: I used to click the amount of people going up there. That's an awful lot of people.

Abigail: So you would count the number of people at the run?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Abigail: So how many people would visit in a day?

Frank: Oh good night. When we had the cornbread day and the Indian pudding day. There were cars all the way up the street everywhere. We had to have two cops up there. And the cops of course they did a good job.

Marian: It was all free. You'd get a nice crowd. We'd get a lot of sales too.

Frank: And loads of kids. Loads of kids.

Marian: We used to have a lot of weddings there too.

Abigail: Really?

Frank: Oh yeah, in the back. They'd have the mill as a background. Oh yeah. They'd always call and ask first because we told them if anybody wants to have a wedding or something, graduation even, let us know because if it's a really busy day we have to be careful. But the police were good. The police were so good. They made me an honorary cop. I got a police badge and an ID in my wallet.

Abigail: Not bad.

Marian: Anytime he goes and he has his badge on people notice. You know they kinda behave themselves. Are you with the police?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Abigail: So when you were doing herring enforcement, what took up most of your time?

Frank: Ah, I think getting to greet people. Be with people. That's about it. They really, people really enjoyed being talked to and explain what's going on with the herring. We did an awful lot of conversation with people. That's about it, you know. Dealing with the people, with the conversation. They just love to talk to you and find out what's going on. We had a bunch of worksheets you know, that explain the whole thing.

Abigail: Oh cool!

Frank: I gotta make some this year for whoever's gonna run it. But really, that's about it.

Marian: Have you been there when we have the herring, that's black you could walk on the water?

Abigail: That's actually where I got interested in herring. I grew up in Braintree, just out of Boston. We'd visit the Back River in Weymouth and then we'd come to Stony Brook and visit in Brewster. And then my grandparents lived in Wellfleet so we'd visit the Wellfleet herring. That's what we did in the Spring is we'd come check the herring. And it's incredible. That's where my love of herring started.

Marian: Yeah we hear that a lot from people. I stay here with my grandparents and we gotta go see the herring.

Abigail: Yup, that's just what you do.

Marian: I just love the waterfalls there. Just to see that water coming down by itself, it's amazing! And then to see the fish come up. And they know exactly what time of the year it is. The temperature of the water is important. I'd say to him how do they know? And the babies come back the same route? He said yeah. They know!

Frank: And when they're going back you see millions and millions of the little ones.

Abigail: The little fry...

Frank: And sometimes when they come back late and they have, they're that big, like sardines. Tons of them! Did you ever see the video?

Abigail: Dana showed it to me actually. He gave me a copy. Yup.

Frank: Did you see when we had the drought and we opened the gate and all the little tiny ones went flying through?

Abigail: Is that when they went over the wheel? Yeah I know I couldn't believe there was that footage of them going over the wheel. But that was a drought? That's why? Ahh

Frank: We had the drought. They couldn't come down the stream because it was blocked off. The water was too low.

Abigail: Ah I didn't realize that.

Frank: But we had the little herring and they went down right over the waterfall and (sound effect) right out!

Abigail: I couldn't believe. And they seemed to do OK

Frank: Didn't hurt em.

Marian: That was a sight.

Abigail: It really was.

Frank: That's one really interesting part, is that you know...Of course the whole tape is interesting but I thought that was great. Unique.

Abigail: So how often have there been drought conditions in the run such that the babies couldn't get out.

Frank: Maybe a couple of times. After that we kept the water level as much as we could and shut off the water so it isn't just flowing for nothing. And it worked.

Abigail: So it stored water in the pond?

Frank: We'd open it up when we wanted to grind corn 'cause we have a separate sluice for that. That worked good, after that. It was kind of scary to think that we could have lost thousands and thousands of little ones. And we didn't, we made it.

Abigail: Good management.

