

Interview with Charles Borden [CB]
Occupation: Fisherman
Port Community: Westport, MA
Interviewer: Azure Cygler [AC]
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Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries
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Grays Four Corners, Tiverton, RI

Interview

[00:00]

AC: Ok, so for the record my name is Azure Cygler. It's the 17th of July, 2012, and I'm here with Charles Borden. Do you prefer Charles?

CB: Charles is fine.

AC: Charles is fine, ok. Charles Borden, and we're here at Gray's in...?

CB: Tiverton.

AC: Tiverton, Rhode Island. We're sitting on the rock wall, on a lovely balmy day; very nice. And just to begin, Charles, could you state for the record that you signed the release form?

CB: Yes, I did sign the release form. I signed my life away.

AC: You did. And give me your full name and address, for the record?

CB: It's Charles Remington Borden, and I'm at 38 Mullen Hill Road, Little Compton, Rhode Island, 02837.

AC: And your vessel's name?

CB: *Drake.*

AC: So you have one vessel?

CB: Yeah.

AC: And what's the length?

CB: Thirty-eight [feet].

AC: Thirty-eight feet. And you're in the common pool, is that correct?

CB: I am. Right now, the boat that I'm fishing is not in the sector. I [also] own two other permits that are in the sector, but I don't actually fish for the sector. I don't fish on sector quota. But next year I'm probably going to join the sector. I'm actually getting a bigger boat this fall, and I'm probably going to put it in the sector.

AC: Oh, which sector?

CB: In sector seven.

AC: Seven, which is based?

CB: [It's] the New Bedford sector.

AC: And your age?

CB: Thirty-three.

AC: Thirty-three. And [can you] give me a little context about who you are; where you came from, how you came to be here, how you came to fish?

CB: All right.

AC: Just some of your background information.

CB: Yeah, I mean, my dad wasn't a fisherman, I just sort of stumbled into it. Mostly small boats; I started fishing out of a skiff, and just kind of worked my way up from there.

AC: Out of here, this port?

CB: Out of Westport.

AC: Westport.

CB: Yeah, Westport, Mass(achusetts). And, it's just kind of [been] a progression. I don't know how the heck it happened, but I just sort of slowly climbed up. And it's been going well ever since.

I [started] fishing [in the] summer when I was probably fourteen years old. And then once I stopped going to school, I made it more full time. But I was always fishing at least three to five months, even when I was in school.

AC: Which fisheries were you into?

CB: I started out mostly just in lobster, and then I got into fish potting for black sea bass and scup. Then I got into some more fluke gillnetting, and I went groundfishing for two or three years in the winters. And then, about three years ago, I bought a monkfish permit.

And that has been like two-thirds of my year. More than half of my year, anyways, is now monkfishing and skate fishing. Every year is a little different, but the last three years have pretty much been just monkfishing.

AC: Did you say you went to school beyond high school?

CB: Yeah. Well, I went to URI [University of Rhode Island] for three years, [but] I never wrapped it up. I was there for three years doing a Biology program.

I always knew I was going to be fishing, so I guess finishing school never really seemed too important. And I wasn't necessarily applying myself I guess you would say. So I left, and I never went back.

But like I said, even when I was in high school, I was pretty confident that's what I wanted to be doing: fishing. I used to work summers at random other jobs. Then I'd go fishing in the afternoons, and I'd make more in two hours' worth of work than I made for an eight-hour day working on the golf course, or wherever else I was working. So I realized that that's where I wanted to be, pretty quickly. Not working for 'The Man,' right?

AC: Exactly. So there was the appeal of money?

CB: Yeah, and obviously the lifestyle: being self-employed, making your own schedule, and being on the water. I mean, for me it was pretty much a no-brainer. I guess there were a few times when I was kind of back and forth on whether or not I should come up with some other type of career, but for the most part, I was headed in one direction for quite awhile.

AC: And no family members that fish?

CB: No, but my dad was definitely a big part of getting me into it. We used to lobster out of our small boat together. He was actually in fisheries management, which is sort of another reason why I got into it.

He worked for the state of Rhode Island, and then after he retired, probably four or five years ago, he [started] working part-time for Massachusetts marine fisheries. He has a smaller boat, and he does some fish potting, lobstering, stuff like that. He wasn't a commercial fisherman by trade, but he definitely influenced me to getting into it.

AC: Really? Now, was he a biologist?

CB: [He] started out as a biologist, and just kind of worked his way up the chain. [He] was more on the political side of fishing for the last twenty or thirty years, probably.

AC: Ok, gotcha. Now, are you inshore fishing mostly, or offshore?

CB: We fish anywhere from a mile off the beach to eighty miles offshore. It just depends on the time of year, and what we're chasing.

AC: And is it always you running your boat, or is it you having other people run [it]?

CB: No, I always take it.

AC: Always take it, ok.

CB: I could see one day maybe having someone fill in here or there, but I've never sent anyone else with my boat.

[06:40]

AC: Indeed. I think it's (raining) going to pass because I see the sun.

CB: Yeah, can't last too long.

AC: It's quite lovely, actually. It's just starting to rain.

So tell me a little bit more about this area, your neighborhood. Do you consider it to be a fishing community? [Are] people sort of plugged in with what's happening in fishing?

CB: It is. I mean, there are small parts of both. [You've] kind of got two towns here. Obviously there are fishing harbors all along the coast, but you've almost got two smaller harbors right in this area. They're relatively well linked, because they're so close; but there's Sakonnet, and there's Westport, which I fish out of.

Down at the docks, there's obviously quite a community. But when you get away from the dock, I don't know if people necessarily consider themselves to be living in a "fishing community," although there is a pretty thriving fishing industry. But, it's not like if you were living in Gloucester, or New Bedford, or something. Everybody would think, "Oh, New Bedford, this is a fishing town." Some people think of Westport that way, but...

AC: And how far apart are Sakonnet Point and Westport?

CB: By water, it's probably only six miles; something like that. It takes about a half hour to drive between the two, because you've got to kind of snake around the water.

AC: And what's the advantage for you to have your boat there, versus closer to where you live?

CB: I've always fished out of Westport, even when I was a kid. My dad grew up on the Westport River; he was from Westport originally.

I actually do live in Little Compton, but right on the border; more towards the Westport side of town. There were a couple of points where I thought maybe I would try to get a mooring in Sakonnet, but it just worked out well that I got on the dock in Westport. And you know, it's a really nice spot to fish out of.

AC: It certainly is. This whole area is really beautiful. It seems there's a farming mix as well, [with] some fishing?

CB: Yeah, I think fishing is probably more thriving around here than farming is at this point. There's still some farming. There's a lot of Mom & Pop type of small farms with little vegetable stands, and stuff like that. But as far as any big, higher scale farming, there's not too much left. There used to be a lot of dairy farms around here, but I'd say ninety-five percent [are] gone.

