

Interview with Chris Brown [CB]
Occupation: Fisherman
Port Community: Point Judith, RI
Interviewer: Azure Cygler
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Bagels Coffeehouse, Kingston Rhode Island

Interview

[00:00]

AC: For the record, I'm going to state my name is Azure Cygler and I'm here with Angela Wilson and it's the 18th of November 2011. We are at Bagels Coffeehouse at URI (University of Rhode Island) Emporium Campus in Kingston, Rhode Island. For the record, Chris, if you could just state that you read and signed the release form.

CB: Yes, I did. I read and signed the release form.

AC: And if you can just state your full name and your address for us.

CB: Christopher T. Brown, Sr. [My] address is 35 Erica Court, West Kingston, RI.

AC: And your homeport, Chris?

CB: Point Judith, RI.

AC: And what's your vessel's name?

CB: *Proud Mary*.

AC: And you're in which sector?

CB: I am in Northeast Fisheries Sector 5.

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

CB: I am 53 years old.

AC: Excellent. And to begin, if we could get a little bit of context. Just about who you are, where you came from, any educational background, just a little bit about yourself to start.

CB: Fisherman of probably 33 years. [I have] fished since shortly after birth, I always tell people. [I] started fishing immediately after high school. [I] built a boat two years afterwards. Fished out of Point Judith the whole time. Mainly day fishing. We're very opportunistic. We fish for not specifically species but for dollars. We take advantage of the seasonal changes. We mix it up. We're groundfish dependent probably 25% of the time and squid is also a big part of our fishery.

AC: And family structure? You're married?

CB: Married to the same woman for 26 years, 3 children. And [I] wouldn't have it any other way.

AC: Any of them in fisheries?

CB: Not really. My sons and my daughter are all college graduates. Two of them are through grad school. The third one is a senior at the University of Rhode Island and will be going to grad school. Two of them right now are working for us in the fish business as managers and communication liaisons to the restaurants. He drives the fish truck for the business we started. Small, upscale restaurants. "Wild Rhody" is the name of it. See our website at wildrhody.com.

AC: And did you say you went to URI?

CB: No, I did not. I graduated from high school, made a conscious decision to not pursue higher education because at the time I firmly believed that colleges were for people that couldn't get by in four years in high school. Since then I have given a lot of thought to that and maybe wished I'd gone. But I read everything I can get my hands on, try to stay abreast of everything, and have taken a circuitous route to get to probably the same place that I'd want to be even if I went to college.

[03:23]

AC: I see.

CB: I love fishing. I enjoy it.

AC: So we had just spoken with someone who said it wasn't at all about the money, it was about the love. So is that the same? Would you say that's the case?

CB: Yeah. No, I think there are a lot of reasons to fish. But what attracted me to it in the beginning was the ability to get down time. To get alone. Very rarely people in this world ever get alone. I get twitchy if I don't get alone once in awhile. You know, its good to be by yourself,

sitting there in the pilothouse, drinking a coffee, watching the sun come up. I do that every day. You know?

AC: Yeah.

CB: [The] crewman goes and lays down and I am just alone with my thoughts in the most magnificent office. And it's really good. I could not imagine not having that. That would bother me if I missed that.

AC: I see. Now where do you fish? Inshore or offshore?

CB: Yeah, we fish usually within sight of Block Island.

AC: How many miles from shore?

CB: 10,12 miles. 15 miles. We joke about our own. We say the farther you have to go, the dumber you must be. Plenty of fish out there.

AC: Now has that always been the case?

CB: Yeah. No, by design I have chosen to be a day fisherman. I like getting up and having a same every day. You know, I get up and you do your little solo thing, you do your work thing, you come home and do your family thing. You know, I never wanted to be a trip fisherman. I watched too many guys give too much of themselves to the industry and suffer when they get older. Rarely does someone ever say, "Jeez I wish I'd spent less time at home with the wife and kids and you know worked a little more" when they get to be 60 years old. So, I just accepted that as not being something I wanted to ever pursue.

AC: That's hard. Now you said you have one crewmember?

CB: One swing man. I've had him for almost ten years now. He's married and he has little kids and he likes being home every night too.

AC: Does he ever run the boat when you're...?

CB: He has....

AC: To go away or...?

CB: Occasionally, but its less important now with the sector, with the quota, system.

AC: So you just tie up?

CB: Just tie up. We'll go get them later. They're not going anywhere; I got them right here on paper.

