

Interview with Carl Buchard [CB]

Occupation: Fisherman

Port Community: Exeter, NH

Interviewer: Azure Cygler [AC]

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Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries

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INDEX: [minutes:seconds]

McDonalds; Exeter, NH

Interview

[00:00]

AC: Well to begin, my name is Azure Cygler. And I am here with Carl Buchard at McDonalds, in Exeter, New Hampshire.

CB: Yeah!

AC: A great spot.

CB: Have a happy meal.

AC: Now for the record, Carl, could you say that you [have] read and signed the release form?

CB: Yes, I did.

AC: Ok. And could you give me your full name and residential address?

CB: Carl Edward Buchard; Exeter, New Hampshire.

AC: And your homeport when you were fishing?

CB: Hampton, Hew Hampshire.

AC: And what was your vessel's name?

CB: *Stormy Weather.*

AC: And were you in a sector or the common pool?

CB: When sectors started, I had the boat in the common pool; however, I had a couple of other permits, so I leased that quota to other members.

AC: Ok. And [do you have] any family members that are in fishing?

CB: No.

AC: And how old are you, if you don't mind my asking?

CB: Seventy-two.

AC: So to begin Carl, just give me a general context of yourself; where you're from, how long you've been here, your family structure, that kind of thing.

CB: Born and raised in Exeter, New Hampshire; been here seventy-two years. [I've] got a wife, three children, and ten grandchildren. I started fishing commercially later in life. I was probably about forty-five years old when I decided what I wanted to do with my life, and I started fishing.

AC: And what made that decision for you?

CB: Well, I was always an outdoor type of person. I got involved in lobstering at first, and then groundfishing.

AC: What year was that?

CB: In the late eighties, 1985; something like that.

AC: And what were you doing before that?

CB: I owned a service station; a gas station, a car wash. I enjoyed getting out.

AC: Did fishermen come into that gas station that you became acquainted with?

CB: No, not really. No, [it was] just something I decided I'd like try. I met some folks and got involved.

AC: So you were going in with no friends or family in fishing; just had to break in?

CB: That's right, I had to learn it myself.

AC: Wow. And did you buy a boat right away, or work as crew?

CB: Yeah, I [just] started. I never worked as a crew member on a boat. I started with a small boat, and then a little bigger one. And then I started dragging.

AC: Ok. And how about your education? Did you do any college?

CB: I graduated from high school.

(03:10)

AC: Ok. And what kind of fishing have you been involved in? You started with lobstering and then from there, did you diversify?

CB: Groundfishing, shrimping, tunafishing, lobstering.

AC: And was it inshore, or offshore?

CB: Always inshore; never went offshore. The furthest we've ever gone was thirty or forty miles I guess.

AC: So home the same day?

CB: Home the same day, off the following day is the rule.

AC: So two days?

CB: A day boat.

AC: A day boat, yeah. Now you said you are currently retired?

CB: Yes.

AC: Could you tell me a little bit about that decision? How you came to decide to retire, and when you did?

CB: Like I said, I am seventy-two years old. And I was probably sixty-five, sixty-seven when I started getting messages from my wife that I should think about retiring soon. And I heard it a few times. So one day I said to her, "I'll retire or put the boat up for sale when I turn seventy."

And quite honestly, I didn't expect to live to be seventy. My father and my brother both passed away at sixty-eight, so I said, "I don't have to worry about. If I make it to seventy I'll retire." Well, all of a sudden I'm seventy years old, and I have to make good on the promise to my wife.

AC: All that good clean living, it worked against you, in that regard?

CB: Yeah. So anyway, I put the boat up for sale, and it happened to coincide with Amendment 16 and the beginning of sectors.

AC: So what year was this?

CB: This is about three years [ago]. Well, I actually sold the boat last November. Sectors started in 2010, I believe. So that year I put the boat in the common pool and leased quota from additional permits that I had purchased.

AC: And were you fishing it? Were you the captain?

CB: I was the captain, yeah. I never let anybody else take my boat; I always ran it myself. And always owned my own boat; never worked as a crew member for anybody.

AC: So what was the day of your last trip, do you remember?

CB: Are you looking for the date?

AC: Well, was it in the spring, or summer, or fall; and what year?

(06:11)

CB: Well, I did a research project in the spring or summer of 2011. We did a project with the University of New Hampshire, tagging wolfish. And I did a project with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, with an experimental topless net.

I enjoyed doing those research projects, very much. I learned a lot. The topless net was quite successful. We cut back our catch of codfish by fifty percent, which was our goal. It's not something that somebody [would] want to use all the time. But if you don't have a lot of cod quota in an area, [but] there's a lot of flounders there, this is a good net to use. Just another tool in the research box.

AC: So your last day on the boat was actually doing research versus fishing?

CB: It was. I'm going to say [this was] late June of 2011.

AC: So at that point were you doing more research than commercial fishing?

CB: Oh no, I always tried to do one or two research projects a year. But a project is typically a day to ten days. At the height of it I was on the water close to two hundred days a year.

AC: That includes research and commercial fishing?

CB: Between shrimping, groundfishing, tunafishing, whatever; I was on the water close to two hundred days a year.

AC: No wonder you were getting those elbows from your wife after thirty years of that.

CB: Anyway.

AC: Did you say you had crew members with you?

CB: Always one, and sometimes two. I almost always hired an extra person when we were doing a research project, to ensure that the projects went smoothly and swiftly.

AC: And were these always the same guys?