Frank: In Harwich you know somebody opened a gate for the water that goes into the cranberry bogs. And of course it was just at the time when the little ones were ready to go back to the ocean. And they didn't realize it, the manager opened the gates and they all flooded. They didn't know how to get out, and they all died. Thousands and thousands.

Abigail: When was that?

Frank: I think it was 5 or 6 years.. Well it was before the moratorium. So it had to be maybe 7 or 8 years ago. I don't know what happened after that but they really made a mess. They lost a whole year's growth of herring. Unbelievable. Unbelievable.

Abigail: So did Brewster stop harvest before the state moratorium? Or was it in 2006?

Frank: No, we let them take 'em as well as they could, you know. They wouldn't take many. We were down to 5.

Abigail: Five per person?

Frank: Yeah, well a week.

Abigail: Five a week, per person?

Frank: We would just mark them off on their permit. They were using them for stripers. Which you can't really blame the guys because that was the best way to get a striper. Put 'em on a hook and heave it out into the tide. We paid off too. They brought us a couple of beautiful stripers.

Marian: Yeah, nice and fresh.

Frank: Every year they bring us. Some of the clamming guys. I take care of them and they take care of me. Clams and oysters and we had beautiful pieces of striper they bring, they bring me two nice fillets you know and I'd cut it up and freeze it.

Abigail: So where would people get the permits for harvesting?

Frank: Town Hall, yup. Town Hall.

Marian: That's where everything happens, Town Hall.

Abigail: So you could take 5 herring per week, for...?

Frank: Well we used to.

Abigail: Right, before the moratorium. How many weeks could they do that?

Frank: Oh we did that...I don't know, well it wasn't long, because the moratorium took effect. But normally we gave them 15 fish a week. And most guys that fished with herring would take only 3 or 4, maybe 5. Because they knew that they were scarce and they didn't want to waste them. So that's it, they wouldn't take any more than 5, or 15.

Abigail: So what do you think about the moratorium?

Frank: Well I'd like to see it end. Because, right now our run is loaded. It's loaded. But you have to wait 'til the others towns, you know, until they are able to get enough fish out of there. Go to these meetings every year too, they have, of all the herring people, the wardens. And most of them feel that it could open it up. Even on a trial basis to see what happens. But there's plenty of fish. You know, especially in our run. Of course we always had the best run anyway. Most people...

Abigail: So if you opened up now, how many herring do you think people could take? How much could the run sustain do you think?

Frank: If we could get it going, probably go 5 or 10. I don't think it will harm anything. But ah, everybody else thinks the same way. Although we don't want to see it get to a point where we'd lose them. Dana is very cautious on that. He doesn't want to see too many people get down there and clean them out. I can remember the day, on that video, did you see where they got backed up with the truck and they took the big net?

Abigail: Yeah! Dana was describing that to me, that people use to harvest them.

Frank: Millions. The Town would contract somebody to do that, and they'd pay the Town so much a ton. And uh, they'd just clean 'em right out. It was terrible.

Abigail: I'm 34 and I've never seen that many herring in a run that could sustain that type of harvest.

Frank: That big bag comes up you know and they just dump it in the back of the dump truck. And then they go to fertilizer. That's where they go.

Marian: We used to have a problem at first from people who owned bait shops.

Frank: Oh yeah.

Marian: They'd come in during the night. He was there, like, first it was 12 o'clock at night. Then it was 2 o'clock. And they would have a watchman watching when he came down and they'd take off. And they'd wait until he's gone and they'd come down and take, they had barrels in the back of their trucks, bring it to their baitshop.

Abigail: So this was after the moratorium? And there were people still trying to take..

Frank: And before too.

Marian: It was before that was a problem.

Abigail: But they would harvest at night, which is not allowed.

Frank: It's illegal. Well first of all, they're taking more than 15 fish. They're taking barrels. They had live wells in the back of their truck. I had one guy say to me, well I saw this one guy taking buckets, two buckets. Well this particular guy didn't carry two buckets, he carried 2 buckets of water to put in his tank. So I says we've checked him out. No problem.

