

## BERNARD & MARIE WALLACE

Interviewers: Steven and Shawn  
Date: September 28, 2003  
Place: Bernard and Marie Wallace's home  
Transcribers: Shawn and Jessica



*Bernard Wallace was born on December 3, 1929. For 17 years he lived on Friendship, Long Island. He has two sons, both lobstermen, and four grandchildren. He was a lobsterman for 60 years. His wife, Marie, was born on November 9, 1932, and moved to Friendship from Gardiner, Maine. She has two sisters. At one time she worked at Hoods, and she considers her main occupation being a housewife. Her hobby is drawing. Steven, the interviewer, now lobsters with his brother on Bernard's boat.*

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

A: I started when I was 13 years old.

**Q: How long have you been lobstering?**

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A: I've been lobstering for 60 years.

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

A: Probably because of my grandfather; he took me on Allen's Island. I went crazy about lobstering.

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

A: I guess I was the captain.

**Q: Did you have someone that lobstered with you?**

A: I use to have a my two boys that went with me; then I had Old Faithful.

**Q: What did Marie do?**

A: She was a helper, and she filled the bait bags, banded the lobsters.

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

A: Yes, it is. My father, my grandfather, and my great grandfather. Everyone in the family was lobstering.

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

A: I guess when I first got married. When it was a good day, I would go out with Bernard. And when the oldest boy was born, when he was just a little baby, I used to put him in the clothes basket, put him up in the bow of the skiff, and we'd go out on sunny days.

**Q: How long have you been lobstering?**

A: I've gone with Bernard for eight years, and before that I would just help if it was nice out.

**Q: Why did you become a lobster woman?**

A: I was living with a lobsterman; I just automatically got into it.

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

A: Sterning person. I filled the bait bags, measured the lobsters, checked for v-tails. That would be anything with eggs on them. If they had eggs, I would put a v-notch in the 3

tail.

**Q: Is lobstering a tradition in your family, Marie?**

A: No, I had never heard of a lobster before I got married.

**Q: Bernard, name all the boats you've had.**

A: I started with a dory. It was 12.5 feet long. Then a 5-horse outboard. Then a 25-foot lobster boat. Then a 26-foot. Then Herald Benner built me a brand new 30-foot lobster boat. Then I went to Beals Island and got a 35-foot wood one built. And the best one I had was a 32-foot glass.

**Q: What were the names of your boats? Why did you name them that?**

A: The first boat I had was named *Vixen*. The second boat was named *Dana R*. The new 30-foot one I got was *Dana R* also. The 35-footer was named after my wife, *Marie Helen*, and the 32-foot glass one was also the *Marie Helen*. They've always had



**Q: What kind of equipment did you have on your boat?**

A: I had a radar, GPS. For safety equipment I had life jackets, horns, bells, fire extinguishers--everything I needed--and hauling gear. I had a hydraulic hauler; she was caged over the wheel (the propeller).

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**Q: Marie, describe your lobster traps.**

A: They're 4-foot long and 18-inches wide, about 13 1/2 inches high.

**Q: Describe how you set your traps.**

A: Well, when the shedders first start, we go in probably 2-fathom, 3-fathom water, and that is 6 feet to a fathom. As it keeps getting later in the season, we keep going off, and we'd weigh off. I used to have 55 fathom of line out.

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

A: We have to move them during the season. We take the short warps off when we fish in winter, and we keep going off in deep water. As the weather gets colder, the lobsters keep moving off. In the summertime when the weather's good, we haul maybe three days. And in the winter probably a week. It could be ten days or even two weeks.

**Q: How many traps do you have, and how many do you pull a day?**

A: When I was fishing, I used to have 600 traps. I pulled 200 every three days.

**Q: Marie, how do you tell your traps from someone else's?**

A: Each one has a colored buoy, and we also have our name on it and the number of our lobster license.

**Q: Bernard, do you use toggles? Explain how they work.**

A: Yes, I use toggles. That keeps the rope from playing on the bottom; it helps out a lot; it keeps it from chafing.

**Q: What do you use for bait? Where do you get it?**

A: I use herring, redfish; and we also use pogies, and I have used flounder racks, and about anything you get is good bait.