CB: The last fellow worked for me for five or six years, I think. I didn't have a big turnover. Usually when I picked up the extra guy, it was somebody that owned another boat who didn't have enough Days at Sea to fish all the time, or didn't have enough quota. It worked out well.

AC: And did sectors influence the availability of crew, or the changeover of crew at all?

CB: I was getting out at the time when that might [have] happened.

AC: Tell me a little bit about your neighborhood. Exeter isn't right on the water, is that correct? It is a little ways away?

CB: We're twelve miles from the ocean. I tied up in Hampton Beach, and that's a big tourist area. During the summer, there's a tremendous amount of traffic there. But in the winter, like all beach areas, you can drive across it. So it's a fifteen, twenty minute ride from my home.

AC: So would you consider it a fishing community at all? Are there other fishermen that live that far away because it's a tourist area?

CB: You know, it's not a big commercial port. So there's more lobstermen than anything else. They have probably a dozen commercial boats working out of Hampton.

AC: Ok. And that includes guys doing groundfishing, shrimping, lobstering...?

CB: Well, lobstering added to it quite a bit; but [there's] probably a dozen boats that went shrimping and groundfishing out of that harbor. They're all small boats; under fifty feet.

AC: Inshore day boats?

CB: Inshore day boats, yeah.

AC: No big boats were ever out of Hampton?

CB: I was probably the largest boat at forty-five feet.

AC: And Hampton Beach is officially the port name?

CB: Well, for the record, we always said Hampton, New Hampshire.

AC: If you could tell me a little about your social life; do you consider fishermen as friends in your social networks, or not? And how has that changed over time for you?

CB: I would say more fishermen than anything else. These are people you are associated with. So yeah, I would say fishermen.

AC: Are they groundfishermen exclusively, or is it a mix?

CB: It's a mix, but more groundfishermen.

AC: Because that's what you know, and that's who you...?

CB: Right, those are the people you talk to on the water everyday.

AC: Did the onset of sectors in 2010 influence that at all? Did that change your social circles?

CB: Well, maybe a little bit. In 2011, I was on the Board of Directors for Sector Two, out of Gloucester. I was home-ported in Hampton, but I joined the sector in Gloucester. I felt there was better opportunity to lease the quota from my extra permits in the Gloucester sector than in the New Hampshire sector.

AC: Ok. Tell me more details about that. So you were in the sector for a while, and then switched to common pool? Can you lay all that out for me; how and why you did those things? What made you decide to join a sector or not?

CB: The government almost forced you to join a sector, because there wasn't enough fish in the common pool to [keep it] viable. You pretty much didn't have any choice, whether you wanted to join a sector or not. I kept the boat in the common pool because I knew it was only going to be there for one season. And I only intended to fish a few months that year anyway. That was the transition year into sectors.

The Days at Sea, that we were in prior to sectors, were being ratcheted down; from unlimited fishing, to 128 days, down to 88 days, 78 days, 48 days, and so on and so forth. In order to fish fulltime, you had to buy a permit and lease the days to yourself. With Amendment 13, we could lease days to ourselves, and stay fishing. Most of the serious fishermen bought out other fishermen, so we could have their Days at Sea to lease to ourselves. That was the currency, Days at Sea.

Amendment 16 came along and said, "That's no longer the currency; the currency is now quota." It was a very political battle in the Council, as to how the quota should be established. They basically said the Days at Sea we had were like Confederate money; no longer valid.

I personally spent \$350,000 to buy additional permits, so I could continue to fish under the Days at Sea system. Those particular permits had little or no value when Amendment 16 came into play, because they had very little catch history from 1996 to 2006, the period that qualified groundfishermen. This was a very raw deal; much like insider trading. People go to jail for insider trading, and this was a very similar thing at the Council level. Politically oriented, all legal; but certain groups got what they wanted, and to hell with the rest of the fishermen.

AC: So when you heard that, you said, "Ok, I have to join; I have to put the *Stormy Weather* into a sector?"

CB: I had to.

AC: Because...?

CB: Because I was due for retirement.

AC: Ok, so you were thinking of retirement?

CB: It just happened to happen when I was turning seventy years old, and was time for me to retire. I put four of my permits into the sector, to lease off the quota. And I took the weakest of my permits, put it on the boat, and fished it in the common pool. By the weakest, I mean the one that had the least amount of quota to it.

AC: And what are those four permits that you still have?

CB: What are they? They are groundfish permits.

AC: It's groundfish? So all four are groundfish permits. This probably sounds really stupid, but why four permits when you have one boat?

CB: Because Amendment 13 allowed us to lease Days at Sea to ourselves. So the boat that I was fishing, the *Stormy Weather*, could lease Days at Sea from these other permits that I had purchased. That was the currency. That's the way we were doing business. Anybody who was serious [about fishing] bought extra permits, because you couldn't make a living on forty days a year.

AC: And those permits were extremely expensive.

CB: Extremely expensive; permits started at \$100,000.

AC: At that time you could go to NMFS [National Marine Fisheries Service] and buy a permit?

[17:00]

CB: No, you couldn't buy it from NMFS; you had to buy it from another fishermen who chose to go out of business. Somebody that had qualified earlier for Days at Sea, enough to buy his permit; he went onto another job, pounding nails or whatever he wanted to do.

AC: So each permit was a piece of paper that came with a certain amount of quota for Days at Sea?

CB: The permit when we bought them came with Days at Sea. And then that got converted to quota with Amendment 16.