AC: Ok. Could you tell me about your decision to [join] a sector next year; and why you're not in [one] now?

CB: I was in the sector when they first came out, but I wasn't using my groundfish permit. Then they came out with the sector management plan, and I decided to actually buy a second permit, [which] didn't have groundfish [on] it. [That's] the one I have on the boat now. So my current boat is not a groundfish boat, and my other two permits are in the sector. You can keep a permit in the sector and just lease your quota out.

But I think I'm probably going to use my old permit, which does have groundfish, with the new boat; so I'll at least have the option. Maybe a month, or two out of the year I might try and do a little bit of groundfishing. It just gives me another option.

We've been relying heavily on monkfish the last few years, and if they decide they're going to cut monkfish days, or quota, then I [would still] have the option to go buy groundfish quota, and work in the sector. I mean, the idea is to keep busy as much of the year as possible. And the only way to do that is to have options; to stay diverse.

AC: Ok. Now [with] monk, you have pots to maintain?

CB: Monkfish is a net.

AC: Right, so you have two different sets of major gear that you kind of juggle on and off the boat?

CB: Well, it's a seasonal thing; it wouldn't be at the same time. I wouldn't go monkfishing one day, then fish potting the next day.

This year I monked from November to mid-June, then I started fish potting. And I'll probably fish pot until close to November again. Some years I go lobstering too, but this year I'm not. Next year I probably will go lobster.

AC: Are the pots the same for sea bass as they are for lobster?

CB: They're similar, [but use] different bait.

AC: I just picture your yard probably being filled with all these pots and nets.

CB: Yeah, well that's sort of where I just came from. We own a couple hundred fish pots, [and] five or six hundred lobster pots, [so] they do take up some space for sure.

AC: So you have to consider land [space] where you live?

CB: Yeah, well I rent a place now, and I keep most of my stuff at my parents'; behind my dad's tool shed basically. I have a massive trap log back there.

AC: Nice. Much to your mother's chagrin, do you think?

CB: The only time she minds is if it's a big stack of traps that have been in the water for six months, and they smell. They've got weed that's been growing

on them all summer, and I take them out and dump them in the yard. They take a week or so to dry out and stop smelling. If I can keep the odors down, it's usually not a problem; they don't seem to mind. They have a little bit of space around their house.

AC: Good. And your parents have been supportive of your fisheries career?

CB: Yeah, I think so. I mean, they weren't exactly pleased when I stopped going to college, but they never gave me too, too hard of a time. I think they kind of knew that's what I was headed towards. And they've seen [that] I've been a lot happier the last ten years than I was when I was in college. I just didn't really like it. As long as I have a smile on my face, I think they're usually pretty cool with it.

AC: That's a good parent right there. Now are you married; do you have children?

CB: Nope, I'm not married, [and] no kids. So I've been able to do a lot more. Financially, I have a lot less burden with that kind of stuff, so all my money can really go towards the business, as far as buying boats, and permits, and things like that. I'm not paying for a house, or supporting a family at this point, so establishing the business is the number one priority. And then, maybe at some point I'll have to pay for kids or something.

AC: You have to get it all in now, that's right. Now, do you lease your days?

CB: I lease my quota.

AC: You lease your quota. All of it? When you're monkfishing, you're able to just lease all of your groundfish?

CB: The groundfish quota, yeah. I don't have a lot of quota. The quota that I qualified for was, I'd say, ninety percent based on other people's landings. It wasn't groundfish that I had caught and qualified for; it was permits that I bought, that other guys had landings on.

When you buy a permit, their landings become your landings, basically. So I got a handful of pounds of this or that. Enough to definitely make it worthwhile to have the [permits] in the sector and lease it out.

And every year is different; one year I might get "X" amount, the next year it could jump way up. It just depends on how much of those fish are available; [how many] species. But hopefully in the future, I'll catch more of it myself. That's one of the concepts of actually being in the sector with the boat.

- AC: So is there something else that pulls you into it beyond [that]? A sense of connection that you value; or not? Maybe there isn't.
- CB: Not really. I think there's a lot of potential financial gain to be had. A lot of the big sector boats have to make so much money on each trip to make it worthwhile to go [out], whereas [guys] like me have much lower expenses, across the board. [Its] a smaller fiberglass boat with two or three deckhands, compared to an eighty foot steel boat with crazy insurance, six-man crew, fuel costs, and all this stuff. I just think that down the road a lot of the smaller boats will be able to actually, sort of benefit, from having that.
- AC: Less overhead, sort of?
- CB: That's my concept anyway. I don't know if that'll actually happen, but I've heard all these stories of draggers going out and doing broker trip after broker trip; not making any money. They're coming in with forty, fifty thousand pounds of fish, but they're not making any money. [But if] someone like me comes in with forty thousand pounds of fish, I'm going to make money, because my expenses are going to be so much lower.
- AC: Now, do you take crew with you?
- CB: Yeah, I have two guys; sometimes three, but usually just two.
- AC: And have they been the same two guys all along?
- CB: Yeah, I've had one guy with me five-and-a-half years, and the other guy is going on three years this fall. The guy that's been with me for five-and-a-half is actually going back to school, the end of summer, so I'm actually looking for somebody new for the fall.
- But I mean, you can't complain about having a deckhand in the fishing industry for over five years. He doesn't owe me anything at this point. It's been great. I mean, I really lucked out with deckhands. Some guys are just constantly rotating through their crew; taking different guys every other trip. That would just drive me nuts.
- AC: Training them, essentially? The time and all?
- CB: Yeah. If I wanted to, I could leave on a fishing trip, be out for twenty-four hours, and literally not say one thing to my crew, and they would know exactly what to do the entire day. Whereas if you're taking new people, all day you're pointing out, "You've got to do this, do that, stand over here." You

know, as a captain, you want to be able to think about the fishing end of it; [about] catching fish more than dealing with your crew.

AC: Sure.

CB: Hopefully I'll find somebody else that will last another five-and-a-half years, ideally. But we'll see.

AC: Sounds like you have good luck, so there's a good chance.

CB: Yeah, I had a couple of good guys before them, too, so I have been lucky with that.

AC: And did you know them through your short time at school?

CB: No. One guy was just from the area. His cousin worked for me, and he just called me to see if I needed any help. And the other guy that's been with me for five years, he went to school with one of my friends that used to work for me. So, kind of random connections.

AC: Ok, that's good.

CB: He went to UMass, (University of Massachusetts) and he and my deckhand were talking. He just showed interest in it, came down, and has been working for me ever since. So, five-and-a-half years later, he's ready to go back to school.

[19:00]

AC: He's had enough. You're probably a cruel, very strict captain. I can sense that, Charles.

CB: Yeah, I'm pretty rough; a real screamer.

AC: Now, in terms of your social relationships, do you interact with other fishermen regularly?