Marian: Straightened them out eventually.

Frank: Yeah, we had that one guy.

Abigail: How did you catch them?

Frank: Well I stayed there. And one night somebody called and said there's somebody out there taking herring. So I went down. Of course when I went down they disappeared. So what happened is I waited and waited. Everything got quiet again. They came back with their pickup and the tank. They backed down. I called the police station right away. So the police came down. By then they had taken off. But they caught the guys at the four corners out here... The cops said what are you doing with that stuff there? "Oh we're just getting a few herring..."

Marian: Yeah..

Abigail: A few!

Frank: But anyway they were charged. I don't know what they ever paid for fines, but it should have been heavy.

Abigail: So what time at night did this happen?

Frank: Two o'clock

Abigail: Two o'clock in the morning you were out there staking out the herring run?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Abigail: That's awesome.

Frank: We had a lot of interest in them so we didn't want to see it abused

Marian: We got good watch people down there, that's why we've got so many herring.

Frank: Well it's just like. The oysters are the same way now. They're having a problem with oyster thieves, you know? They come down at night and steal tons of oysters.

Marian: Terrible

Abigail: People put so much time and energy into their operations.

Frank: You know? That's their living. And you got some h comes in there and steals it.

Marian: And make money out of it.

Frank: Oh yeah

Marian: And when they start they're only the size of a pinhead. They're so tiny.

Frank: Like a flick of pepper.

Abigail: That's the best description I've heard. They really are like little pepper flakes. I was amazed the first time I saw them.

Frank: Three years they're a full grown oyster, you know?

Marian: Yeah.

Abigail: That's amazing.

Frank: But I liked the oyster fishing too. I liked that job. She says I do too much.

Abigail: So what do you think - what was the most challenging part of doing herring enforcement?

Frank: What's the most challenging part? Just about what we just said. You know? Keep an eye on em.

Marian: You have to. You need someone there 24 hours a day when we were having this problem. But I think we got it pretty well straightened out. Everybody.

Frank: We're able to get the people that are sneaking them at night. And during the day they know. And the police at night, they patrol, they watch, and if they see something you know, fishy...

Abigail: Something fishy!

Frank: Then they get right in there and do something about it.

Abigail: So were there ever any controversies over water flow between the mill and the herring run?

Frank: No.

Abigail: No arguments?

Frank: No Dana controlled it all.

Marian: Oh yeah - he doesn't take any baloney.

Frank: I'd say Dana how's the water and he'd say, it's good. It's good. You know. The mill would open up and the water level would stay about the same because we're just balancing off how much is coming out of there. Cause it's not a big... Even though it's connected with 7 ponds they're not heavy with water ponds you know. They're not deep - they're shallow ponds. And of course you'd have the people that come down at night that go to these ponds and put a brush dam up and ah, we caught them too.

Abigail: What were they doing?

Frank: They were scooping out herring!

Abigail: Oh! To catch the herring!

Frank: Yeah. Stealing herring. And most of them never had a permit, never had a license.

Abigail: So was that in the run?

Frank: Further up - in the ponds. One pond goes to the other - 7 ponds - and there are fish hatching at every pond. So. We had one guy he had a little aquarium at home and he was treating it with saltwater and he had 50-60 herring in there.

Abigail: No way!

Frank: Yeah. I don't know what he was gonna do use 'em for bait in the summer. Legally he couldn't have them. Right now legally if you have a herring it's against the law. It could be a minimum of a 50 dollar fine.

Marian: You just can't have them in your house or anything. You cannot have them.

Frank: Even if you got some the year before the moratorium went into effect - if you had herring in your freezer - get rid of them. Because they're now illegal to be in possession. So I'd have a few guys that come down going fishing I'd tell 'em - hey - get rid of them or take 'em out and fish with them for a day But make sure you get rid of them.

