

JOHN NEUBIG

Interviewer: Randall
Date: October 4, 2003
Place: John Neubig's home
Transcriber: Eleanor Barlow



Johnny Neubig was born on September 18, 1939, and has always lived in Friendship. His family has lived here for two generations, and he has one sister, two sons, and one grandson. Now disabled, he was a lobsterman for 31 years. He was also a mason and served in the Navy for two years. His hobbies are stamp collecting, hunting, and making models of boats from scratch. In the picture, Johnny is knitting a head for a trap.

Q: When did you start lobstering? How long did you lobster?

A: 1954 'til 1985.

Q: Why did you become a lobsterman?

A: I liked the water, and there was a lot more money in it.

Q: What was your job on the boat?

A: I was the captain.

Q: Did you have someone who lobstered with you?

A: The last few years my wife went with me.

Q: Is lobstering a tradition in your family?

A: No.

Q: What is the name of your boat, and why did you name it this?

A: *The Three D's*, named after Daddy, David, and Dwayne.

Q: What equipment did you carry on board?

A: Let's see. . . fathometer, fire extinguishers, radiotelephone.

Q: Did you have a propeller cage?

A: Yes.

Q: Describe your lobster traps. What were the size and the weight?

A: They were wooden lobster traps. They was probably around 50 pounds. Then in 1975 I went to wire traps.

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

A: I had a fathometer and a paper recorder, and you could tell where the hard bottom was and the soft bottom. We set them on the hard bottom.

Q: Do you move them during the season? If so, why?

A: In the summertime--June, July--we fished the rocks right in close, and as the water got colder, we kept moving off into deeper water.

Q: How often did you pull them?

A: Every two days, depending on the weather.

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

A: By the buoy color.

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

A: When I first started, we used glass toggles, and then with my lathe I used to make wooden ones, and they wouldn't break, but the glass ones would break. Then in about 1960 they came out with styrofoam ones.

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

A: Bait came from Rockland. It was redfish.

Q: When did you go out in the morning? When did you come back? How far out did you go in a day? How many traps did you pull in a day?

A: I used to leave the house around 5:00 in the morning and be home by 2:00 in the afternoon. I used to haul 200 traps, out about six miles.

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

A: We had a brass measure. Three and three-sixteenth--we used to have to throw back any lobsters that were smaller than that. Then they kept increasing the measure a little bit. When you used to catch lobsters with eggs on them and they didn't have a notch in the middle flipper, we used to take a knife and make a little v, and that was a notched lobster.

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

A: We'd catch all kinds: flounders, mackerel, pollock, and codfish.

Q: Where did you take your lobsters at end of the day, and who determined the price you get for them?

A: We had a wharf that we fished from, and the price is governed by the demand for the lobsters; you know, how many would call for the price.

Q: What was a normal haul for a day?

A: Back in those days 100 pounds was a good haul, but in the fall you could probably get 200-250.

Q: How did the weather affect your fishing?

A: If it was getting rough, whitecaps and anything about 15-20 mile an hour, most of us stayed home then.

Q: How has lobstering changed since you began fishing?

A: They've gone to all wire traps now. You don't see any wooden ones now, and the number of traps they have today is about 800, where back in those days when I first was going, about 100 was a big gang.

Q: What did you like most about lobstering?

A: Nice fresh air and seeing the sun come up in the morning.

Q: What did you like least about it?

A: When you get a hurricane or a bad storm, your traps are all snarled up.

Q: What happened when it was foggy?

A: Fog didn't seem to bother us. We used a compass, and we remembered where our traps were and went by that.

Q: What kinds of problems have you experienced at sea?

A: Oh, I've been on a lot of rocks, had to get towed off a few times. I fell overboard a couple times.

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

A: I fell overboard by Black Island one time when I was in my little skiff and outboard. Another fisherman was right there and saw me in the water, so he came over alongside and pulled me aboard.

Q: Describe your most memorable time fishing.

A: Oh golly, that's a hard thing to tell because there was always good times and a few bad times.

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

A: I did 'til around Christmastime, from June 'til Christmas, and then I used to go to work with my father doing mason work.

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

A: I eat them anytime I can get them. I used to have them about once a week when I was lobstering, but now I don't get them very often.

Q: What color were your buoys?

A: Blue and yellow. The last few years I used to have all orange.

Q: How did you used to make your buoys?

A: I used to go in the woods and get some cedar and bring it home. I had a wood-turning lathe, and I turned my buoys out on the lathe.

Q: Did you make your heads out of cotton or nylon?

A: When I first started, it was cotton; then nylon came out, and I started using nylon.