AC: Now tell me a little bit about your neighborhood where you live. Would you consider it a fishing community?

[05:58]

CB: Not at all. I live in West Kingston, in an upscale development. I am the only fisherman there. I daresay I am the only South County-ite or Swamp Yankee there. I don't know where these people come from. We don't socialize with them. They're fine people, we help them out if we have to, we know their names. But you know, if you give everything you have to family, then you don't need the neighbors for amusement or entertainment. There isn't any time.

AC: I see.

CB: The more you give to family, the more it gives back to you.

AC: So you're....

CB: We're self-sufficient.

AC: Your downtime or your free time is spent with family?

CB: Absolutely.

AC: Primarily?

CB: Exclusively.

AC: Okay. So like your social networks, do you consider some of the fishermen you work with as friends? That you would hang out with?

CB: No, colleagues.

AC: Colleagues?

CB: Colleagues. Professional colleagues.

AC: And your wife? Are there other wives or partners that she's connected with in the fishing industry?

CB: No, not at all.

AC: It's separate.

CB: No, well we have dedicated ourselves to raising our kids. Our kids are all funny. They both produce and consume humor. They're great, they have their own house and I cannot imagine not having them.

AC: Yeah.

CB: You know, two of them still live there. My daughter lived there 'til she was married.

AC: [You're] loving parents. [It's a] good home, I tell you.

CB: I'm telling you.

AC: And you might be expecting grandkids in the next few years?

CB: Yeah, I think in a year or so. Absolutely.

AC: And you're hoping they'll stay somewhat local?

CB: Oh, there's no doubt about it. My kids have already said that they're not moving any farther than grandma's willing to go. So we're going to be close knit, right 'til the end.

AC: Did you ever aspire for your kids or do you aspire for your grandkids to get into fisheries in any capacity?

CB: No, no I deliberately did not have my kids follow me. You know, fishing was my dream. Fishing was something that I wanted to do. My job as dad is to facilitate them pursuing their own dreams, whatever that dream might be. Not to jam my dream down their throat. It would have been real easy, having two boys, to bring one down to the boat, sit them in the captain's chair, turn the key, and let them hit the button and roll the diesel over at about six. Then they're hooked. They're done. I just put a glass ceiling up. You know?

AC: Right, right.

CB: I didn't want to do that.

AC: And it's the same opinion for your grandkids?

CB: Yeah. If they want it, it'll always be there. And my sons have fished with me and they have enjoyed it. But, get your own dream. This is mine. And I'm willing to share it with you if that's what you want. But if it's not, that's good. That's okay.

[09:00]

AC: In terms of the fishing industry, what were the best years would you say? Was there a range?

CB: Next year.

AC: Next year?

CB: I think so, I really do. I'm incredibly opportunistic. Or, optimistic rather, about our future. You know, I think you take a lot of things for granted when you're younger. I don't think you appreciate your freedoms and successes. I think you miss out on a lot. I think you're in such a rush and such a hurry. You know, I'd like to refine my relationship with the entire, with the ocean and with my boat and with my port. And you know, I think the best is in front of us. I think we have tools now that we didn't have before.

AC: Now your boat, is it the same boat you used to have?

CB: No, I built a boat called the *Grandville Davis*. I built it when I was 20. I fished it for 31 years. I retired it last year and I bought another boat to take its place. I crushed the *Grandville* up, put it in a dumpster and just moved on to this one. I named it after my wife, and here we are.

AC: Over the last two years, since sectors started, and this I guess I'm referring to the federal sectors. So you're involved in Sector 5. But if you still want to speak about the state sectors as well.... So since either of those have started, have you seen significant changes in the community, in the fishing community in general?

CB: Yeah.

AC: Has it affected them in any way?

CB: Yeah, greatly. We've had forced change rushed upon the community. Change doesn't come easy and very seldom is it welcomed. You know, fishermen tend to just downplay the futility of the situation we were in. I don't think the average fisherman understands how closely we came to shutdown. You know, the reauthorized Magnuson Act has garnered an enormous amount of testicular fortitude, if you will. It has what it takes to shut you down if you don't get your management strategy and your stocks healthy. It will close you down, that's all there is to it. You know, guys always tend to think that they can live with what they had, but the reality is the status quo is fleeting.