AC: That's why you're saying you were left out. I see, ok.

CB: There should've been some kind of a conversion from Days at Sea currency to quota currency, and there was not.

AC: There was no accounting for Days at Sea in the equation of who gets what for quota, for sectors?

CB: None, whatsoever. Had nothing to do with how many Days at Sea you had; only had to do with the quota that was attached to the permits you owned. And the insider groups, that knew this was coming, made certain that they purchased permits that had good quota in the years that would qualify.

AC: Right, of course.

CB: I would call it something similar to insider trading. There was no guarantee that it was going to go this way. It was an open process; had hundreds of meetings about it. But when all the dust settled, [only] a handful of people got their way.

AC: And which sector were you forced to join?

CB: I joined Sector Two; the Gloucester trawl sector.

AC: Was that because it was closest, geographically?

CB: Not because it was closest; the one in New Hampshire was closer. But the New Hampshire trawl sector ended up with only three or four members, I believe. It was so small they had to merge with the New Hampshire gillnet sector, so there would [have been] very little opportunity to lease my quota. So I joined the Gloucester trawl sector, where there were seventy-some-odd members; many of them with large vessels, who had more capital to lease quota.

AC: And was that process straightforward; did they accept you willingly, or was it hard to get in?

CB: Oh, yeah. Well, there were people I'd known through the fishing business for years.

AC: Ok, so it was just a matter of calling up and saying...?

CB: I had fished out of Gloucester during the winter months for the last five or six years, because it was closer to the fishing grounds in the winter.

AC: So you would tie up in Gloucester?

CB: Yes, I tied up in Gloucester during the winters, for the last four or five years.

AC: Now, how have your families' long-term life plans changed over the last few years? I mean, obviously you've decided to retire; that's a big change. But it also sounds like that just happened to coincide with what was happening with sectors. Were any of your plans to retire, or other life changes, attributable to sector-based management, or not?

CB: Well, like I said, I had promised my wife I'd retire when I turned seventy. The fact that sectors happened to fall into that year was just a fluke accident, or whatever you want to call it. I don't think that affected family life very much.

AC: And would you say your quality of life is better or worse? Or has that changed at all in the last couple years since sectors started? Again, this is difficult because you've happened to go through this big life change. But if you could distinguish or separate out components of your life, would you say overall quality of life has changed since sectors?

CB: Probably. It created more uncertainty. Like I said, I was going to retire when I turned seventy, had sectors not come along. I would have simply sold my boat and permits for current value, and that would have been that. But now, with the sectors, I sold the boat and retained the permits. And I leased the quota, so last year was a pretty good deal for me.

This year, quota is selling for far less. It's still ok, [but] I have great fear that next year we'll probably be at the soup kitchen. We're talking an eighty percent reduction in the Gulf of Maine cod. That not only means fishermen can't catch as much cod, it means I can't lease eighty-percent of my quota. So even though I'm retired and out of the fishery, there's as much uncertainty for me as there is for anybody that is fishing.

If I had sold everything a couple years ago, when things were at their height, I might've been better off. That's kind of like if you sold a house five or six years ago, when the housing market was at its peak, you'd have done all right. But if you happened to buy something at that time, and you're still holding the mortgage, you're way underwater. So I guess the answer to your question is, it creates a lot more uncertainty for me.

AC: So essentially leasing those fish is your retirement account?

CB: Yes.

AC: And you can only demand so much of a price for that fish, based on what the market is doing. I mean, people are only going to pay what they'll pay. So like you said, eighty-percent less fish to lease, essentially. Now is it the same person, or people, that you lease to? Or does that change on a regular basis?

CB: No, that changes.

AC: So you're not committed to one...?

CB: No, not committed to any one person. I don't think I've sold anything to the same person [for] two consecutive years. We're only into the third year of it now.

AC: And how often does it change? Is it each trip?

(25:00)

CB: You get your quota for the year. And you can lease it all at once, or in blocks of fish, or species of fish; [for] any amount that you want to make a deal for. Not everyone wants to buy 50,000 pounds of cod. Somebody wants to buy 5,000 pounds of cod, depending on how fishing is [going].

Last year, there was a lot of codfish around, and people were paying good money for codfish. This year, there's a lot less codfish around. And they're not willing to pay that price, because they don't know if they're going to catch them. And if the fisherman who's leasing quota to supplement his own fish, doesn't catch them, it's money lost to him.

On top of that, the worst part of leasing, for the person trying to catch the fish, is the discard rate and the accountability measures that are associated with Amendment 16. Your discard rate for Gulf of Maine cod and yellowtail is factored in. Whether these guys catch the fish or not, they got to buy discards. I don't know exactly what the discard rate is on each individual species. But if you buy 5,000 pounds of Gulf of Maine cod from somebody, you're not going to be able to go catch [all] 5,000 pounds, even if they were all there. Because every time you go fishing, they automatically deduct a discard rate from you.

AC: Is that [what] they call the 'Assumed Discard Rate?'

CB: Assumed Discard Rate, based on the total catch onboard. Even if you didn't catch a codfish during that trip, you're going to get charged for discard on codfish. And if you're paying a dollar a pound for that, that's a dollar a pound you're paying to discard fish that never came on the boat!

AC: Is that unless an observer is on board? Because if an observer witnesses, they adjust that, right?

CB: If an observer is onboard, it's what you actually caught. If there's no observer onboard, it's the Assumed Discard Rate. And on the subject of observers and mortality: when we don't have an observer on board, we're much more efficient. We're much quicker getting the fish overboard, so they have a chance to survive.