CB: Well, yeah.

AC: Would you consider your peer-base to be largely made up of other fishermen?

CB: No, I'd say most of my friends are not in the fishing industry. There are a few [though]. I know a lot of people. But as far as who you'd hang out with on

any given Tuesday night or something, it's mostly not fishermen. But I would consider myself pretty good friends with quite a few guys around.

AC: And has the start of sectors influenced those relationships at all?

CB: No, sectors haven't. I mean, other stuff gets in the way of friendships. But no, sectors in general haven't really affected me too much.

I wish I could do more, like the way it was before. It was nice to just be able to go groundfishing for a month here or there, and just burn a few days. With the monkfishing, I haven't really missed it too much.

But, you know, I had to spend a lot of money to get into monkfishing. If I didn't have the means to buy the monk permit, I mean, the sector thing would have really thrown me for a loop. But I was able to invest and get into the other fishery.

AC: So state fisheries aren't much of a base?

CB: What, state waters' fisheries?

AC: Yeah. Sea bass, is that a state-managed fishery?

CB: Yeah, it's a state-managed species, but it's state and federal waters. You know, actual fishing is managed state-to-state. Each state has its own state quota.

AC: So at the time, you said to yourself it's worth it to invest? You said it would be a substantial amount for this monkfishing permit, versus relying on other [fisheries]?

CB: Yeah, either I would've done that, or relied a lot more on lobstering. Lobstering used to be my other big fishery, [but] I've gotten away from it quite a bit over the last few years. I went two years ago, didn't go last year, and I'm not going this year. [But] I am planning on going next year. I mean, things can change, but it's more a lifestyle thing than anything else.

I've made it more of a priority to have relaxing summers, and work harder in the winters. You know, I like fishing in the winter. It sounds crazy, but I actually really like fishing when it's cold.

AC: Not much else to do floating around on land.

CB: Yeah, there's less going on. And it's cool; it's good working conditions, and I just like being on the water in the wintertime. I mean, there are definitely plenty of days I don't like being out there, when it's blowing and screaming wind. But in general, I like the wintertime.

People are always like, "Oh my God, you fish year-round. [That] must be so miserable; so cold out there." And it's really not. [Between] the gear we wear now, the heat in the wheelhouse, and [the fact that] we're always moving, [it's not too cold].

I always tell people, if I was standing, I would be so much colder. A lot of my friends build houses, and if I was standing on frozen dirt, staring at a wall, putting up shingles or something, I would be frozen solid. But on a boat, it's non-stop; you're always moving. It's aerobic; you're never just standing around. And if you are, you're probably just sitting in the wheelhouse where it's warm anyway.

AC: Right. [It] could be a health benefit for you, versus sitting in the pub drinking or whatnot. Winters tend to detract from our activities.

CB: Well, we do plenty of that, too.

AC: Now Charles, thinking about the future, have your long-term life plans changed? Have you shifted how you think about things like [that]? I mean, you're young; but things like retirement, or buying a home, have those changed in the last couple years?

CB: You mean because of management policies?

AC: Yeah, and sectors specifically. They might not have, but if they've influenced that at all. Have you changed any plans because you now have a monkfish permit?

CB: Right. No, like I was saying before, I think having a lot of options is key. If you can lobster, monkfish, groundfish, scup, sea bass, fluke fish, dogfish, [and] skate fish, [then] you've got all these thing going on to keep you busy. If you're busy doing one fishery or another, you're probably going to be doing ok.

There are a lot of guys around that just lobster. If you're just lobstering, there might be three or four months out of the year where you're not making any money; you're almost going backwards. As long as I'm not doing something like that, where I'm just treading water, I usually feel pretty comfortable about it, from the financial side.

My biggest concern is more environmental. If we keep having these warm winters, or if stuff really starts to change climate-wise, I think that would throw me off more than fisheries management. [With] fisheries management, you've just got to be adaptable.

I think a lot of the older guys are less apt to want to shift from one thing to another. They're just kind of set in their ways; comfortable with one or two things that they're doing, and don't feel like they can bounce around. It's hard to get into different fisheries; you've got to take a chunk of money, invest it, and then go out and pay the bills.

A lot of the older guys never had to buy a permit; they [just] had to buy their boat. They basically just wrote down their boat information on a piece of paper, sent it in, and they had their permit. Twenty or thirty years ago, that's all they did. They didn't actually have to make a big investment. So I think it's harder for them to adjust to the newer times.

AC: You've been fishing for almost twenty years, right?

CB: In reality, yeah. Which is kind of scary, I'll bet. I'm glad you said that.

AC: It's not scary at all, in deference to your experience. But even so, like you said, you're younger than the average age at the port. Do you feel like adjusting to management is easier for you, because you've always seen it? Or is it still just as difficult?

CB: I think I just expect it. Every time something new comes out, a lot of guys are like, "Oh my God," whereas I'm like, "Yeah, that's just how it is." Every year there's going to be something.

They're getting ready to do a bunch of trap cuts for the lobster industry. They're going to be cutting each guy's allocation on a percentage basis, and, in certain areas, they're probably going to change stuff like fence size and gauge size. I just expect stuff like that.

I don't wake up in the middle of the night, surprised that they're going to cut traps. It's not something that throws me off. And sometimes I think it's a good thing. Your average guy out there probably says, "It's all bad. All fisheries management is bad; all enforcement is bad." But maybe because I grew up around it, I have a different [view].

I mean, some of it is bad, don't get me wrong; some of the stuff they come out with is just ridiculous. Some of the rules on species that are obviously not

over-fished, [with] really small allowable catches on them, it's just craziness. But a lot of the stuff makes sense to me.

I don't always say that around the dock, because it's not the most popular thought process. But, I don't mind a lot of it. It also gets rid of some of the pretenders in the industry. The guys that are really doing it as a legitimate business are going to survive, and the guys that are just sort of hackers, aren't going to make it.

AC: Right. Do you think your father's involvement helped contribute to your better understanding of management, and necessity?

CB: I think so. Yeah, definitely. I owe him a lot, as far as my perspective and understanding of things. If something comes out, I can just be like, "What is this? What are they talking about?" and he knows, because he is totally tied into it. If not a part of the actual new management measure, his name may be on the document. He can explain to me what the actual ramifications are, or what I need to be thinking about.

He's always looking at my business a year or two down the road. He's thinking, "Well, you might want to do this, because they're probably going to come out with A, B and C new rules. You might want to invest in something now, so that you're in better shape down the road." Which is great; that helps out a lot.

AC: Someone's got your back a little bit?

CB: He's definitely looking out for me. It's good to have somebody looking out for you.

AC: It certainly is, [especially] in this unpredictable business. How about your involvement, Charles, with any sort of management councils, or cooperative research? [Can you] give me a full list of all the things you do?