The status quo does not exist anymore in commercial fishing. There is a new day. January 1, 2012. Accountability measures, the annual catch limits, go into effect. They are the rule of law that you have to accede to. And unless you find a way to navigate that, blend your commercial needs with the realities of that document, you'll find yourself out of business. You'll find your

fishery closed. So that is why I was able to make a snap judgment several years ago with the reauthorization, and decided that sectors were the only way to go to avoid wholesale closures. To avoid, you know, the sledgehammer that the document could be.

[12:33]

AC: Do you think other fishermen grasp it in the same way that you do?

CB: No, not at all.

AC: They just think moment to moment or...?

CB: I think there's...

AC: What's the gap?

CB: I think fishermen traditionally are idealized. I think their ideology is to battle things greater than them. That's how they make a living. They go to sea, they battle the ocean, they battle the elements, they compete against each other. I think every battle they gage is done so with the same bravado. The Magnuson Act is not something to be dealt with in that light or in those terms. You must accede to its dictum. You must yield to its authority and find a way to become more pragmatic. You know, that's all there is to it. You have to find a solution.

AC: Well, I think that many, many people are probably quite grateful that you had the foresight a couple years back to be a part of...

CB: Well, I wish a few of them would chirp up. Damn little of that, I'll tell you.

AC: Well, I hear it through the grapevine. In terms of your quality of life, I mean, you're a unique person in that you seem to have an overall general outlook on life that is positive. But if you were to look at where you were at a couple of years ago, before you had your involvement in sectors and now, would you say your quality of life has changed?

CB: I think if I was able to simply isolate the fishing component, which is what I have to do for this discussion I think....

AC: Yeah.

CB: I think the quality of life is better.

AC: Is better, okay.

CB: I cannot tell you how tormented I was discarding fish.

AC: I see.

CB: Trying to find... I cannot tell you. It is an unholy choice that you make. You know, the daily profitability or secure future. You're asked to make that decision every day in a quota management system where, you know you have daily possession limits. Do you stop and go home and not make any money or do keep fishing, kick some stuff overboard, and save some more of the other stuff? You know, and that ruined my.... I didn't want to fish anymore. That's just wrong. That's a crime against the planet.

AC: And you're right, separating sort of how you feel because you know you're family is a big part of your life. You know, obviously huge. Did you see any effects over the last couple of years on your family life, for better or worse? Did it free up some time, did it make things more difficult? I mean, you're heavily involved.

[15:13]

CB: I think my family really understood more in the last two years than they ever did. Ten or fifteen years ago I just went fishing and came home. There was very little discussion about the regulatory hurdles, or the reform necessary to succeed, or quota trades, or this or that, or any of that stuff. And now its daily banter.

AC: Really?

CB: It is.

AC: At the kitchen table?

CB: Yeah.

AC: At dinner?

CB: Yes.

AC: Wow.

CB: Well, I mean.

AC: That's fascinating.

CB: You know, part of our dinner formula is we sit down and my wife asks me about my day and I ask her about hers. And the kids are there and they weigh in. And now that my boys are involved in the trade a little bit, while they're working towards their degrees, and whatnot. It's just... it goes around.

AC: Wow, very cool. That's unique, I think. You know, I don't think I've heard that before. That's just the way it should be. Now you fish day trips because you like to stay close?

CB: Yes.

AC: If you could just tell me a little bit more about your sector involvement, your roles?

CB: Well, with the groundfish sector, I am the president of it. It was a logical fit, given my exposure to it and our ability to maybe test this thing to see what it could do. You know, I really don't accept any predetermined outcomes about this. You know, people say it will do this, it will do that. You know, the naysayers have assumed that there will be consolidation; there will be one company that will own the whole thing, and things of that nature. And I just don't accept that. I think we are challenged to do better by others' failings. I don't know, I just don't know where it's going to be but its going to be better than the last one when we're done.

AC: So the, becoming president, that was about the same time that you were starting to form the fluke sector, right?

CB: Well, actually the fluke sector is in our third year and the groundfish sector is in our second year. So I have quite a tenure as the head of sectors.

AC: Are people coming to you for advice about their sectors in different communities?

CB: Well, I think people have always looked as these things as being limiting. When you expose to them the possibility of 'what if'... you know, two of the most wonderful words in the English language are 'what if.' And when you expose them to the possibility and flexibility of these things after a fashion, they get in a much better place. You know, in the beginning they felt like they were getting shoved on a train to go to Auschwitz and now they're realizing that it doesn't have to be that at all. There's opportunity.

