

JOHN FAULKINGHAM 1
Fisherman and Entrepreneur

Date: January 22, 2004
Time: 1:00PM -2:00PM
Location of Interview: Mr. Faulkingham's place of business, East Bay Fishing Supply, Beals Island, Maine

Student Interviewers: Brittany Sawyer **Grade:**12
Martin Alley **Grade:** 12
Misty Jo Blount **Grade:** 12

School: Jonesport/Beals High School
School Location: Jonesport, Maine

Teacher or Parent

Interviewers/Chaperones: Linda Church
Title: Business Technology Teacher

Pam Smith
Entrepreneurship Teacher

Transcriber: Hayley Alley **Grade:** 12
Ashley Fenton **Grade:** 12

Brittany Sawyer: Where and when were you born?

John Faulkingham: I lived down in this field down here. Born in 1941, March 10th, and my mother and father had built a new home out of, well... what they had done was take a home from over on the head of the island with some old lumber that they had, and my father and his brother nailed it together and made the home. They had the bottom part of the house made, but the upstairs, it was wide open and that's where I slept for quite a while. In the winter time it was pretty cool!

BS: Who was the most positive influence on your life in your fishing career?

JF: Well, my father helped me out when I started, but when I went offshore my Uncle Jimmy Beal, James Beal his name is, I used to call him Jimmy. He's 95 years old today. I saw him yesterday. He showed me where to fish because there was no...I didn't have any fathometer or anything at the time. No loran or no, ahh, we used to go out using landmarks is what we did, and he showed me where to fish, and I'd fish right on side of him.

BS: What was your first job?

JF: The first job? I would say digging clams.

BS: Did you like that?

JF: Well, it was fun. It was good to dig clams, but when you started as a young person digging clams you had to learn how to put the hoe on over them, so as not to hoe down through them or you'd scrunch them up. You'd have to dig a little bit and go on over them and roll them over and pick them up, without busting them. But clammin' was fun; course' I went with Uncle Jimmy when I was probably oh' ten or eleven years old, I'd say. I went out with him and did handline fishing in the summertime and he showed me how to split the cod, they were big cod fish, probably ten to twelve pound cod fish and a lot of them. Probably some of them would go... some of them would go between 15 to 20 pounds, big cod fish, monstrous. When you split them open, ...when you'd split the stomach open, there'd be lobster in there. Back in those old times if you got 100 pounds of lobsters you were doing well, real well, through the summer. And I learned right there that the lobsters were in the stomachs of the cod fish. The cod swallowed them and when you opened them up, ...when you'd open the bellies of them, split them open, the lobster would be there and they'd be all... they wouldn't be the dark red, they'd be bright, just like they'd been boiled, because they'd be where the heat was inside. The fishermen used to tell me that "Here's where the lobster was going". Course' they'd be smaller lobsters but they'd be all eaten up. And then when the fish got dragged a lot, our gear was knocked down but the lobsters seemed to increase a lot more then. That taught me a lesson there, that's for sure.

PS: Back to when you were digging clams John, what was the price of clams back then? What would you get?

JF: I do know that when I was probably either a freshman or sophomore in high school, I remember that my Uncle John, which I'm named for, his name was John Beal. That would be my mother's brother and he sold a lot of clams. I sold them for three dollars a bushel, I think it was at the time, and I think he sold them for three dollars and a half. That's what we sold them for then. I can remember digging one morning, cause' I lived with my grandmother then and I left when it was just growing daylight, on a low drain tide. I think I dug three bushel that morning and I think I got... I was thinking three dollars a bushel, and away I went to school. I made nine dollars out of the three bushel and I got them down here, down below where the lobster pound is, outside the lobster pound. Tide was way down, and I saw this place, and I started digging and when you rolled em' over it was good, good clammin'.

.PS: Is there still good clamming there?

JF: The tide was so low that time, I had gone down several times years ago and it was underwater, so it was quite a low tide.. My uncle went down toward one of the western

shores down there, and he probably dug five bushel and he sold them in Milbridge for probably \$2.50 a bushel.