CB: I've been to plenty of meetings over the years, but I haven't really gotten involved. I never sat on any panels or boards, or that kind of stuff. I think some of that goes back to my father's involvement.

Sometimes I feel like I should just stay out of that end of it, because somebody's going to look at me and be like, "Oh, his father's just feeding him information, or giving him his opinions." That type of thing. I usually just stay clear of that.

If somebody asks my opinion, I'll tell them, but I don't really try to get involved. They have a council, or a team of people, that are assigned to each species in the state; that kind of stuff. I don't really get involved in that kind of stuff.

[What] I've done is more the research side of stuff. I've done monkfish stuff, and I did some tagging for both scup and sea bass years ago. It's been quite a few years since they did any of that. That was through the state of Rhode Island, and we did some stuff through Woods Hole. And then GMRI (Gulf of Maine Research Institute), is sort of like the headliner for monkfish projects.

There are a couple of people in New Bedford [working] on a satellite program for it. We pay them for extra Days at Sea, and that money goes towards their research. The scup and sea bass projects are actually more direct. They pay us with fish, and we set in certain areas, and do the actual measurements with different types of traps and net-less pots.

AC: Have you seen the results from those projects come into action yet?

CB: Yeah, I think some of the stuff we've done with scup has. The scup quota has been going up like crazy, and I like to think we had a small part in showing the size structure and population.

A lot of our research has been based on how draggers can't go into certain areas. If they're going to do a research tow with one of the government draggers, they can't go through one of these stretches of ground that are just rocky, hard-bottom areas. So we've been sampling in those hard-bottom areas, trying to figure out how much fish is actually out there. They could tow right by us on a smooth bottom, and not have anything; [but there are] certain times of the year [when] all of the fish are in the rocks.

AC: Oh, so that's a great supplement to the information.

CB: Yeah. The idea is that they're getting decent information by towing all the spots they tow, but there's probably a lot of fish that they're not accessing. And it also shows them the difference size structure.

AC: Ok, cool. That's a lot of involvement, plus having to maintain your business on a daily basis.

CB: Right.

AC: Ok. [So] what does a day look like for you? I know you said it's seasonal, depending on what you're fishing for. But it's inshore mostly, correct?

- CB: It's a really wide range. [In] the last month, I've been fishing for sea bass, six or eight miles out at the furthest. But up until mid-June, I was fishing forty miles [out]. Before that, I was fishing sixty to eighty miles [out] in the wintertime.
- AC: So [fishing for] a couple [of] days?
- CB: It's usually a twenty-four to thirty hour trip, [with] anywhere from six to ten hours of a ride each way, and the rest of the time [is] hauling.
- AC: So it's an early morning wake up for you?
- CB: Well, we usually leave at night. On those trips, we'll leave anywhere from around dark to eleven o'clock at night, and we get there for first light the next day. Usually we plan on leaving early enough to get there maybe an hour before sunrise.
- AC: Ok. [Now] I know you're not in a sector currently, but do you have opinions on some of the pros and cons of sectors and the common pool?
- CB: Yeah. I mean, I haven't talked to too many people that are actually in the common pool. I think [in] the last couple years, some of the guys here in the southern area have actually done pretty well, because there are so [of them]. They've actually had a decent amount of quota to work on, with something like codfish. And the Days have probably been worth more than what they would have been if they had just gone by their qualified quotas.
- AC: So it depends on how many people are in it, because it's only one chunk of fish? And if there are hundreds of people, they're only going to get a tiny piece of that chunk?
- CB: Yeah. I think the big thing is for each individual guy to decide, "I have 10,000 pounds of quota, or I have thirty days at 2,000 pounds a day, or 1,000 pounds a day, or something." Obviously that guy is going to go with common pool, because he can catch more. But if somebody has 40,000 pounds, and they can catch that in six or eight trips, instead of going every day for a small amount, then that's going to work out. So that's very case by case.
- AC: Ok, so is one more flexible or stable than the other? Or are those not factors that people take into account?
- CB: I'm honestly not sure how well the common pool has been working out for guys. I think some guys have been doing fine with it. And then most of the

big players are in the sectors. But there are still some smaller and medium-sized boats that are probably doing pretty well in the common pool; they're kind of just finding their little niches where they can work on certain species. They're not bound by as many of the rules.

When the sectors started out, they had dockside monitoring, and very high observer coverage. Some of that stuff outweighs the gains of being able to catch your whole quota, [with] shorter and fewer trips.

That's kind of been the debate for me: do I just stick with what I'm doing, which has been great, and just concentrate on the monkfish, fish potting and lobstering, or do I take a little bit more of the BS associated with the sectors. Like I was saying, the observers and VMS [Vessel Monitoring System] coverage; but I may be able to do a little more of the fishing. I'm still not totally decided if I'm going to use the next boat or not. I might just go a year with my current system.

AC: Is there a deadline for you to decide?

CB: No, because the new boat isn't going to be ready until the late fall, so I've got plenty of time to figure it out. A month before it's done, I've got to decide which permit I'm going to use; if I'm going to use my current permit, or my other permit. Time will tell.

AC: Ok, yeah certainly. You'll have to make a decision sooner or later; it will be upon you.

CB: I talk to the sector manager, a woman in New Bedford. She manages sector seven and eight, and she's good. She's married to a fisherman, so she's well-tied into a lot of the issues, and questions; she's been helpful.

I've just been trying to figure out if it's worth the hassle. [It's] basically what it comes down to, and I haven't decided on that yet.

AC: So it's not strictly just a financial decision. It's "Do I want the headache of all these details?"

CB: No, I think maybe it's going to help me slightly financially. So it's like, "Is that little extra bit of flexibility and possible financial gain worth a lot of extra hassle?"

AC: Ok. It's in there; there is a lot of hassle that you guys have to deal with, for sure.

CB: Oh, yeah.

AC: And how about your income; has that increased or decreased at all? You don't have to give me [any] numbers.

CB: It has gone up slightly, or a decent amount, every year. I haven't gone backwards yet.

AC: And to compensate for that, have you put more aside for [the] future, or maybe [for] buying the boat?

CB: Yeah, [for] buying this boat. Mostly I've just been reinvesting everything, either [for] permits, or in this case, a new boat. I'm selling the other one though, so that takes a lot of the pressure off of buying a new one. Hopefully I'll get at least half the value of the new one out of the old one; or close to it anyways.

As far as income, I like to think maybe [I'm] getting a teeny bit smarter, learning the ropes a little more every year. I've been a little more productive fishing with the new permits.

I don't know if this year will beat last year, hopefully it will; but if not, at least it will be close. And every year previous has gone up slightly; can't ask for much more than that. I guess at some point it will probably level off a little bit, but hopefully at a nice high level.

AC: Of course. I hope that for you, too. And how about health insurance; do you have that?