Codfish have to be twenty-one inches long to be legal-size. If you get some twenty-inch fish, or normally eighteen-inch, and you don't have an observer, you get those fish overboard right away, and a good number of them survive. If you've got an observer on board, they're guaranteed mortality. Because this guy is going to put them in a basket, weigh them, fool around with them for half an hour, and everything goes over dead. So, there's no chance of survival for discards when there's an observer onboard, and a good chance of survival when there isn't.

AC: That's a good point. Now, was going from a sector to the common pool just a matter of you saying, "I want it to be this way" and signing some paperwork, or was it an intensive process? How does that work to switch; or vice versa, for guys who go the other way?

CB: It's not hard to go from a sector to the common pool; you just don't re-enlist in the sector. But to join a sector in the beginning of the year, it costs \$10,000, I think.

AC: Per person?

CB: Yeah, but I don't remember the exact amount.

AC: But it was a substantial amount, you think?

CB: Yeah, and then on top of that, you pay pennies per pound of fish that you land, to cover sector operational costs. Half a penny, or two pennies, or one penny; depending on which sector you're in.

AC: [To pay for the] sector manager, and that kind of thing?

CB: Right. Sector managers make sixty or eighty grand a year, and that comes out of the fishermen's pockets. There's talk that fishermen are going to pay for observers. This will be the final nail in the coffin for the groundfish fishery.

AC: What will?

CB: Paying for the observers.

AC: Ok, sorry.

CB: If the boat fleet has to pay, the cost of the observers will exceed the value of the fish. And there will be no more viable fishermen.

AC: So the fishermen will just choose not to fish?

CB: They don't have any choice; if it's \$700 a day to pay for the observer, \$400 a day for fuel, plus crew, and insurance, and boat payment. There's no way you're going to get your head above water. As soon as the government says the industry will pay for observers, the groundfish fleet is all done; except for a handful of very large vessels.

AC: And is that something that is being discussed at the Council?

CB: Oh, yeah.

AC: That's a big topic now?

CB: Yes, the Council has been discussing this from day one. Everybody knows that the groundfish fleet cannot afford this, but it's only [government] funded through 2013.

And through 2012, we didn't know if it was going to be funded through 2013. The way it stands right now, everybody is going to pay for an observer onboard in 2014.

AC: That sounds like a hot topic then.

CB: It certainly is.

AC: Ok. Are there other hot topics in your community, or in the Hampton area?

CB: Well, that's not just Hampton; that's all sectors. The fishery service agreed to eliminate dockside monitors for 2012, but I believe they're going to be back on for 2013. And who's going to pay for it? NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] says that they're not going to pay for it, and they're not going to pay for the observers; so that would be the final nail in the coffin.

AC: So what advice, Carl, would you give someone starting out today; or who wanted to start out today?

CB: Well, I'm no one to give advice. The handful of boats that are left, and the fishermen that work really hard at it, will probably survive and do very well. But the problem is, when you're cutting down on the number of boats, you're cutting down on the infrastructure, and turning the bottom over to the fixed-gear sector. So everything gets ratcheted down, and before you know it, there's no infrastructure, the bottom's all taken over by fixed-gear, and it's just dissolved.

AC: What are the pros and cons of sector-based management, versus the pros and cons of common pool; if there are pros and/or cons of each, in your opinion?

CB: I don't have a problem some form of sectors, or individual, quota-based management. I think it's a good thing for many reasons. When we were working under Days at Sea and trip limits, there were huge amounts of discards of good fish.

There's no reason why, if you catch 2,000 pounds of codfish, accidentally or intentionally, that you should have to waste 1,200 pounds, because you have an 800-pound daily limit. Those fish should have been landed and have some economic benefit [come] from them.

With sector management, we don't have that trip limit and those discards. This is a huge plus for the fish and for the industry. But the cost of doing business this way is prohibitive, because of the cost of the dockside monitors and observer coverage. The intense monitoring that this [system] requires, kind of makes it prohibitive, especially on a large scale.

The fact that you could lease fish from somebody else, if you didn't have enough, is a good thing. I'm all for that. But I don't know how you can overcome the monitoring costs. I really don't.

[Under] the Days at Sea system, we did very well in the common pool. Because we were leasing days to ourselves, or from other people, we were able to fish a great number of days. I actually landed far more codfish in the common pool, legally, than I was allocated in the sector system.

In the common pool, we were landing 140-150,000 pounds of codfish a year. Because we fished a lot of days through leasing, I was allocated 90,000 pounds of codfish under the sector system, I think. But in the sector system, I had the opportunity to lease quota from other people. The problem is, when we were landing those 140,000 pounds, we were probably discarding just as many, because it wasn't legal [to land them]. In the early years, they had a ten-day running clock. I don't know if you remember that or not?

AC: People sitting out under the bridges for days?

CB: If you happened to catch two or three or four thousand pounds of fish, you didn't have to throw it overboard; you could land and keep the clock running. You didn't have to stay out on the ocean. You could come in with them, sell them, and let the clock run. If you had 4,000 pounds and you were on an 800-pound trip limit, you just stayed tied up for the given number of days to let that catch up. In the meantime, you didn't have any discards. This was a wonderful thing. I didn't go out every day, discarding fish in order to keep the 800.

But the fisheries service chose to remove that running clock, because a very small handful of fishermen found a way to abuse it. This was an enforcement issue, certainly not something to penalize the entire fishery on. This was an enforcement issue, and that's the way it should've been handled. It would have saved millions of pounds of fish.