BS: Do you have any interesting stories about fishing?

JF: Well, it had been one of those years. I can remember of going down, ...course' everybody was fishing then, and they were fishing inside, and some of the fishermen told me that they was down inside, they were down in the shoals farther and they asked how come I didn't set in where the shoals were, cause' I was setting in deeper water. I went down the first of August, and I was setting wooden traps back then. I can remember in three days I set 150 traps down in the fog. There was nobody right there to worry about because nobody was there in the ocean, they were all inside. In three days I set 150 traps, and I had the old man with me. The first day we set them, they were sitting five days and four days and three days. Of course it was very foggy days and just the beginnin' of shedder season. We hauled 150 traps and had over 600 pounds and the old man said, "Pretty good fishing!". He said, "If I were you, I would set the last one down on that lighthouse, and after about a month you'll see them drop-off, because I have seen it before". Of course, about close to a month's time, we hauled those 150 traps back up through there and we had 19 lobsters. That's how things can change, that's how it can lift you up or be discouraging. I know one of the guys fishing back then was Marshall Kelley. He just passed away. He was telling me one day when I was over visiting him at the nursing home, he was telling me what I did when I was a young boy. I asked him, "What did I do?" I thought... "Did I do something wrong?" "No", he said, "I was hauling a set of traps and you were setting one out in ahead of me." He said that I realized when the tide went, the flood tide would come right down towards his traps. He told me that I came down and apologized and took the traps and hauled them up. I appreciated his talk. In other words, he wasn't tearing me down about it, he was thanking me for what I did when I was a young boy.

BS: Have you ever had any close calls on the water?

JF: Yeah, I have. I've had several, and that's why I appreciate some of the guys around here. I got a wooden buoy caught in my, ahh... right in my shaft, my propeller. And I was headed right into a bunch of rocks, right in, you know.. heavy seas. We, ahh ...I had to take the risk and open her up and stave things up. I got off far enough so I could throw the anchor, so I saved my life. One of the guys I used to fish with, Archie Alley Jr., he ahh...pulled me off a couple of times when I got hung up, that's for sure. Course' on the other hand, there was a guy that was headed in, he broke down and headed right into a bunch of seas going right into the shore and I went in and grabbed him and towed him out. So we helped each other. That's all I can say, we saved each other. Those things happen though. I mean you would be hauling right along and then next thing you know, you just didn't know what was going to happen or take place. Once we were down through the lighthouse, down through the channel, when a hurricane came up and it was a hurricane sea. I went to go up through by the shore cause' I couldn't get up through the big channel to get in out of the hurricane. My father and I, that year, we lost ahh... I don't know how many we lost. Course' I remember what we had , cause' we had wooden traps

back then. We had 175 traps left between us, and they were all stove to pieces. We had to repair them. And ahh... what I had to do, course' it was foolish, but I had to take a guy with me, so an older man went with me. I hauled in three or four traps and put them down in the stern and he would repair them, then I'd set them out and go haul some more. And we had such a small amount of traps that we hauled them out some times twice, or three times a day, to get enough to make a days pay. That was the day, that was the time, when ahh... my wife knows what year it was, but I can't remember just what year it was now. But ahh ...you remember where you hunted Martin, down here, there was two fresh water streams down to Three Falls. Well, anyway, one of them busted up. The storm busted it right up so that the water run right out. There was a lot of people that went down to see if they could get their traps and there was a lot kelp and rockweed and stuff on the shores. When they got down there, they started to find out it was full of lobsters. The lobsters had washed right in to the shore, and that's why the lobster went so bad, all the shedders went right in on to the shore. That's what we had left for traps, 175 between the two of us.

BS: Can you tell us about some likes and dislikes about working on the water?