**Q: Describe a typical day of lobstering.**

A: Well, we get up in the summer time about 2:30, and by the time we get ready to leave the house, it's about 3:30. And we have to run way down river, and the time we

get down there summertime, the days are long, and it's usually about daylight before we get there.

**Q: How far do you go out in a day? How many traps do you pull?**

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A: Well, I can't say exactly because in the summer you don't go too far, but in the winter you go a long ways. And I usually pull 200 traps a day when, you know, I was fishing. How long? About eight hours probably in the summer, but in the winter, a lot of times you'd leave here before daylight, and you wouldn't ge home 'til way after dark, according to the weather.

**Q: Do you catch any other things in your traps besides lobsters?**

A: Yes, I've caught sculpins, mackerel, flounders, and codfish. Well, you get a lot of crabs, too.

**Q: Tell us a little more about the end of the day.**

A: OK. When we get through hauling, we wash the boat up, get in to the dealer. We sell our catch to a dealer, and he determines the price he's going to pay you. We don't have nothing to do about that.

**Q: What do you haul on a good day and a bad day?**

A: Well, on a bad day I've hauled in the winter time a good many times about 50 or 60 pounds, and, of course, in the summer, if you haul 200 pots, a lot of times I've seen 400 pounds out of them.

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

A: All the fog and the rain and the snow and everything else we've had and fished in it, but it's not a very good time to do it.

**Q: How has lobstering changed since your beginning?**

A: Oh, when I started fishing, and the shedders were out, I got 20 cents a pound. But my father had even got 12 cents a pound, and this summer they're fellas that got \$3.25 a pound. And we used to use wooden traps, and now everything's all wire. There's been quite a big change in the fishing. The same way with lobster boats. They were always wood, they had caulking seams, and now they're all glass.

**Q: What do you like most about lobstering?**

A: I like lobstering because you're your own boss, and nobody behind you to tell you what to do.

**Q: What do you like least about lobstering?**

A: I guess probably the worst I ever had is the fog. Of course, I've been ashore, too. I  
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didn't think much of that. Stove my boat up, but I guess everything altogether, why, probably fog's the worst.

**Q: What do you like most about lobstering, Marie?**

A: I like the early mornings when the sun comes up, and it's nice and warm, and I like getting home early, and getting my work done early. And I enjoyed it.

**Q: Bernard, what kind of problems have you experienced at sea?**

A: Well, I guess a little bit of everything. Probably the Lord was with me the biggest part of the time. He had to be because one time there I got my oil coat button caught in a wooden lobster pot where the lath went together, and I went to push the trap overboard, and then I went out another morning, and I got in a breaker, and the breaker broke the front of my house out, and I went ashore, stove the boat up. The day I got ashore, I said goodbye to my wife 'cause the breakers were going sky high, and I was right in the rocks, and when she laid down, I got out and crawled over the rocks on my hands and knees. I didn't think I was hurt any, but the next morning I was all black and blue. Another boat came in, and they put a line, my boy put a line to another fellow's stern. He got in, and my boy's helper, he got ahold of my hand and said, "You're comin' in over the bow of the boat," and he got me in, and they brought me to Friendship and got me home and got me in a hot tub of water. And from there on, why, we had to haul the boat up, and we hauled her up to Sonny Lash's shop, and that was a \$6000 job.

**Q: Are there any other accidents?**

A: Yes, I've been overboard in a dory down in Flanders Cove. And I've also been overboard in the Damariscotta River, and there was two towing us in another skiff, and, of course, one of the boys is passed on, but the fellow that went overboard with me is still alive, but he's hard shape; he's 78 years old.

**Q: Did you lobster in the winter? If you don't what do you do?**

A: I lobstered every winter 'til I was 50, and then the cold started to bother my hands, and I took and stayed in the cellar and built new traps and repaired my old ones. Had them ready for spring, when we set out again in March.

**Q: Marie, how do you eat lobsters?**

A: Well, I think mostly we just have them boiled and dipped in butter because that's what Bernard likes, and I like it, too.

**Q: How often do you eat lobster a year?**

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A: We only had lobster while he was fishing for them. I never bought them outside, and we had them probably twice a week.

**Q: Thank you for letting us interview you.**