AC: It wasn't a flaw in the design of this particular management option; it was more of an abuse that should have been handled by arrests, or some enforcement measure. So, you said now you can lease in a sector or in the common pool?

CB: In the common pool you lease Days at Sea, in the sector you lease fish, or quota.

AC: Ok, I'm just trying to keep it straight. In terms of the pros and cons, you were doing better in the common pool, you said?

CB: Yes.

- AC: But you were discarding more. And in sectors, you don't catch as much, but you're keeping everything; so there are no discards.
- CB: Right, so it's better for the fish.
- AC: Better for the fish. Ok, that's interesting. Now, a lot of guys have called the common pool "the cesspool," and [said] that it's a "death sentence." Why do they consider it such a harsh option, in your opinion?
- CB: Think of the total allowable catch as a piece of pie. Each participant in a sector gets a slice of that pie, based on their allocation. So if ninety-eight percent of the quota is gobbled up by the sectors, that means there's only two percent of the quota left for the common pool to compete for.
- AC: Did a lot of people end up going into the common pool, so there was less available to each person? Do you know?
- CB: The first year, I thought the common pool was very attractive. The second year, the trip limit for Gulf of Maine cod in the common pool was 500 pounds a day. And it was either 200 or 250 pounds a day for grey sole and witch flounder. The yellowtail flounder was 250 pounds a day, I believe. So if you were able to catch exactly these blocks of fish, you could probably come in with a thousand pounds of fish, which would be fine. But fish don't come in 500-pound blocks, or 200-pound blocks. So if you caught that amount, you discarded a whole pile. When you start getting up to your limit on one, you keep discarding the other to catch the balance of another block of fish. It's crazy.
- AC: Yeah, I see.
- CB: It's just a lot of discard, because the trip limits are so low. In 2012, they went to a trimester [system], so the quota doesn't get shut down immediately. They get three trimesters for the year. It looks like the common pool will probably close the second month of the first trimester. Looking at the catch-rate, I don't believe it will go past the end of July; which would mean nobody could fish in the common pool in the month of August. And then it would start back up again in September.
- AC: So instead of a May fishing year, it's sort of three different starts.
- CB: Right. I don't know how that's going to work out.
- AC: Even though you're retired, it sounds like you are pretty informed about what's happening currently. Do you prefer to stay somewhat informed on fisheries issues, or do you keep your distance?

CB: This has been my life for the past twenty-five years. [Just] because I've retired, doesn't mean I'm dead.

AC: No, I wasn't implying that at all.

CB: I still have ownership of my permits and lease my quota, so I have to stay in touch with what's going on. I attend Council and groundfish committee meetings, and I'm still on the groundfish advisory committee that I've been on [for] the last twenty years. So yes, I stay involved.

AC: So have you and your wife ever considered just taking a big long road trip or vacation, or is that not an option?

CB: We're too old for a road trip.

AC: So you prefer to stay local?

CB: Yeah, we're going to stay local.

AC: Now, do you have health insurance?

CB: Well, yeah.

AC: You and your wife?

CB: We're on Medicare. And we don't have any choice; the government takes it out of our social security. Plus we have to buy our supplemental to go with that, and there's nothing cheap about that.

AC: Now, did you have health insurance during your active fishing years?

CB: I started collecting social security at age sixty-two. And prior to that, I had to buy my own health insurance, yes.

AC: Ok, so it was like a direct pay that you did when you were fishing, prior to age sixty-two? And boat insurance; was that something you always had?

CB: Oh, yeah. I always insured my boat, [which was] very costly.

AC: And your crew; did they just take care of their own insurance?

CB: I had insurance that covered the crew and the vessel.

AC: Like workman's comp?

CB: I did not provide health insurance for the crew.

AC: Ok, so more of a workman's compensation type thing?

CB: No, we never did workman's comp. The crew members are self-employed, so we didn't have to pay workman's comp, unlike in Massachusetts, where they take out...

AC: Is this the Mass Health you're thinking of; the health insurance?

CB: I'm thinking of unemployment. Most of the guys in Massachusetts take out unemployment. So quite a few of them probably make more on unemployment comp, than they do actually working on the boat. But that's neither here nor there.

AC: And do you feel like the port dynamics have changed at all since sectors started? [Do you think] communication between fishermen has changed at all? How do you fit into that picture? If you could describe to me the social dynamics down in Hampton, and whether that has changed?

CB: I don't think sectors [have] changed that much, quite honestly.

AC: And you mentioned your friendships haven't changed?

CB: No, I don't think sectors did anything to them.

AC: Do you think sector and common pool fishermen view each other differently?

CB: There's not that many common pool [guys]. Two years ago, the first year, I didn't know another guy in the common pool.

AC: You were the lone wolf.

CB: I guess there's a couple down here this year. But not many people stay in the common pool, because there isn't any quota available for them. It just happened to fit in with my retirement [plan].

AC: And how about shore-side infrastructure in Hampton? Has that changed, [in regard to] the supply houses, or ice houses, or anything like that?

CB: I don't know how far back you want to go, but there used to be three co-ops in the area; one in Newburyport, TriCoastal Seafood Co-op, that we closed up about twenty years ago. Then there was the Portsmouth Co-op, which was a real high volume co-

op. They closed that up about six or seven years ago. The only remaining one is the Yankee Fishermen's Co-op in Seabrook.

AC: And it's still active?

