

## GORDON MURPHY

Interviewer: Douglas  
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Place: Gordon Murphy's home  
Transcriber: Douglas and Sally Merrick



*Gordon Murphy was born on November 23, 1931, and has always lived in Friendship. His family has lived here for at least five generations. He has four children and seven grandchildren. Now retired, he was a lobster fisherman from the time he was in the seventh grade. The focus of his life is his love of the Lord and his church.*

**Q: When did you start lobstering?**

A: Since I was a little fellow, probably seventh grade.

**Q: Why did you become a lobsterman?**

A: Must have been kind of foolish, and nothing else to do.

**Q: What was your job on the boat?**

A: Oh, I did the whole thing, from steering to hauling--the heavy thing that needed to be done, and I went alone.

**Q: Is lobstering a tradition in your family? Explain.**

A: I guess you could say so. My father and my grandfather were both local fishermen, my children are, and all of my relatives.

**Q: What was the name of your boat? And why did you name it this?**

A: The last boat I had, it was named *Grace*, and that was because of the grace of God.

**Q: What equipment did you carry on board?**

A: Hauler, motor, of course, and all the things that go with it--radio, radar; I guess that was about it.

**Q: What was the length and the kind, and was it fiberglass or wood? What was the color, and how much horsepower did you have in the motor? Was it diesel or gas?**

A: My boat was a fiberglass one, 30-feet long, and the motor was gasoline--a 292 Chevy.

**Q: Describe your lobster traps and how they work.**

A: You mean the length and like that? The last ones I had were all 4-foot length and 22 1/2 inches wide, wire traps.

**Q: Describe how you set your traps. How do you know when to set them and where to set them?**

A: Well, all of us, I guess, kind of begin setting our traps when the shedders first come in the early summer. Usually set them close around the rocks and move them off in the mud a little bit later.

**Q: How often did you pull them?**

A: I divided my string up into three days--that would be every third day.

**Q: How do you tell your traps from someone else's?**

A: The color of the buoys. Mine were white with a black tail.

**Q: Did you use toggles? Explain how they work.**

A: I used a few toggles, but just for fishing on the rocks, when they got off on the mud

lay. You don't need them. Toggles are to help hold the rope up off the bottom, so it won't get caught on the rocks.

**Q: What did you use for bait, and where did you get it?**

A: Most of the bait came from where I sold the lobsters, usually used herring, sometimes pogies, sometimes redfish, whatever's available, sometimes cod racks.

**Q: What other kinds of fish got caught in your traps? What did you do with them?**

A: Once in awhile you'd get a codfish; I would cut in up for balt and use it for bait.

**Q: When did you go out, and when did you come back? How far out would you go in a day? How many traps did you pull in a day?**

A: I only hauled about 100 traps a day, and I didn't go too far, maybe a couple miles from home. I'd go out probably before sunrise usually and get back whenever I was through hauling traps.

**Q: Describe what you do when you catch a lobster. What lobsters did you have to throw back? Explain notching lobsters.**

A: Well, when I catch a lobster, the first thing you do is see if it's big enough or not, or too big. Once in awhile it's too big. And, of course, band it, and put it in a circulating water tank to keep it alive. As far as the notched lobsters, I just throw them back. I never bother to punch them myself.

**Q: Where do you take your lobsters at the end of the day? Who determines the price you get for them?**

A: I always sold my lobsters the same place, to the lobster buyer, and I don't know who determines the price, but it's somewhere near the same all along the coast--in the harbor, different buyers, whoever buys the lobsters.

**Q: What is a normal haul for a day, on a really bad day, and on a really good day?**

A: Well, quite a bit less than a pound a trap would be a bad day, I would think. A good day would be a couple of pounds to a trap.

**Q: How does weather affect your fishing?**

A: Wind and fog bother considerably. If there's too much wind, I stayed at home, and if there was too thick a fog, I stayed at home.

**Q: How has lobstering changed since you began fishing?**

A: Well, I think there are more lobsters now. The way you go after them, we used different equipment altogether. Always did have wooden traps, wooden buoys, sisal rope. Now it's all polyester rope, wire traps, and styrofoam buoys.

**Q: What did you like the most about lobstering?**

A: Collecting the money (chuckle).

**Q: What did you like the least about it?**

A: Oh, I think bad weather. I just didn't like to go out when it's bad weather--cold weather, too.

**Q: What happens when it's foggy?**

A: Depending on how thick the fog is, and how far I have to go, but if it's real foggy out, I'd stay on the dock. And if it was just, you know, you could see a quarter of a mile or so, why, we'd go.

**Q: What kind of problems have you experienced at sea?**

A: I guess probably the most common thing would be some trouble with the engine, the engine stopping or something, and having to get towed in. And I have been on some of the rocks around, bumped around, but not enough to cause any severe damage.

**Q: What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you while you were lobstering?**

A: Well, I don't know that anything big sticks out in my mind. I always had pretty good luck, I guess. I can't seem to think of anything too severe right now.

**Q: Describe your most memorable time fishing.**

A: It seems like everything like that all runs together. I don't know that there's anything that sticks out in my mind that I would remember the most.

**Q: Did you lobster in the winter? If so, describe it. If not, what did you do in the winter?**

A: I have a little, but not very much. Most of the time in the winter would be working on traps, getting them ready for the next year.

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**Q: How often do you eat lobster? Do you have a favorite way of preparing it, like recipes?**

A: It don't seem like we had lobsters too awful much; I guess we got tired of looking at them. Just boil the lobsters and pick them out, have plenty of butter on them; that's the way I like them.