And I think my job is to be upbeat, positive, and to demonstrate a way through. To show and to lead. That's what leadership does. Leadership leads. Some of the other sector presidents are not necessarily supportive of the process. Some of the sector managers have listened to the naysayers in their group and have arisen as detractors of the process from within. How unproductive is that? It's enormously unproductive. So, I've never done that. We've had people leave our sector because I refuse to be negative. I refuse to sue, I refuse to litigate, I refuse to bash.

[19:09]

AC: Where did they go? To a different sector?

CB: Yeah, they went to a different sector where that was more the common currency. We're trying to form a coalition of the willing and show you just how far that can go. I don't think anyone's ever done that.

AC: You're right. Now opportunities exist within sectors for people for the future. So that certainly would be a pro, in terms of its...?

CB: Absolutely.

AC: Do you see any sort of cons to sectors, in terms of how they function on a daily basis for people? For the members involved? Are there things maybe that could be improved? Or maybe not? And what are some of the other sort of pros and cons?

CB: I really don't like to freeze them in time and evaluate them. This is a living, breathing document. On day 1, I sat down with everybody and said "Guys, this is our last stop. But we're going to make it better. And it's going to take time. We're not going to settle for anything until we get it better, to a point where we can all look at it and go 'Gee, this really doesn't suck at all.'" And that's what we're doing. So to freeze it, and assess it, I don't think that's healthy. That's not a route I choose to go down.

AC: Do you have other positive thinkers near you that are helping you?

CB: Yeah, I do. I do. As a matter of fact, I have gone around New England and have a group of followers or believers or likeminded individuals and we started a marketing initiative based on our vision. To try to be a model for everybody else.

[21:12]

AC: Just kind of getting back to life logistics... health insurance, how does that work for you?

CB: My wife currently teaches at the Catholic school and they pay a portion of her [health] insurance. With her retirement, I'll be buying it.

AC: Okay. And boat insurance for you? Is it something that has changed over the years? Do you still have it?

CB: Lets see, about twenty years ago we had an insurance crisis, which was linked closely to a fisheries crisis. All of the boats in Gloucester simultaneously started sinking when the stocks diminished. And as a result, it became impossible to get great insurance. So we formed our own insurance company, and [I'm] the vice president of, it was called the Point Club. We are self-insured and we have our own group.

AC: Is that open to anyone?

CB: Yeah. We have very high standards. We like to think we insure the man, not just the boat. So if you have a reasonably good reputation, and you're a responsible citizen, we'd be proud to have you.

AC: Okay. And are new members coming to you?

CB: Well, yeah. Membership seems to evolve. Our membership is down a little bit because the fleet is down over twenty years. You know, in twenty years we've probably gone from 1,200 boats to 500, so the club has been as high as 100 boats and now we're probably down to 50 to 60.

AC: Now when you said down to about 500 boats, is that Southern New England?

CB: No, New England in general. So the consolidation that people fear has already occurred. As a matter of fact, the rate of attrition of the number of boats actually slowed down in the first year of sectors, for the first time in twenty years.

AC: Really?

CB: Yeah.

AC: I guess you're a tricky one, in terms of... cause you have such a unique perspective. So any events that happen in Point Judith related to the fishing industry regarding the foundation, fundraisers, do you go to those events?

CB: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AC: Are you a part of those?

CB: Yeah.

AC: So it's kind of socializing, but in a way....

CB: It's community support.

AC: Community support, okay. So that's, you think, the extent of your involvement with the fishermen on your off time? Would be those kind of community endeavors?

CB: There are obligations that come with the positions that I occupy.

AC: Okay.

CB: I gladly fill those.

AC: Okay.

CB: No, I do, you know, I do socialize with fishermen, but I don't take time from my family to do it. I mean, and my wife has professional life as well. So if she's pursuing her professional life, I mean I go to meetings and I have friends on the council level and friends from other ports. Likeminded people from other harbors whose company I deeply enjoy. And we share thoughts and visions, and that's what friends do. But my social circles are not defined by where I throw the bow lines.

[24:30]

AC: Do you feel like Point Judith is unique in any way, in terms of fishing communities? Because of...?

CB: I think it's very romantic to think that it is, but the reality is, it's just like every other port.

AC: Okay.