CB: It is still active.

AC: More members? Less members?

CB: Well, because of the closure in Portsmouth, it has more members now than it had when it originated. But I don't believe it does as much volume [now] as the total of the three used to.

AC: Has sectors influenced that at all, do you know?

CB: Oh yeah, certainly. The volume has to be way down because the guys' allocations [were] similar to my experience.

AC: Ok. Have the dozen or so guys in Hampton changed where they take out, and those sorts of things, in the last couple years, or does it stay consistent?

CB: No, I don't think so. When the Portsmouth Co-op closed, some of those fishermen went to Portland or Gloucester; some came to Yankee Co-op. Almost all of the guys in Rye Harbor ended up selling at Yankee Co-op.

AC: Sectors haven't changed their decisions to go here or there?

CB: No, it hasn't changed where they sell their fish. But because of the allocations, the Co-op isn't going to get as many fish.

AC: There's less volume overall. Now, if you held a crystal ball and looked into the future, what would you see for your area, in general, and for your port specifically?

CB: What would I see for it?

AC: Yeah, what does the future hold for Hampton as a port; or Exeter?

CB: If NOAA refuses to fund the observers, there will be no groundfish fleet in New Hampshire in two years. There won't be any. The cost of monitoring is going to put the fleet out of business, if it hasn't already done it. And that would be the final nail.

AC: So it's an observer cost issue, versus maybe sectors having to play a role in that nailing of the coffin?

CB: The cost of monitoring, and of doing business through the sector program, is prohibitive to small-boat fishermen.

AC: And Carl, in terms of your income, how has that changed since sectors started? Being retired, you're probably not getting direct income from fishing. But you're still getting money from your leased fish, right? So how has your overall income changed?

CB: It's certainly less.

AC: It's less. Ok, so it has decreased. By a significant amount, or a small amount? You don't have to give me numbers, but just to kind of get an idea?

CB: Well, I don't [know], I think we're too new. We're only into the third year of sectors, so the jury is still out; but it's certainly less.

AC: Ok. And how have you and your family compensated for that change? Have you had to sell something, or is it more just kind of scaling back?

CB: No, just live within your means, that's all.

AC: No more grand evenings out on the town with the lovely wife, huh?

CB: [Just] live within your means.

AC: And does your wife still work?

CB: No. She had a full-time job taking care of Carl Edward Buchard, and her duties have been reduced considerably since I've retired. She did one hundred percent of the bookwork for the business, so it was her opportunity to retire, too.

AC: So she was an integral part of the business, in that way? Was that always the case? She did the bookwork from day one?

CB: Yeah, always. I have never paid a bill in my life, and I'm seventy-two years old.

AC: This was for house and boat stuff?

CB: My wife took care of that one hundred percent. So when I say she had a full-time job taking care of me, I mean it.

AC: That is very true, absolutely. And, when you had your kids, when they were younger, she also...?

CB: She had three children and she took care of them.

AC: She took care of them, and the boat business. Wow, so no wonder she was giving you some nudging to retire. So you were always the sole breadwinner financially?

CB: But that's only a part of it.

AC: It is, absolutely.

CB: You can't do that without support from your spouse; especially the amount of work that she was doing.

AC: It's a team. That's good that you recognize that. That's a good husband right there. And how about your health? How are you doing these days?

CB: Heart's still beating.

AC: Feeling good? You look good. Has fishing kind of taken a toll on you over the years?

CB: No, I've been pretty fortunate. Everybody has their little things they go through, but at my age, I feel pretty fortunate.

AC: Any other sort of health-related issues that may or may not exist because of fishing?

CB: No.

AC: Not necessarily [just] the physical element of it; are there any other aspects of sectors or regulations that has impacted you?

CB: Well it's certainly a lot of stress.

AC: Stress, that's a health issue for sure.

CB: Is that a health issue? I don't know. But there's certainly a lot of stress and uncertainty.

AC: And has that stress and uncertainty been more or less in the last couple of years since sectors started?

CB: Oh, I wouldn't attribute it to sectors. I would attribute it to fisheries management, period, over the last twenty years.

AC: In general, ok.

CB: Because even before the sector system, every year there was a new amendment or a new framework. [Something] that reduced what you were allowed to catch, the [amount of] time you were allowed to fish; always reducing something.

AC: How about in your community; have you seen the same sort of stress amongst your peers?

CB: Yeah, all the fishermen felt pretty much the same way. But you know, it's no different than any other business. You've got a lot of fishermen that work very hard and are quite successful, and you've got fishermen that like to sit on the dock and complain. That's no different than guys that are landscaping or running a shoe store. You get back what you put into it.

AC: Right. Any other issues in your fishing community that you would say [have] changed the fabric of it? Any other health issues or...?

CB: No.

AC: Ok. Now, if you could go back in time and change or remove sectors, would you? And if so, what would you replace it with, or how would you change it?

CB: If I could go back in time to when I was in high school or something?

AC: No, say three years ago when sectors started. Not that far; we'd need some more tape on that thing, I'm sure. So would you change sector-based management as a management tool, or not? And how would you change it?

CB: I had said earlier in our conversation, I don't have a problem with sectors. But I have a big problem with the way the fish were allocated, and with the costs associated with sectors. The costs are prohibitive for day boats, and the allocations are very unfair. Everybody feels they got cheated on the allocation. Nobody got enough, and not everybody was treated equal.