CB: Yeah, health insurance hasn't been too bad. I pay my deckhands as sub-contractors, so they're in charge of their own taxes, their own health insurance, all that kind of stuff. But I do have a group plan for my business, which I am the only member of; and it's been fine.

AC: You're able to maintain that cost?

CB: Yeah. When I came off my father's [insurance], that bridge between college and getting my own, I was paying not quite twice what I am now; one-and-a-half times, at least. And once I figured out this whole group plan, it's been fine. It's an expense, but as far as I am concerned, you have to have it.

AC: And boat insurance?

CB: Boat insurance isn't too bad. For guys like me, with a smaller fiberglass boats, we don't do any dragging, or scalloping. Insurance goes up [with] those types of dragging fisheries, with winches, and things swinging on deck, and that kind of stuff.

AC: They look at all those things?

CB: Oh yeah. So [since] we're just hauling fixed gear, traps and nets, it's really not too bad. It depends how much you actually want to insure your boat for. I'm sure it's going to go up significantly with the new boat. I'll probably put twice the value on it that the other one has, but it's manageable.

I do hear stuff about these guys with bigger boats [who are] paying eighty, or a hundred thousand dollars of insurance, and I'm like, "How does that work?"

AC: It's absurd, yeah.

CB: I can't imagine what a big longliner or something [is like]. It's got to be just ridiculous.

AC: Right. And they're a bit rogue-like, so a lot of them didn't even have insurance. I'm sure they didn't care if we ever came back.

CB: You were fishing on some pirate ships? Nice.

AC: Nice for them, I'm sure. How about some of your personal relationships, in terms of friendships? This study is interested in learning about how those might have changed with the times. I know in some ports there used to be a tight-knit dynamic where people helped each other out. Was it ever the case? Has that changed?

CB: Yeah. I don't know if the majority of the guys down there in Westport like me, but I like most of them.

AC: That's a start.

CB: There's maybe one guy in particular that I don't get along with. But other than that, there aren't a lot of people looking at what the other guys are doing. I've seen that a lot in other ports, where everybody is in everyone else's business.

AC: Is everyone doing the same sort of thing that you are?

- CB: In Westport, there are five of us that go gillnetting for monkfish, and then everything else is primarily lobster. Most guys that monkfish [also] lobster, too. Guys fish around each other, and there is competition, but I've found most guys to be pretty friendly, and get along pretty well.
- I've seen firsthand [in] other ports [that] the fishing industry really leads itself to a lot of jealousy. I guess all business is like that, but it just seems like people get so worked up and jealous; paying attention to what the guy next to them is doing. If one guy is catching more than you and you're doing almost all the same thing, people just get heated about it.
- You hear stories about guys up in Maine shooting each other over territorial issues. I think about that and I'm just like, "Oh my God, how is that even possible?"
- AC: How do you live like that?
- CB: How does it come to that? How do you sleep at night? How do you enjoy getting up in the morning and going down to the boat when the guy that ties up next to you just totally hates everything that you do? I can't imagine that. Like I said, I have had some negative interactions with one or two guys in particular, but [no issues] in general.
- AC: And there isn't [any] sort [of] "You're a sector [or] you're a common pool guy?"
- CB: No, because there's almost nobody in the sectors around here. There's me and one other guy on the dock; we're the only guys in the sector in Westport. And I don't think anybody in Sakonnet is in sectors.
- AC: I don't think so either.
- CB: So, I know around here, it's not really a big issue. Everybody was just like "Well, we didn't really qualify for much quota, so we're not going to even bother with it." I guess there are a couple guys that are in common pool. Some guys just got rid of their groundfish permits completely.
- AC: They just sold them?
- CB: They had monkfish and groundfish [permits]. And rather than have a teeny bit of quota that they couldn't really use, and [have to] go by all the rules of the sector, they had NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) take the groundfish right off their permit. They just got rid of it.

AC: And that's not something they could have just saved? I mean, would you have considered doing something like that? What's the benefit?

CB: I never did, because I qualified for some quota. But I could understand why they would do it, because they hadn't gone groundfishing probably in the last eight or ten years. They hadn't used it. All they got was maybe either a handful of days or a handful of sector quota that they could have used. It just didn't make sense.

Why [would you want to] have a VMS and probably get hammered by observer coverage? Especially us day boats, because the observers love going out with us for sixteen or twenty hours instead of going out with a dragger for six days; you can't blame them. But if you're in a sector, and you're in a small boat like that, you're going to get observers all the time.

AC: So if you have a permit, you have to fall under those rules, regardless?

CB: Right, you still take observers monkfishing. But they only send them with you every once in awhile. You might take a few; maybe two to five times a year. Whereas, if you had a groundfish permit, you're going to be calling in ahead of time [for] trip notification, so observers know when you're leaving. And then they call you up, [because] they already know you're making a trip; whereas [with] monkfishing, you just leave.

You have to call in, but you call in when you're leaving. So they don't know when you're going. They could still call you and say, "When's your next trip? I want to come with you." But it's not like they're notified three days ahead of time, where such-and-such boat out of Westport is going to be going out on a trip.

That's another one of my concerns [about] joining the sector. Do I want to take an observer eight out of ten trips? Not really. It's not the actual observer coverage that I care about; it's just having that extra person kind of rattling around on the boat. Its ok once in awhile, but it's intrusive.

[50:20]

AC: Right. It seems like that would be the hard part of doing business at that point.

CB: If it's like one out of ten trips or something, I don't really care.

AC: How about shore-side infrastructure, Charles, in either Westport or Sakonnet Point? Has it changed; have things closed down? Are there fewer facilities to offload, icehouses, that kind of thing?

CB: We don't have much in Westport. At one time, we had a lobster buyer [who] had his own dock, and two or three boats tied up right [there]. But a lot of other boats were coming to unload. He's been out of business for probably six years; or maybe longer.

Everything that gets done through Westport is done by trucks, whether its ice, fish, lobsters. It's all just trucks coming down to the dock to pick up.

AC: So that hasn't changed much? Sectors haven't influenced that change?

CB: No, it hasn't really changed.

AC: So you have reliable services then?

CB: Yeah. When you're in one of these [small] ports, as opposed to being in a big port like New Bedford, we end up doing a lot of our own. I'll drive to New Bedford, pick up my bait, and bring it back to the boat; whereas a guy in New Bedford might actually just have bait dropped off right at his boat. Or he can pull up to an ice dock and load ice; whereas I've got to go get a couple of vats of ice in the back of my truck, and bring it back. But we're used to that. We've never had that kind of set-up.

AC: And the volume of fish, or shellfish, you're dealing with is not as huge.

CB: Yeah. We'll fill up the back of a big eighteen or twenty foot truck with skates and monks, but we haven't gotten to the point where we're over-filling a truck. Not yet, hopefully soon.