CB: I was interviewed several years ago by a gentleman from... where was he from? He was a social... was he from Tufts? Very big, articulate, handsome black man. Big guy. And he was hired by NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) to interview us to see why more fishermen had not left the industry and had been to blunted to accept the subtle hints that NMFS had been giving people over the last several years as to maybe how they might want to consider another profession. And after the interview, he just sat and you know, I answered the questions as best I could. And he just sat and smiled and I said "What's up?" and he said "Just like everywhere else." He said "You know what, you guys are tribal. That's why you don't leave. Because you are tribal."

And then I took that thought and I ran with it. I mean, we had a great time. Our history is recorded orally. We're superstitious, we sing chanties, we celebrate kills, we have identical body markings, we dress alike. We're tribal, Jack, that's all there is to it. And it's just not like getting done being a plumber. It's like leaving the tribe, getting off the reservation. And that's why we are ever so reluctant to leave, and are very passionate about what we do.

AC: So the kind of values stream too, unites across ports and countries even?

CB: Yeah. I thought that was pretty cool.

AC: I think so, too. Chris, you have a lot of different hats, I guess, that you wear. Could you just sort of list those for me? In terms of all the things that you do, in your position?

CB: Let's see.

AC: Can you describe them?

CB: I was the last Secretary/Treasurer, the last Secretary of the Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative. Go chronologically. I am Vice President of the Point Judith Point Club, the insurance company that we formed. I am the president of the RI Commercial Fishermen's Association. I am the president of Northeast Fisheries Sector 5. I sit as an advisor to the New England Groundfish Committee as a Southern New England representative. I am on the Executive Board of Directors of the Northeast Seafood Coalition. Let's see, what else is there? I founded the Stanley Dumarie Foundation.

AC: Which is?

[27:11]

CB: It is a, it's kind of a spoof. The Dumarie Foundation celebrates "the accumulation and dissemination of truth and wisdom acquired at sea." So, for example, Laura and Barbara at URI, we're doing some closed trap studies in Wickford Harbor. And one day they were rowing back to shore, 'cause they were in a rowboat, and they discovered a little squirrel that was drowning in the middle of Wickford Harbor. So they rowed up to it and they stuck the oar up to it to help it, and get it aboard. And it ran up the oar, ran around the boat at 100 miles an hour, and chewed the shit out of both of them. So the Dumarie Foundation recognizes as being worthy of them trying to develop a fishery for the Atlantic *Sciurus carolinensis*, which is the Atlantic Seagull and Grey Squirrel. And the harvest technology associated that would support that fishery. So we had a little trophy made up for them and honored them at our annual meeting.

AC: Excellent. Very serious endeavor.

CB: Very serious endeavor. I have had the governor of the state of Rhode Island applauding the Dumarie Foundation. He didn't know what it was for.

AC: It's alive with the state support.

CB: Once a year, or so, we'll go into a school and we'll donate five microscopes or something like that. Our mantra is "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it." So hopefully we'll give rise to some good scientists.

AC: Excellent.

CB: My wife is always the recipient of our generosity. Her classroom.

AC: Oh, yes. Good. Full circle. Well, excellent. I mean, that's it? That's all you do in there?

CB: That's all. That's it.

AC: Now how in the world do you do all of that, and fish, and maintain a relationship with your family? What's your secret?

CB: I don't do a lot of anything else.

AC: So you find time for it all? You just make it work?

CB: Yeah.

AC: Now does this include 2 am emails and...

CB: No.

AC: ... catching up?

CB: No, I go to bed, man, I get tired. I shut down.

AC: Ok, so you....

CB: Yeah, I do a lot of work from the boat sometimes. Smart phones, computer work from the boat.

AC: Yeah. In terms of the sectors and getting paid and fish bought and sold and leasing. Just describe a little bit of how that works currently. Of course, like you said, it evolves and changes, but how does it work?

[29:58]

CB: Well, we evolve an allocator's certain amount of days, we've accumulated it, brought it home into our community, and have elected to fish it. If you brought it in as history, you'll be allowed to fish it. That's the current model. There's a lot of quota that is available, and we can be profitable leasing quota. Last year I leased and caught five times my allocation. So, as an early adapter, I understood the utility of the system, and I took advantage of it. Not for enormous profit, because we paid pretty much to fish, but we got by. As an entire process, we've left a lot of fish on the table.