JF: Well, of course there's seasons when you might get discouraged, because there's certain seasons when you're trying to fish and make a years pay, make a weeks pay, or just make your payments. There was seasons when we'd do good, then there was other certain seasons when you'd be doing poor, period. So in the summer time when the weather was nice and we was waiting for some shedders to come in, we would probably have to.... there was times we would have to go haul our traps and then come in and go dig some clams so's to make our weeks pay. My wife's grandfather told the story that he and another old man were out there offshore fishing one afternoon. They went probably 20 odd miles offshore trying to catch cod fish. They came in the next afternoon at 4:00 pm and they had one cod fish. They had to go clamming to try to make a living, to try to get some food for their family. You think now, what I am saying, how low you can go. People might say, "I got some good hauls" or, "I have made some good money", but there was times when it was pretty low. It's up and down, but through the year you do the best you can do. My uncle and I, when they first started the worming, we went worming not knowing what we would put them in. We ended up putting them into a metal bucket, and stuff like that, and I think we,... I think he and I were saying we made all day worming three dollars(laughs) three dollars a piece. That was probably in the ...I think it was in the early 60's.

BS: What do you like best, worming or clamming? What do you like better?

JF: Well...I'd rather not do either.... wouldn't want to do it again. I like lobstering better than anything. I use to go shrimping, we'd drag shrimp, and we'd drag scallops, and there was another time that we did other things. We went dragging shrimp one time, which was nice, nice fun. Clamming, digging clams or doing some of those things..... worming it was alright during the summer time, but there were other jobs much better. And course, you can see what happened. I've gone through all of this and now I am lobster fishing, so lobstering is the best thing. The best thing I ever did. Yes, now I'm lobsterfishing. We

didn't make no great big money, there was times when we did all right, and times when we didn't, but we're thankful we made a living.

BS: (laughs) what's the most difficult part about being a fisherman?

JF: Well, as far as a fisherman's concerned, you ahh... you have your freedom and every thing, and most people get along. Sometimes you run into problems with other people, some are our friends and some aren't, you know, but I look at that like.... when you are fishing with other people, ahh... you should be friendly and you should be neighbors. You should work together. I was telling you people before, about Marshall Kelly, when I was a young fella. I (pause) set my first ahh... well, one of my first pairs of traps on the flood tide and I didn't realize they went down toward his. He didn't get mad with me, didn't get upset, he just went down and hauled it. He (pause) he was telling me how thankful he was that I was willing to haul it up and get out, you know, but he was good. A lot of fellas used me good. I think that ahh... I feel we should be friends and neighbors together really, and help each other.

BS: Can you tell us some things that have changed over the years since you've been fishing?

JF: Yes, I can. I can say very plainly what I was telling you earlier. From when we did all right to the times that we didn't but was so thankful we made a living. About the codfish, and ahh... when they used to have the ahh... lobsters in them. You hardly ever see that now, ahh... any time I've seen any codfish now, there haven't ever been any lobsters in them. Of course the lobsters are a lot better, they're catching more these days than what they used to. Another thing is the wooden traps we used back then was ah... they was different. They was light and they used to move over the bottom and we used to have wooden,... wooden buoy's, and sisal rope and ahh... glass bottles is what we had on em'. I can remember of ahh... using a quart bottle, five fathom bottom, sometimes ten fathom, but we didn't have no float rope like we do now, back then, in those times, ahh... things was so much different with the wooden traps. They would go adrift. Now, with the wire traps, ahh... the wire traps hold on bottom and they're better now, they do much better. You're bound to catch a lot.... do a lot better with wooden, I mean with wire traps.

BS: What years did you fish with wooden traps?

JF: When?

BS: What years, did you?