If [you're going to] allocate over a given period of years, say '96 to '06, it should be [the same] for everybody in the fishery, not just for the groundfish fleet. It should've included the recreational [guys], and it should have included the original Cape Cod hook sector. There were three different sets of years that we were allocated under here.

AC: I see. So when Amendment 16 came into place, the hook sector was exempt from those rules?

CB: They got allocated Georges Bank cod on a different set of years than the rest of us, because they were the first sector. I don't remember exactly what years it was, I

think '92 to '98. Whatever it was, those were their peak years. And they have never, ever caught that amount of fish again. [Because] the fish happened to be in that area, during those years, they got tremendous amounts of fish. And now, forever after, they've got that high percentage of Georges Bank cod.

AC: Ok. So because they were already in play, their sector was off and running.

CB: And the argument was made that they made their business plans based on the allocation from those years. Well, my business plan is based on the Days at Sea that I had to go out and purchase, for a huge amount of money. Many other fishermen are the same way. But our business plans didn't count, [because] we didn't have a strong enough voice on the Council. So the allocation was very unfair, and the cost of doing business in the sector was very prohibitive.

AC: So is there any chance of changing that? Or because they've set that ten-year period, it's in place, and they can't go back next year and say, "Alright, let's revise this?"

CB: "The Council cannot be bound by a future Council." [That's] exactly how that wording works. Every year, there's a new Council, because you get at least three new members. So the group that's there this year can overturn what they did last year. But they have to come up with something that satisfies the law of Magnuson.

So, do I think it's ever going to change? It'll probably get tweaked a little bit. But [I think] you're [still] going to have this type of management, [because] I don't believe it will change much, with all the politics on the Council.

AC: Now Carl, do you have a few more minutes? We're kind of wrapping up, but I have a couple more questions, if that's ok. In terms of your family, do you have daughters, sons, both?

CB: I have a daughter, and two sons.

AC: Ok. Now, did your sons ever consider fishing; or your daughter, for that matter?

CB: Nope.

AC: They never did; were never interested.

CB: Both of my sons went with me a few times, for something new, but were never so inclined to be commercial fishermen.

AC: Do they live close now?

CB: They did, until recently. My daughter is only ten miles away, and one son is five miles away. The other son recently moved to the west coast. But they were all close by.

AC: So then your kids had moved out before you retired; at that point, it was just you and your wife holding down the fort. What were the family dynamics like for you and your wife, and how did fisheries affect that? I mean, did some of the stress you mentioned come into play in your family life, or were you able to leave work at work? Obviously your wife did the bookwork, so she was pretty involved. But I'm just trying to get a sense of how fisheries affected your home life over the last couple of years, before you retired? If it did, was it positive or negative?

CB: Fishing was my job; that's what I did. I went to work, made a weeks' pay; it was what it was. Some weeks are better than others, that's the way it goes. It's no different than a farmer growing corn.

AC: Right. But it sounds like you went to a lot of meetings, and [that] took time away [from being at home]; more than you would want to be.

CB: Well, I stay involved. I don't know if it took me away more, but it took a little more time. And a lot of times, it was just time out of fishing. When you're limited on how many days you can fish, or how much fish you can catch when you do go, there's ample time to go to these meetings. Not all fishermen choose to do that. But if you're going to stay abreast, or they're constantly changing rules, you've got to pay attention.

AC: So you were able to keep a relationship going, and a full-time fishing business?

CB: Yeah, I'd say.

AC: That's a tough thing to do. A lot of people aren't so successful at that; so that's good, you balanced it. Now, was [being involved with] some of these research projects positive for you?

CB: Very positive. I learned a lot, and I think we were able to benefit the industry with innovative gear.

AC: Do you see the results of your work with researchers; on the water now, or through the management process? Or is it not quite there yet?

[1:03:40]

CB: Well, some of it's there. But the biggest problem is, most research projects are based on present-day need. So by the time you design a project, complete it, [and have it] peer-reviewed, the rules have changed and the status of the stocks have changed.

The very first research project I did with Pingo He, from the University of New Hampshire, was because codfish were in dire straits. We wanted to separate the codfish from the flounders, and concentrate on the flounders. By the time we did the project, got it peer-reviewed and whatever, the roles had reversed; codfish were in excellent shape, and flounders were in trouble. So, we were 180-degrees out of phase. But someday it will probably go back the other direction again, and it looks like we're headed that way now.

From doing that [project], we learned that haddock responded differently than other species. That led us to developing a rope-separator trawl for haddock. So even though we were somewhat unsuccessful in that project, we did design another project that was very successful; the haddock separator trawl.

So yes, I enjoyed doing it, and learned a lot. It was very time consuming, in the sense that when you're doing a research project, it isn't just the time on the water; it's all the meetings prior to and after the project that you go through. Many fishermen think that you're making a pile of money on this research, because they see you fishing on very few days. But they don't realize the extra time that goes into it.

AC: And would you ever consider getting back into it?

CB: Yeah, but I'm kind of old.

AC: What would the conditions have to be to sway you to get back into fishing?

CB: Well, it's probably easier to answer now, because I'm too old to get into it. [At] seventy-two years old, you don't go back into the fisheries business. If I was ten years younger, and knew what I know now, I would be looking for some stability in the fishery. And there is no stability right now. You can't do a business plan, even for one year, [because] the rules are constantly changing. How do you go to a bank and tell them you want to borrow a half a million, or a million, dollars to go into the fishing business, when you can't guarantee them six months from now what the rules are going to be? It's impossible.