The utility of things kind of confounded people. People were uncertain. We weren't forced to learn, because we are not groundfish dependent, but we tried to encourage people to lease as much as they could. We leased big blocks of fish as a community and established working relationships with other fishermen in other sectors. I got it from you this year, and next year I'll be back. That kind of a thing. They're like "Yeah, that worked out great for us, Chris, we'll see you next year."

AC: So is it fisherman to fisherman?

CB: Yeah.

AC: Or you as the president administering?

CB: Well, I have a lot of friends in a lot of places via my council obligations and I am very well connected to people with quota. I have tried to get... I have always told people, if you need something, look me up. I'll do what I can to help you. We've worked with a guy trying to develop an ACE trading platform so that people can go online and peruse quota that's available, so we're going to have our entire sector hooked up with that to make quota available to everybody equally.

AC: And now, so if a Sector 5 member happens to catch more cod then they can call you and you will help them.

CB: Well, we made a decision that we wouldn't. Understanding that we probably wouldn't catch all of the quota that we had just because the prickly nature of people. People weren't snuggling up to this thing, so chances are they're not going to be avid traders. We chose to not stop anybody. Catch them. Take them off the table, we'll figure it out later.

AC: Okay, cool. It seems like an adaptable feature that's nice, that's built in from the beginning. Right?

CB: Yeah.

AC: That was a smart....

CB: In every other region, if you study these things, which I have, the first year you're lucky to get 60 percent of the quota caught. Year two is 70 percent, year three is 80, and so forth. So knowing that, we just said "There are no choke starts. Go get it done."

AC: Gotcha.

[33:00]

CB: So that's just how it worked out.

AC: Are any of the Sector 5 members... are there sort of complaints about not having enough? I mean, it sounds like there's plenty.

CB: Yeah, there are.

AC: 'Cause it's not caught, right?

CB: Well, there are complaints. Your ability to learn and adapt lends itself to acceptance. And if you are a slow learner or if you are hard to educate, then you will not love this system.

AC: I see.

CB: You know, we've had a few guys leave. We've had one person who's threatened to go back to the common pool, without being aware of consequences with the common pool and what the accountability measures look like. Hopefully they won't.

AC: Now that's regarded in a pretty scary light, the common pool, from the few guys I've talked to. What exactly does it mean if they were to return? I'm ignorant, describe.

CB: Well, the common pool this year... last year there were no accountability measures. There were no stops to stop overfishing. This year there is. This year as soon as... in Southern New England, should yellowtail quota get caught, the minute it's caught, they will close vast tracks of land to groundfishing to everyone in the common pool.

AC: Gotcha.

CB: So the fishery will be closed. That area will be closed. It's a poor choice. It's a poor option. But that's your only, you know, your only option in common, in a free flowing, open access kind of no rules fishery. That's why sectors make sense.

AC: Gotcha.

CB: You can exercise discretion. You can use your common knowledge to your advantage.

AC: And do you find that the state sector and Sector 5 operate kind of on similar principles? Or on par with...?

CB: They do, but the federal sector process has a lot more moving parts. It's infinitely more complicated. You know, the fluke sector is very simplified, but enormously effective. We had the luxury of building the fluke sector, and crafting it around a common ideology. You know, we all believed in what we were trying to achieve, on day 1. Every single man. And that made it so easy. And that makes us such a proving ground for evolved thought. Erasing the lines of historical allocation, like we did that this year. I'm trying to bring that to the groundfish sectors.

At a Northeast Seafood Coalition meeting, about three or four months ago, one of the guys who had a lot of quota was standing up, and he's railing against the government, and the process, and sectors, and the Coalition. He said "You guys are putting my buddy Joe out of business. You're killing him, you're starving him. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves." And I said "Oh, excuse me, wait a minute. You know, they only had you accumulate your historical performance in the fishery into the sector. You don't have to fish it like that." I said, "If you

want to help Joe, you can give him all what quota you want. As a matter of fact, you're putting him out of business. The government isn't doing anything." So the minute we decide to make it a priority to have people quit suffering, that'll happen. We can do that. And we should maybe make that as our first goal. To keep as many people in business as we can. To mitigate the suffering as generously and wisely as we can, to keep healthy communities, as opposed to individually rich fishermen.

[36:48]

AC: I see.

CB: So we did that this year with the fluke sector. We took thirteen vessels, 430,000 pounds of fluke, and divided it up without regard for anything other than vessel size and need. We had people coming into the fishery that didn't have any history, but he had a baby, so we gave him some quota. Cool stuff.