Abigail: So what do you think about the herring count program?

Frank: The herring count?

Abigail: The volunteer counters?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Marian: I was just gonna say that - did Dana tell you about the counters?

Abigail: Yeah

Frank: They work good. They're very good. And they're so reliable. They have the clickers you know.

Marian: Volunteers.

Frank: Huh?

Marian: Volunteers.

Frank: Yeah they're all volunteers. Well at the end of the year they have that little get together.

Abigail: A little luncheon.

Frank: Yeah. Which is nice. So much goes on. You know. But I have to stick with my wife because she's the boss now.

Marian: <laughs> No...

Abigail: So what were your favorite parts of doing herring enforcement? Did you have any favorite moments?

Frank: Well I think. Well, let me go in first and then she can. I think socializing with the people and it gets them on your side all the time. If something happens they're right there. And if people go down and they see like even now they see 'em handling fish. They come right up and they tell us. They come right up and they tell us. We thank 'em. Go down there and tell people you can't handle these fish. She's a cracker jack on that part. She don't let 'em get away with anything.

Marian: I think my most exciting part is when all the herring come in and they're so thick like I say we could walk on them. It's amazing to see so many of them! You know? And then they get their way up. And to get them up the ladders that is exciting too. You know? And they come back the same year the babies too?

Frank: The fry.

Marian: I think it's exciting.

Abigail: I agree. Nothing beats that feeling.

Marian: It's nature.

Abigail: I can't wait for it every year.

Marian: I know. We do too.

Frank: It's an amazing thing that they do come back every year. And I tell people I say you know those fish 3 miles out can smell that water from that river and they follow it in. And they say oh you're kidding me. And I say no that's what they do. How else you think they can find the river that they came in. That's it.

Abigail: Oh! When we were on the phone you told me a story about a book, a John Hay book that you were given. Can you tell that story again please?

Frank: Do you want to see it?

Abigail: Well can you just tell the story again? I would like to see it too. But I want to record for posterity.

Frank: You mean when I told him I found...

Abigail: Yup.

Frank: Well this woman, our neighbor, she's very nice. And she said to me, "You know, you work hard you do a lot of things for the town. I'm going to have you have this book. It's a first edition of The Run." I've got it all in plastic now so it doesn't get damaged. But ah. It's even got the sleeve on it you know. And I said to Dana I got to call him up and see if he'll come down and sign it for me before I package it.. (He said), "Oh yeah he'll come down." No I wanted to go to his house first. So I called him and he said, "Sure. But I tell you what..." He says, "You stay there. I'm going to have my nurse drive me. I haven't been there for a while. So we did. And he came down and he brought a pen. He says..And he said I'll come down. You don't have to drive up here. I'll have my nurse take me down 'cause he had a nurse then. So he did. So I saw him. I was at the bottom of the herring run. And I saw him, you know, starting to walk down. It's kind of rough, he's an old man.

Abigail: That's rough terrain.

Frank: So I says oops. I gotta go catch him before he gets down here. Plus I had the book in the car. So I went up and I says, "Hi John." "Hey Frank! How you doing, how's everything going?" I says, "Beautiful – we got a super run." He says, "I can see it from here." So he says, "Where's that book you want signed. So I brought it out and he signed it. So now I have a signed edition of "The Run. But I have 2 other, 3 other books of his and they're all good reading.

Abigail: Yeah I know. He's a great author. So what year was that do you think?

Frank: On what?

Abigail: When he signed the book.

Frank: Oh when he signed it? Well it had to be about 3 or 4 years before the moratorium.

Abigail: So early 2000s.

Frank: So 12 years ago maybe.

Abigail: That's a great story. I love that story.

Frank: I was lucky that she had it, or that she found it, and she bought it. I says, "You don't have to do that" and she says, "Yes,I do."

Frank: I get excited over these things you know.

Abigail: I do too.