AC: Any other fisheries-related business you would get into? Maybe not fishing itself, but maybe you've considered other consulting, or seafood, business-type thing?

CB: No, I don't have to worry about it. I'm too old.

AC: Ok, gotcha. Is there anything else about sectors specifically, that I haven't asked, that you'd like to say?

CB: I don't think so. I think sectors are fine; they're [just] cost-prohibitive. If Congress is going to mandate these things, let [them] pony up the money to make it possible to do these things. Magnusson Act said everything has to be rebuilt within ten years; this is impossible. There's not enough money in this world to make the fish respond. Even if nobody goes fishing, not everything can be at its peak at the same time.

Look out at the parking lot here. If you see two squirrels, two rabbits, and two foxes, how long is it going to be before there's only two foxes? The government is telling you that everything has to be at its peak at the same time, predators or not. That can't happen.

AC: What was the status of the resource, in your last years of fishing? Were things looking ok; were they in dire straits?

CB: Everything runs in cycles. For the last eight or ten years, codfish have been on the rise. We've had huge quantities of codfish; better and better every year. We've gone over the hump, and things are on the downhill turn now. One year it's the yellowtails, next year it's the grey sole, then it's another species. Not everything can be at the top of the pile. I mean, not everybody can go to the Superbowl. There's only one team that's going to win the Superbowl; that's the one that's on top.

AC: Or the World Cup. We follow soccer, but exactly.

CB: Everything can't be at its peak at the same time.

AC: Carl, kind of going back a little bit, [there's] one thing I forgot to ask you. What would a typical day look like for you, prior to retirement?

CB: Typical day? Ok, got up at one-thirty in the morning and left the dock at three a.m. The last five years, we stayed out overnight. We left Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, and came back Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning. The reason for that was the trip limits.

The trip limit on codfish was 800 pounds; flounders were 500 pounds, etc. If you stayed [out] more than twenty-four hours, you could have two limits. We stayed more than twenty-four hours, and came in the following morning. That cut our discards in half, and our fuel bill by a third.

So we basically worked three, thirty-hour days a week. And that worked out very well. You could plan on that from May till October, or so, during a good weather month. After that, if the weather was good enough, you could continue. But if it kind of was kind of blowing over...

AC: So you got an income from your last year of fishing? You would offload your fish, and get paid through the dealer, like you always had? Or was that changed because sectors were starting? How did you get paid the last year of fishing?

CB: On the amount of fish we landed.

AC: Ok, so being in the sector or the common pool didn't affect how you actually got paid for your fish?

CB: No. We offloaded at the same places, and payment was the same way [as before].

AC: So just to be clear, the last year you fished, you were in the common pool? You started in the sector, and then went to the common pool. Ok.

CB: Right.

AC: And now, do you get a check weekly, or monthly, from the fisherman who's leasing your fish? How does that work? Sorry for my ignorance.

CB: If you and I were both fishermen in the same sector, I could lease you some of my fish, or all of my fish. The money gets funneled through the sector. If we're not in the same sector, it gets funneled from one sector to another. It's whatever arrangement we make between each other, as to a price per pound, and how many pounds.

AC: Gotcha. So it's a private transaction, in a sense.

CB: It's private, but not really when you go outside of your own sector. When you make a deal with somebody outside of your own sector, it may not go forward. The fishermen within your own sector have six days for right of first offer. So if you and I are in different sectors, and I say I'm going to lease this to you, and you agree to buy it, you may not get it. Somebody in my sector may say, "I'm going to take it for the same amount of money," [and they would get it first]. Does that answer your question?

AC: It does. Now, do you have to pay to maintain your permits, [since you're] not actively fishing them right now?

CB: No, I don't have to pay to maintain them.

AC: So they're just sort of filed away right now?

CB: There's two ways to do this; one of them is to have your permit in Confirmation of Permit History (CPH), in which case you don't have to do anything with it. You'll get a letter from the Fisheries Service that says "This permit is retained in CPH, the quota's

attached to it, and the percentages will remain.” The other way is to have the permit on some type of vessel. Generally a skiff is what is used. And if you choose to do this, you have to register that skiff every year. You have to re-apply for the permit every year, and if you forget to, it will get cancelled.

AC: Oh boy, big note on the fridge.

CB: Yeah. And not only that, if you go this route, you have to fill out and send a weekly “Did not Fish” report to the Fisheries Service for each of the permits.

AC: So why would people do that then?

CB: Well, the permit is more flexible that way. You can’t sell a permit unless it’s attached to a vessel. The skiff is a vessel, so it’s easier to transfer if you’re contemplating doing that.

AC: I see. And that’s what you’ve done?

CB: I’ve got two in CPH and two on skiffs.

AC: Keeping your options open.

CB: Well, you never know which is the best way to go. That’s part of the uncertainty of the business.

AC: Half and half sounds like a good plan. So in closing, is there something you would want to say? Or perhaps an experience, or an event, that happened in your fishing career that you would want to end with, sort of for posterity’s sake? For your grandchildren who might listen to this in the future, or others. Is there something you would want to end on? A comment, or story, or something along those lines?

CB: No, I don’t think so. I enjoyed fishing very much and I worked very hard at it. I think I was somewhat successful, and I feel pretty proud of my accomplishment. That’s about it.

AC: Excellent. Well, thank you so much for your time. And again, I’m here with Carl Buchard. This is Azure Cygler, and it is July 17th, 2012. Thank you again, Carl.

CB: Ok.

[01:16:19]

END INTERVIEW