But we can always go into New Bedford if we have a massive trip. It's out of the way; it's probably an hour-and-a-half or two hours to steam back from there. [But] it's not the end of the world; if you had a huge trip, you could go and unload right there at the dock. It's the same guy that I sell to, it's just that the truck comes and picks them up, then drives them over there. He has dock space where boats unload, so not a huge deal.

AC: Ok, so the cost would be a little different for that?

CB: It would cost a little more. [It] would take an extra couple hours of fuel out of the boat, but it wouldn't be the end of the world.

AC: So how do you get paid? Do you get paid directly from the dealer each time you land your fish?

CB: Yeah, I get checks. Well, the guy I sell to in the winter pays me every trip. The guy I sell to this time of year pays me once a week. So if I have two, three, four trips in a week, I get that all at once. But it's like next day for winter trips. There's usually a check there by noon the next day.

AC: Probably makes it nice for you.

CB: We've got no problem with that. [With the] guy I used to sell to, I had to wait three weeks to get my check. It was brutal; gets a little scary.

AC: Oh man, that's like the government.

CB: Yeah. [If you] start chasing checks, it gets a little stressful. Plus [then] you can't pay your crew. I pay on percentage, so I can't pay them until I actually get paid; otherwise I just have to estimate their pay. So down there, I was three weeks behind, and they're three or four weeks behind because they're waiting for me. We like getting our check the day after [now].

AC: Yes. That's fair. [Now] what advice would you give someone starting out today, who said, "Charles, I want to go fishing. What do I do?" What would you say to them?

CB: It would depend on what they were interested in getting into. You'd really have to go work for somebody for awhile. And then you'd have to have some pretty serious money saved up to get into it. You're going to be spending a lot of money on boats, and permits, and gear.

You used to be able to build up, kind of how I did, by fishing out of a skiff, [and] buying a Rhode Island permit; like a state license. You can't buy those anymore. You can't buy Massachusetts permits; you have to buy them off of somebody else. You can't just sign up for it anymore; you actually have to buy it.

When I was starting out, signed up for and bought the permit, and bought a relatively inexpensive boat. Then started out and just built up from there. Now, somebody would have to actually go out and invest quite a bit of money, right off the bat, to get into it. Even to buy a permit for a smaller boat, you're still going to have to spend quite a bit.

AC: Do you see any new people doing that, or is it not happening?

CB: Not really, not recently. Around here, especially in Sakonnet, there are a bunch of guys in their fifties and early sixties [who] have kids that are anywhere from twenty-five to thirty-five. So you almost have two groups, and the twenty-five to thirty-five year-old guys are starting to take over. I guess when some of those guys start having kids, they might get into it twenty years from now. It's kind of bracketed.

Westport has more of a wider range. There are two guys that tie up right near me that both have sons; one's a little younger than me, one's about my age [or] a little older. And they'll both take over businesses.

AC: Ok, so there's some hope for recruitment.

CB: Yeah, there are guys around my age. There aren't a lot of just young [guys]. There are a couple, I guess; people just kind of pop up.

Some guys' kids just don't have any interest in it, too. And they're not going to. The biggest thing now is if one of these sixty-year old guys has a business and it's worth \$400-500,000 dollars, with his boat, his permit and all his gear. Is he just going to give that to his kid? Or is he going to sell it, and have a nice chunk towards his retirement?

When permits were free in the past, you would sign things over slowly. Your kid would start paying to buy your boat [from] you. But now the investments are so high, and the businesses are worth so much, that you'd have to really be the world's greatest dad to start signing over your \$500,000 business to your kid. I guess over time, you can have them pay you, [but] it's not something I have to worry about right now.

AC: Gotcha. But that's interesting. I think that's common across New England, too. There's a question of what the next generation will be [like], or how it will pan out?

CB: Yeah, how are you going to get into something if it's worth that much money? It's going to have to be somebody else; somebody like myself who is going to buy them out, somebody who is already established and is already making good money, or more likely somebody a lot bigger than me. You go into New Bedford, Newport, Point Judith, some of the bigger ports, [and there are] guys that own fifteen or twenty boats. What's it to them to just buy out another one of these small businesses, maybe just get rid of the boat, and take their fishing rights, [and] their quota.

My biggest concern with the sector stuff is I don't see any stop to the consolidation of it. I just see it turning into four companies on the East Coast that own the entire fishing industry.

AC: And you see that starting to happen now?

CB: Oh yeah, totally. It might not happen quickly, because there are still guys that are doing well. But when it comes time to sell out, who are you going to sell to? You're not going to sell out to some eighteen year-old kid that really wants to go fishing.

And you can't blame somebody for wanting to get their money out of it. Unless you've been able to sock away ridiculous amounts of money, and you can sort of tell somebody over the phone.

AC: Just a great guy, one of those nice people.

CB: Well, some people might do that; just find a really good guy, or somebody that's worked for you for five years, and just be like, "Here you go; take it over."

AC: That's certainly not going to be the norm.

CB: That's not going to be the norm. It might happen, but probably not.

AC: The future for Westport then; is it bright, is it less bright?

CB: I hope so. I mean, the dock is full now. There are guys actually waiting to get on the dock spaces.

AC: You're not stacked out four boats like New Bedford?

CB: No, we don't do that.

AC: Let's make it nice; that's awfully stressful.

CB: No, we all have our own spot. It's an incredible spot to fish out of; we all have our own spot, we can drive right up to our boats. It's pretty cool. But it's full; all the slips are taken, so hopefully it will stay that way.

AC: That's a good sign then?

CB: The longer the better, yeah. I worry if, down the road, more of the industry [will] shift to New Bedford, or some of the bigger harbors, [and we'll be] left

with this nice commercial dock, [with] only half the spots full. People in the town are going to be like, "Hey, I want to put my yacht in there. Why can't I rent that spot from the town?" And then slowly we'll just get pushed out of there.

AC: Gotcha. So keeping it full is to the advantage of the industry, in general.

CB: It's important, yeah.

AC: Have there been offers to buy the dock? Has it ever gone up for sale?

CB: It's a town dock.

AC: It's a town dock, ok.

CB: The town owns it, and it's set as a commercial dock. But I think there are provisions in there which say if it's not full, with commercial boats, the town can rent it out to whoever basically. We'll get some big high-top sneaker speedboat or something.

AC: Then there's no stopping it; you'll have your fluorescent-shoed people.

CB: They'll just take us over, one slip at a time. We don't need that.

AC: No way. Could you tell me a little bit about leasing; how it works, how you've ever been involved in leasing?

CB: Leasing days?

[01:02:20]

AC: Leasing days, leasing quota; what's that all about for you personally?

CB: I haven't actually leased anything from anybody else.

AC: Ok, but you've leased out?

CB: Yeah, I've leased my quota out the last couple of years. I guess its only been in effect two years, so the last two years.