Abigail: Let's see. I think we went through all the questions. Anything else about river herring you'd like to talk about?

Frank: Can you think of anything exciting that happened?

Marian: Well I just mentioned you know, the ah..

Frank: Well we're lucky... One thing we're lucky about. Is we had ah we were able to get in touch with I had a police radio. They give me a police radio every year. And I had the police radio. Lucky I had 3 three times I really needed it. Real desperate. One I had a woman she slipped down below where they had been cutting the brush. And you know sometimes they cut it and it leaves a sharp angle. Well she happened to walk down and slip on it and she slit her calf about 5-8 inches. So I says, "I got to get you an ambulance." She says, "Oh no no no she says it's not that bad." I says, "Yes it is. You can't see it but it is." So there happened to be a nurse there and she says, "Let me get a bandage." She says, "I got bandages in the car." She comes back and she says, "You've got to go to the hospital." So I called the Fire Department and they were there in about 2 minutes. And they took care and wrapped her up and took her up to the hospital. Well 2 days later she came down and she said to me, "You know I got to thank you so much for making me go to the hospital. I didn't realize it was that bad. It took 18 stitches."

Marian: She was in doctoring for a couple of years.

Frank: Cause the muscle tone was pretty much gone. And then I had a girl pass out. She was... Sugar. Luckily I had a couple oranges in the car.

Abigail: Man, you're prepared for everything!

Frank: So I peeled one of the oranges. The father says, "She don't need to peel it. Just let her bite it." She bit right into it. So I says, "Do you want to go to the hospital?" (She says) "No no! I don't want to go to hospital." That was right up at the dam. She sat down with her back to the dam. And ah..that was another one.

Marian: One exciting one was about the swans up at the pond.

Frank: Oh God yeah. The swans had two ah, What do you call them?

Marian: Male and a female, you mean the babies?

Abigail: Goslings?

Frank: No, not goslings, that's geese.

Abigail: Cignets!

Frank: Cignets.

Abigail: I knew it would come to me eventually.

Frank: One of them was up at the dam and one was tangled up in some monofilament line that had been hanging from the tree – the brush. I couldn't get at them 'cause I couldn't walk out that far. One of the girls come up and says we got to get the, what do you call it? The animal rescue league. They finally came with the canoe. I says, be sure when you go in what that canoe you be careful because those 2 parents will beat you to death with those wings.

Abigail: I've had run ins with swans. They're frightening.

Frank: She says oh yeah we've handled them before. So I think we'll be alright. They were, but the minute they got out the male and female came pounding at that canoe! They were prepared for it. They had the oars up. Paddles rather. But the finally got 'em.

Marian: They untangled them. Like they had wheels on them. They flew with the parents. The babies.

Frank: The parents had gone oh maybe about 40-50 yards away. They took off. Boy I'll tell you. That little one he was skittering on top the water he was going so fast.

Marian: If we only had a camera.

Abigail: Was it an adult wound up?

Frank: One of the babies.

Abigail: Ah. Oh my goodness.

Frank: That's why they were so firm. They went right at 'em.

Marian: That was fun.

Frank: What else we have? We had quite a few things that happened – just can't register it right now.

Abigail: Well you said there were three times you wanted the radio. There was the injury, the diabetic, and was there a third one?

Frank: Yeah. What was the third one? Cutting the rock. Oh jeez I can't remember, but there were three times.

Marian: Somebody fell in the water.

Frank: Oh yeah I told her that. Kids I had fall in the water all the time.

Marian: One time Frank went down late in the day and there was this van there and he heard people talking and laughing. Tell her the story.

Marian: So he walked down and saw the people and on the ground he saw towels and everything. He says, "What are you people doing?" They were in the brook swimming. Swimming! He says, "What are you doing? You're breaking the law." He says you have to leave. You can't go in. Go in the ocean, you know get a permit, if you want to swim. But he said that was the funniest sight.

Abigail: I've never seen anyone try and swim down the river.

