

JIM STANLEY

Lobsterman

Date: May 16, 2004

Time: 3:36 p.m.

Location of the interview: Home of Jim Stanley

Student Interviewers: Morgan MacKenzie Grade 10
 Hollie Stanley Grade 10

School: Ellsworth High School
School Location: Ellsworth, Maine

Teacher or Parent
Interviewer/Chaperone: Sally Stanley, Parent

Transcribers: Morgan Mackenzie, Tiffany Thurber

MM: How long have you been involved in the fishing business?

JS: Oh, I have been fishing for about ten years.

MM: Do you have relatives involved in this business?

JS: Yes, I do. My stepfathers are a fisherman part time; his brothers are both fishermen and his nephews are fishermen. The whole family are fishermen.

MM: How did you get started fishing?

JS: I got started fishing when my uncle was fishing and one of my cousins was fishing.

MM: How old were you?

JS: I believe I was about thirteen. My uncle fished out of Bartlett's Island and I would go with him occasionally. His name is Horace Butler. We would go out of Bartlett's Island. I got to do all the heavy stuff.

MM: Do you have your own boat?

JS: I do have my own boat, yes. It is here in Ellsworth as a matter of fact.

MM: How big is it?

JS: The boat I haul traps out of now is seventeen feet.

MM: what are some of the tools that you use?

JS: some of the tools? Equipment, gear? Uh, I don't have a hauler because I haul by hand. I just have about one hundred traps and I usually only put in about forty of them. I think there are only a couple of us lobstering in Ellsworth. Reggie Kane and I are the two that haul out of here. My gear includes the traps, buoys, line, bait bags, and the bait buckets. Of course, you have got to have all the other stuff. The boots and the oil gear so you don't get all crap while you are hauling. And then some hand tools like the measure and the banding machine, things like that.

MM: Do you think that this is a good money making industry?

JS: Yes, for people that are at it full time. I think it is one of the few things that you can do in Maine, wherever you live. You are not dependent on who owns the land like the paper companies are. You are not dependent on working for somebody else. You can work for yourself as hard as you want or you can take the day off if you want. That is your own choice. So I think it is a good job for people from Maine.

MM: How many lobsters do you usually get in one trap?

JS: Um, that really depends on the season. If it is early you don't get as many usually as you can in the fall. It depends on when the lobsters are moving. You can get none sometimes or you can get, you know, four or five in a trap or better sometimes.

HS: How often do you haul?

JS: I haul every other day if I can but sometimes with my work schedule I only haul once a week. It depends on when I am working.

HS: Can you keep all of them?

JS: No, you have to throw some back. You have a measure for lobsters that are too small and lobsters that are too big. You can't keep the females that have eggs or a notch; those are the seeders. That is the future crop so you have to throw those ones back.

MM: Do you sell them?

JS: I do sell some, I barter some, and I eat most of them. (Laughing)

MM: do you have any good fishing stories? (Laughing)

JS: I have a couple of them. Let's see, there is another fella down the bay that I helped get started. His name is Bill Dodge. He put a couple of traps in and he was having a little bit of difficulty with them. He had them all wound up around the buoys and I had to

come help him out. We had to pull and cut and pull and cut for most of the day to just set two traps back cause he had them all tied up in one of the navigational buoys out there.

I remember one time I took a friend of mine out with me and we were hauling pretty steady and I noticed a storm cloud coming across the Union River Bay. I was hauling pretty fast and the guy was kinda just enjoying the day, it was so nice. He said, "Why are you hauling so fast? I pointed to the cloud and before I could get the trap hauled in it started raining, blowing, and sleeting. We were going wide open for sure. I said, "when it hits shore, don't stop' cause I am getting out of the boat. It was lighting right behind us too and it wasn't where I wanted to be, so there are a couple of things like that that makes it fun and makes it interesting.

MM: Is there anything you think we should know about lobstering?

JS: Well, let's see, do you know how far lobsters go up the Union River in Ellsworth. Do you know who hauls out of Ellsworth for lobster fishermen?

HS and MM: No.

JS: Very few people. There are a couple of what we call part timers. There are two different types of licenses not. One is a recreational license; you can only have five traps. The other is a commercial license that you have had to have for years in order to keep it. There are only two commercial lobster fishermen in Ellsworth. Reggie Kane who has been doing it for oh, I think he is older than dirt (laughing) so I don't know how long he has been doing it and there is me. There are a couple of other guys out there but they are only part timers. Let's see lobsters along with eels, alewives, bull fish, stripers, and smelts, even Atlantic salmon sometimes come up the Union River. So when you are sitting down on the dock looking out and you see all those boats on the river and you wonder what is going on. Look out and see all those shags that are out there and cormorants that are out there. They are there for a reason. They are out there because there is something coming up under the water. Seals even come right up in that harbor. Not many people fish that far up in the bay, though, because lobsters are typically more down south towards Bartlett's Island.

HS: Where would you say is the best place to lobster around here?

JS: down on the island. They are pretty territorial, actually. So you have to have somebody who would start you down there or you would have to be a friend of a friend or a son of a fishermen or something like that to get in because the fishermen are territorial down there. Swans Island has some really good lobster. Bass Harbor has some of the biggest ones on the coast. The Maine Lobstermen's Association keeps track of the harbors and the amount of lobsters. As the years go by, they get more and more accurate as far as how many lobsters have gone through, what kind of a year it is going to be and whether the population of lobsters is going up or down. Because it is such a big industry that if it was going to crash because it has been over fished, it would make an awful lot of people poor. I mean, banks and businessmen. It is not just lobstermen. You have got the

people that ship it, people that truck it, people that build the boats for lobstermen, and people that build the traps. So you know, lobstering is a big business; it is probably the biggest one in Maine.

HS: O.k. I think that is it. (Laughing). Thank You.