AC: And is it every year? Annually you lease it out in one bulk, or do you do it monthly?

CB: I've leased my quota in one shot, but you can do it any way you want. You can lease it out a thousand pounds at a time, or try to get one person to buy the whole thing. A lot of guys have been leasing groundfish days, because they can use [them] for say, skates. If you lease a groundfish day, you can do a regular skate trip. And groundfish days have been really cheap to lease, [probably because] there are so many guys in the sector they don't need them. Or, probably twenty boats went into the sector, but only three of them are actually catching the quota; so all those days are still available. I mean, you can lease a groundfish day now for \$30.

AC: But that's not to your advantage, because you're the leaser.

CB: Well, it doesn't help me because I'm not groundfishing with the actual boat that I'm fishing. But if I do put the other permit on the boat, then I'll be able to. Say I run out of my monkfish days for the year, I could lease groundfish days and just go skate fishing, or that kind of stuff.

AC: Ok, so you don't rely on the days that you're leasing to someone else as a part of your income? It sounds like you don't make much, right?

CB: I don't actually lease days, I just lease quota.

AC: So quota and days are different?

CB: Yeah, it's two separate things.

AC: But in terms of leasing, does it operate in the same way that you independently seek out someone to lease your quota to?

CB: In my case, it's all done through the sector. I'll say, "Alright, I want to get 'X' amount of dollars for these three species." And she puts it out in a mass e-mail. I think it's three steps. I think it goes: everyone in my sector for three days, then it's like four or five days of this other partition of sectors, maybe it's New Bedford sectors? And then it goes out to everybody; something along those lines.

AC: So you don't have to deal with making that transaction specifically, you just say, "This is how I want it done."

CB: No, I just look at the quota, and I generally figure out what prices I want to get for each thing, and come up with either price per pound, or total amount for the entire thing. And then I put it out there to the other boats, and see if anyone takes it. If they don't take it, [I'll] lower the price, and put it out there again.

AC: Ok, so there's not an individual relationship with someone that you lease to regularly?

CB: You can do that; I just don't know [how] many of the guys are the ones actually catching the fish. I know a couple of guys that drag out of Point Judith relatively well. But I don't even know most of the guys in my sector. They're mostly all draggers.

There are three of us gillnetters in my sector, and the rest are all draggers. And I'm not really tied into the dragging industry that well. It's all New Bedford. It's a New Bedford fleet, and it's just guys I don't ever really deal with. Like I said, I know a handful of guys.

So basically it goes out to them, and hopefully somebody bites on it, and picks it up. I don't even remember who I sold it to this year. Oh, yeah I do; it took me a second.

AC: Do you think this whole sector management process was fair? Was it a raw deal, or was it workable?

CB: I think they should have taken [other things] into account. There are a million different ways you can look at it. They used a wide range of years, but they didn't come very close. They went to 2006 maybe, but they actually did it in 2009, 2010; so you had three years where it didn't matter what you caught, that didn't help you at all.

So [for] somebody like me, I actually did a decent amount of codfishing those couple of years, [but] it was irrelevant; it didn't matter. That codfish didn't count at all. Like I was saying earlier, all the quota that I qualified for was based on other peoples' landings. So that was one problem I saw; I thought they should have used more current years.

I also thought that they probably should have taken into account vessel size; maybe used some of that in their equations.

[And] give something to everybody. Based on the fact that you own a permit, you probably bought the permit, maintained the permit, and should have some rights to that fishing, because of your investment; [regardless of] whether or not you're working on it. A lot of groundfishing has been down over the last decade or so, so guys went and did other things. So you're penalizing the guys that went dogfishing, monkfishing, skate fishing, lobstering; fisheries that were in pretty good shape. You penalize those guys for actually diversifying, and trying to work on species that were in good

shape, [while] you reward the guys that were just continuing to pound on the groundfish stocks. To me, that seems kind of silly.

The same thing happened with lobster, too. They issued us trap allocations, and the guys that were pounding on the lobsters got the most trap allocations. In some ways, that's how it should be, because they have the most invested in it. But I think there should be some balance there. Like, all right, you own the permit. You spent the money and bought that permit, you should get at least something.

A lot of guys with groundfish permits didn't get anything. So, they're totally out, unless they want to join a sector and buy all their quota; which they can do. But if you didn't qualify for anything, you don't feel like you really have any part in the groundfish industry. And the guys that were working on it year-round got the big chunks.

AC: So it was a straight shot? It was based on this particular set of years, this history, that's it?

CB: That's all they did. I think they took a ten-year stretch, [saw] you caught "X" number of pounds of each species in that time, divided it by ten years, [and] you got a percentage of the total allowable quota. No other factors; they just didn't use anything else.

Some guys loved it, because it worked out great for them. Everybody's opinions in the fishing industry are going to be almost exclusively based on how it affects them directly. There are very few people that are going to say, "Oh well, I got screwed out of this, but it actually worked out pretty well in the big picture." Some guys would admit some of that, but obviously most people are going to be thinking from their own perspectives. Everybody's got their own side to it, I guess.

AC: That's true. Hopefully if there are enough people saying one particular effect has been more prominent than others, then that's what these social impact assessments will show.

CB: That will be interesting.

AC: Yeah, I'll keep you posted. How about your general outlook on life; your overall sense of well-being? Has that changed? Is it better or worse; has it not changed at all?

CB: I think it's been good the last few years. Definitely as far as my business relates to the rest of my life, I think things have been good. It's been a good

industry for me to be in, having the flexibility of taking time off when you want. As a captain, you have to set rules for yourself, as far as when you're working, but you still have some flexibility. [You can say], "Oh, my friend's having a party on Saturday night. [So] we're not going to leave on Saturday night to go fishing; we'll leave on Sunday night."

AC: That's nice, for sure.

CB: Yeah. As far as how fishing has affected my personal life, it's been good.

AC: You feel like you can still have a bit of a life outside of being on the water.

CB: I think so. And I've stayed away from any of the real offshore, weeklong, two weeklong trips. I don't have that much interest in it. It's never been a draw to me. Some guys would want to get out there, and prove that they can do the long trips. It doesn't really attract me at all.

AC: So you maintain a strong connection to the land still? That's a good thing, I think.

CB: Yeah. If I'm home at least every other night, then that's a good thing. A lot of times, we'll leave at night, be gone through the next night, and get in that next morning. So you'll be gone from home for two nights, but you're really only gone for one day in between. So you don't really feel like you're gone that long.

AC: [So] there isn't a stack of bills on the front porch when you get home, [just] a couple of days' [worth of] mail.

CB: I don't have to have somebody check the house, make sure the heat's on, or anything like that. It's not that kind of lifestyle.

AC: You've chosen it that way; you've structured it that way.