Marian: No! You know. That's small. He said there must have been 7-8 people plus the driver.

Abigail: So would you guys ever eat the herring roe? The herring eggs?

Marian: I don't eat that stuff. I don't even like the herring. They're too fishy. Oily. But we have a couple old gentleman that have been eating those for years. I think they smoke them. They love 'em. They say we can't wait for its time for us. Just like the oysters. I don't like eating raw.

Abigail: Me neither. I like 'em cooked. I liked 'em fried. But I just cannot...My family loves them. They're like vultures around the sink. My brother will open them and their just popping them down. It's a consistency thing.

Marian: My daughter too. My daughter and my son in law. They all like them. I say, "How can you eat that stuff?" They look so slimy.

Abigail: Do you like them cooked?

Marian: No. I haven't had enough of them to say I like them you know. The first time I had oysters Frank used to own a upholstering business. We used to have to go to Boston twice a year. The first time we went we stopped at the Oyster Bar. I mean it's still there.

Abigail: The Oyster House?

Marian: This was years ago. And that's the first time I had fried oysters. They were delicious. And I've been waiting to get some like that. Not yet.

Frank: I'll make some this year.

Marian: Well we'll see.

Frank: I'll make some.

Abigail: Where did you grow up?

Marian: Oh! In Worcester. And then we moved to Auburn. And he taught at the high school.

Abigail: Yup.

Marian: Worcester was my stamping ground but I was glad to get out of there. It was getting kind of...crowded.

Frank: Crowded.

Frank: With the auto dealerships over there. I was on the Board of Appeals for 20 odd years and I got a little fed up when they started to allow these auto, you know car dealerships that would come in. And they were taking up all prime land. They just ruined a beautiful town. Yup. And they expanded the Mall which is another

thing. But we like it here. We liked Auburn when it was like that. Of course teaching at the high school I've seen all that go blossoming right up there. We didn't like it.

Frank: We had the gentleman from Scotland and his wife.

Marian: Oh yeah. Him and his wife.

Frank: They come down to the herring run. God he couldn't get over how nice it looked there. Even that was the old mill. His wife said "It's such a pretty place. Such a pretty place." So anyway they took what, 5 or 6 bags of cornmeal, try to take back with them.

Marian: On the plane.

Frank: And ah he said I'll see you next year. He was a millionaire. I mean, he was..you could tell just by talking to him. He had, what do you call it? Plantations, he had, down in South Africa, he was loaded. And some on the Islands, you know, Australia. The guy was a big money guy.

Marian: You'd never know it. He was the nicest gentleman.

Frank: He said I'm going to be back with my wife next year. And I want to make sure you're gonna be here. So make sure you're here. I said OK we'll be here. But what happened is he came the following year and he said, "I've got something for you and your wife but you have to come inside and sit at the table at the mill." And he brings out this beautiful bottle of Scotch. A type of Scotch that they don't sell anywhere but Scotland. You can't get it anywhere but Scotland. So he said ah, he had those two little stem glasses. They were full of ice. He dumped the ice out.

Marian: Little tiny ones. Little bowl and a stem. They were about that big.

Frank: So he put a shot of Scotch in each one. This is to wish us many happy returns, many good luck, and..

Marian: Health

Frank: And wonderful people that we met. And we drank it. So he says, "Now it's their turn" - his wife and my wife. So she's a Scotch drinker anyway. So he filled up the two glasses again and had them toast each other.

Marian: It was so nice.

Frank: Unbelievable that they'd think of something like that.

Abigail: I had no idea that the mill attracted so many people from around the world. I just figured it was local folks. Dana was telling me some stories. People from all over.

Marian: It's true.

Frank: A lot of people from all over

Marian: Aren't we in that little magazine

Frank: Which one?

Marian: That little magazine you get.

Frank: We're so proud of our escapades.

Abigail: It's great. I'm having so much fun listening