JF: Oh, ahh... I think we started back in the, in the late umm.... probably ahh.. I'd say it was into the seventies when we first started with the wire traps. We started with some that we bought from the westard'. I can't remember exactly.... they was narrow wire traps, they really wouldn't fish like the ones today, but at least we found out that the wire

traps held on better. I'd say by the seventies, the early eighties, we had the good traps. The eighties really, not the seventies; the eighties, because I went out one time and I lost three hundred traps in one year. I had a new boat, thought I was gonna do good. In 1981 I thought I had plenty of traps, and all to once I lost three hundred traps because of a bunch of draggers. They cleaned em out. So I come in and reported it to the wardens and they said they weren't allowed past the 300 mile limit to help me out, so I said, "Well, I'll just do what I have to do." We had come in, my father was with me and Raymond was fishing with me then, and we sailed up along side of one of the draggers and a young boy was there. I sailed in and of course they had them over the top of the drags. I went to get them thinking for sure they would let me have them. They took a knife out and sliced them off and flipped them overboard --it was mighty discouraging. I come in and reported it to see if the warden would come out an' help me. By the time I had got out of there I had lost three hundred traps. We had umm.... seven hundred and forty and we wound up with about four hundred and forty. We had some old traps back here, so that Fall we had to ahh.... we had to patch them up, to get by for Fall fishing. Some other fellas lost traps too, they.... what they did.... it wasn't a matter of some of these guys out here dragging scallops, they wasn't doing this. But these other guys was doing it to clean,... clean them out, they just sailed right through them, cut them all off and let them go adrift, that's what can happen.

Pam Smith: I hate to cut our interview short but we have to head back to school.

JF: yup, sure.

Linda Church: Yes, we have seventh period next,I don't know if anyone else knows the answer to thisbut when you said about the glass quart bottles...

BS: yes, glass bottles

LC: I don't understand.....what did you do with them?

JF: Oh, yup, we made them for toggles, we had ahh.... the ahh.... Bub, what was the ahh...quart bottles of soda we used back then? Oh, if I could think of the name of it, but anyway, it was bottles of soda and we would use them with #6 stoppers. Course' the way we rigged them--we had a pair of wooden traps when we started and we'd rig ahh... five fathom, tie it on one trap, tie it on the other, then we'd go three fathom, then two fathom, so that when they'd come up, one would be behind the other. We'd tie the rope on them and go up probably.... possibly ten fathom, and tie a quart bottle on and then we'd go up to two quart bottles, which we'd have to buy two quart bottles of something. They would ahh... put a rubber stopper in them. We went up to some of the doctor's offices and got gallon bottles that medication was in and we'd use them. On the top we used wooden buoys. When the tide would run hard, or the 12 foot tides would come, and they happened to go under, they'd soak the water and they would be coarse. We had old sisal rope then, no rope like you've got today.

They ahh...had one hurricane out here. My father and Franklin Libby was with me in my boat. We was trying to handle them, we had 15 pairs of traps all in one cluster after a hurricane. We started hauling them up, we had the old haulers, my father took two or three turns around trying to haul it up and all at once the hauler come up off the floor (laughs) and we had to haul them up by hand. It was kind of comical, we brought the whole thing up here to the beach and dumped it out and everybody come up and cleared out their traps. There were thirty traps in that pile and we had to haul them by hand. Those things, was ahh... when you stop to think about it, these things happen when you don't have the equipment you've got today. Radars and ahh... all of your GPS systems, and all of that. Now you just punch them in, put your numbers on, you know, right where you're going and how long you're going to be there-- how long before your going home. Back then you didn't have that, you just didn't know.

LC: Yes, it was rugged back then.

JF: Things are different today. Yep.

BS: In closing, could you tell us something about owning your own business?

JF: Umm,.. well, we started a little store down there (pointing toward the wharf), the only thing is we didn't have room enough for, you know, the stuff in our store. Doris, my wife, had twenty cases of buoys upstairs and the fishermen would come and the buoys would be gone. We'd have to order and try to guess how much to buy. She said, "I want a bigger store." This was a few years ago. I ahh... I guess it was last year, now that I think about it; I went upstairs and checked to see how many buoys she had. Now, instead of twenty cases, she had one hundred and eighty-five cases, (laughs) so she has room for them. This has been a help to us and a help to the fishermen to be able to carry a little more. Now we have room for the stuff we need, and the fishermen have been good to us. They've ahh... .you know, they come to buy their stuff and we work together.

PS: Thank you very much

JF: Okay.