CB: I just don't know how people really ever settle into their life if they're home for three days, gone for ten days, home for three or four days, gone for ten days. By the time you relax and get back into your lifestyle, seeing your friends and family, it's already time to leave. You've already got that next trip in the back of your mind. For me, that wasn't really what I was after; not why I got into it.

AC: Now, have any health issues arisen from fishing? And that health could be physical [or] mental; issues that you've experienced, or you've seen in your community?

CB: It definitely takes a toll on you at times; just physical aches and pains. But so far, nothing too major. There is definitely a burnout rate in the fishing industry. People just get worn out, both mentally and physically.

I think that's one of the sidebars to our last conversation. If you still have that lifestyle, and you come home every couple of nights for a couple days and you're able to recuperate and relax, then your longevity in the fishing industry is probably going to be a lot greater than if you're fishing ten days non-stop. Your body or your mind never have a chance to rest up. You're just going to be exhausted the whole time. When you come home, you're going to be bouncing off the walls. Then [you] go back out, and [you're] exhausted again for ten days.

I see a lot of guys drink, a lot of guys smoke weed, [and] there's definitely a lot of pills in the fishing industry; various other narcotics.

AC: Has that always been the case, or is that changing?

CB: I think so. If you go back to the whaling days, they were getting hammered when they were in port, so I don't think it's anything new.

AC: But you do see it?

CB: Yeah, it's there. It's always been there, as far as I've known.

AC: Have sectors changed that?

CB: Sectors haven't changed much around here, but in New Bedford they probably put a decent number of guys out of business, because they just don't have the quota to go [fishing]. So some of those captains and crews are probably sitting at the bar, wondering what happened.

But as far as around here, it really hasn't affected this community too much.

AC: Ok. [Just] a couple more questions, Charles, and then I'll let you get out of frying in the sun. Oh my God, we're going to have a half a tan on one side.

CB: Yeah, it feels good; I'm working up a sweat. [But] there's much more breeze here than back where I'm working on traps, in the trees.

AC: Oh jeez, put the sprinklers on.

So, like you said, sectors haven't been a big factor here in this port. But if you could go back in time, and remove them a management tool, would you do that? And what would you replace it with?

CB: You mean just get rid of sectors in general?

AC: Yeah. Is there a different way you would want to manage the groundfish fishery?

CB: I think they could've tweaked the Days at Sea program, and made that better. They could have allowed more flexibility, where you were allowed a thousand pounds of cod a day. These draggers don't really know what they're going to catch until they bring it up to the stern. [So if] they catch five thousand pounds, allow them to just burn five days and come home. To me, it was always why not just associate each day with pounds? And if they want to use five days' worth of poundage with one shot, just let them.

They're actually allowing us to do that with monks now. We can round our trips off. So if I go out, and [catch] two days' limit, I [can just] call in, and they round me off to two days.

So, I think stuff like that would have worked, and [helped] avoid some of these extra costs associated with the sectors, the sector managers, the extra observers. Originally, I thought that would have been a good way to do it. And then if they were going to go down this quota road, I would have rather seen them do a straight-up individual quota. Just say, "Here's your quota. You've got this amount of pounds; you can catch it however you want. [And] you don't have to catch it. You can trade and sell amongst other boats, but you don't have to be locked into these little groups."

They set it up so technically the sector has that quota, [but that's] not really the case. It really is associated with each permit. But that was just their way of getting around some of the rules of ITQs (Individual Transferable Quota). They put a sector label on it, but it's really just the same thing as an ITQ. It just allows people to shift quota around a little bit easier amongst themselves than it would be if it was ITQ.

I mean, it could still work out. I think the way that they did do it could be adjusted certain ways to work out all right. But I think a lot of people probably get totally knocked out in the process. At least when we had Days at Sea, everybody that owned that permit had equal rights. We had our own allocations of Days at Sea already. I don't even remember what I had now, probably thirty days; some boats had forty.

If they had just kept us with some type of modified Days at Sea system, at least we'd still have what we bought originally. Most people bought their permits based on the Days at Sea. Like I said, "I'm going to buy this groundfish permit because it has thirty Days at Sea, and all these other species on it." And then they totally changed our currency. They took something that you thought you were buying, and they turned it into, in a lot of people's cases, [something] worth absolutely nothing.

I wish they would have just taken a Days at Sea system, and continued to modify it year by year, to try to make it more efficient. Cut down on the by-catch, allow people to bring in bigger trips. Use five days' worth of cod, but call it in before you hit the dock. Notify whatever enforcement or dockside people so that they can come down, check it, [and] make sure what you're unloading is actually five days', and not seven days' worth. Something like that.

The problem with a lot of this stuff is that the enforcement really isn't there. So it's kind of just penalizing the honest guys; a lot of guys will just bring in whatever they want. In New Bedford, there is a decent amount of enforcement. But in smaller harbors, there's hardly any coverage at all. The only people that you're affecting are those that are actually playing by the rules.

AC: The good guys. I've heard that as well, quite a bit. [Now] is there something I haven't asked you that you'd want to add for the record? A story, or maybe an experience that stands out to you that epitomizes being a fisherman? Or something along those lines?

CB: I can't think of anything right offhand.

AC: Something that makes you love [fishing], [and] stay in it in the hard times? Is there something that keeps you going in particular, as doubts cross your mind?

CB: I think [with] my personality type, I need a certain amount of physical abuse to be happy, if that makes sense.

AC: Well, you're in a good trade then.

CB: So, even if I'm not catching as much as I want to be, or if the weather is bad, I still know that I'm going to come home after the trip and feel good; because I kind of need that.

AC: The World Wrestling Federation wasn't taking any new recruits?

CB: Yeah, I could have done that. That probably would have been good for the abuse. I would have had to go for a run or to the gym for five hours after work if I had an office job. It's just a personality trait; the more tired I am at the end of the day, the better I'm going to feel. That's definitely been one thing that keeps me in it through some of the harder times, because I know I'm just suited for it.

AC: Hence the wintertime fishing?

CB: Yeah, love it. Love that wintertime fishing.

AC: It's all making sense. So that's what keeps you going, the physical aspect of it. It's a big part.

CB: Yeah, I think so.

AC: The physical [component].

CB: The grind. Yeah, I need it. Sometimes it hurts, but it always pays off at the end of the day. If I take a week or two off, and I'm not really replacing that with something else – which is hard to do – I won't feel as good as I would after a fishing trip. Just feel pretty good about life. There's nothing different about my life, it's just the fact that I've been getting my ass kicked for the last thirty hours, and I happen to enjoy that in some weird way.

I think I found the right career, at least for now. Maybe in ten [or] fifteen years I won't be quite as keen on that; but at this point in my life, I kind of need it.

AC: Excellent. Well, thank you for your time. I'll just close that we're here at Grays in Tiverton, Rhode Island. I'm here with Charles Borden, and it's the 17th of July, 2012. Thank you for your time!

CB: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

[01:27:20]