AC: Yeah, that is cool stuff. [It] kind of reminds me of a discussion we just had with someone who said there was a different type of person years ago that was involved in fishing. Fishermen were a different type of person then and now. Do you see that, or is it just...?

CB: I think it's the reemergence of our core values.

AC: Do you see them reemerging?

CB: Yeah, I think you have to find a different way to express them. You know, if you've never parted company with your core values, and you're deeply troubled by the on-goings of the last twenty years. And then, as the opportunity to help someone out who needs it, or support your community emerges via a different management mechanism, you have to seize it. You have to act on it, because you don't have anything else to act on. So it's the core values that still live, they will emerge. It's not a different person, I disagree with that.

AC: Do you think that the adaptability that seems to be inherent in fishing is a trait, in terms of you know, switching seasonality and switching fisheries, is that reflective on the person? Personality themselves or is it kind of... it seems sometimes the opposite, I don't know.

CB: I think we have to revisit, you know, the extent to which we pride ourselves as being survivors. You know, genes don't arrive in the year 2011 in New England, you know, from being either not a survivor or thrifty, or frugal, or clever. We need to reconnect with those values. You know, throwing fish over is not clever, it is not thrift, it is not frugal, nor wise. Our ancestors would've shaken their heads. So if we reconnect with our core values and get over ourselves a little bit, and get over the notion that government can solve problems that are not theirs to solve and become less dependent on government. I think we would be infinitely farther down the road and in a better place mentally, spiritually, economically, and socially.

[39:22]

AC: Well said. In terms of health issues... have you seen that change for yourself? Again, you're such a...

CB: I'm aging. I am aging.

AC: ... positive person.

CB: And I avoid the bathroom mirror like the plague it is. I have been betrayed by my metabolism.

AC: So is it just a product of time?

CB: No, I think... I mean, I am a diabetic now. You know, type II diabetic. That is probably the result of drinking too much beer and getting too little sleep in my early ages, an affinity for sweet things, and a little bit of genetic predestination. Other than that, I consider myself healthier than the average 53-year-old man. I feel good. I feel I'm a sum of broken parts. But for the most part I... It is grueling. It is physically demanding and it does take its toll on you. I have aches and pains, but I feel good. I feel vital. Very vibrant.

AC: So would you say maybe your involvement kind of keeps you...

CB: Physical activity.

AC: ... keeps you fresh?

CB: Fresh air. Absolutely. You know, I made a conscious decision at age 50 to mount a rally. Most guys at age 50 in the industry tend to follow their vessel's productivity into the ground. The boat is getting older, they've been in the same job for a long time, they've been relatively successful, and as the boat gets... they say "Well, I can't really fish today 'cause the boat's getting a little old." And they go into a downward spiral of general productivity. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to pick it up, you know? I'll be old and dead soon enough, and there's no sense expediting the process.

AC: Now was there an event in life that led you to choose to rally?

CB: I sat back and watched it happen. All fishermen at age 50 crap out. I'm not playing that... that's a bad game right there. That's not good. No thanks.

AC: And your wife has chosen to do the same? Its like, sort of, your partner has chosen to...?

CB: Well my wife is going to retire from teaching and I think she wants to teach yoga.

AC: Wow, very cool.

CB: Yeah. She goes to *Zumba* and she's smokin'!

AC: There you go.

CB: My wife's a smoke show.

[42:07]

AC: I wish that was a comment we heard more. Excellent. I guess, if you could go back in time and change point 1. This is an evolution, like you said, but if you could go back and change anything about how sectors started, is there something that could have...?

CB: I wish we had been as visionary at a point in time when the stocks were healthy.

AC: I see.

CB: The fluke sector had the luxury of emerging during some pretty strong years. The biomass of fluke was good and getting better. We jumped into a management regime shift in year 7 of a 10 year rebuild with the first seven years being grossly ineffective at controlling mortality. So any of the cuts or any of the balloon payments that were due, which resulted in small allocations, has been blamed on sector management, as opposed to the ineffectiveness of Days at Sea management in the first 7 years of the 10 year rebuild period.

AC: Sure.

CB: Guys blame what's in front of them. Another thing I regret is that we would attempt a significant regime shift timed with the greatest recession that we've seen in 100 years. You know, they say that the worst time to have a son is 18 years before a war. So, much in that vein, hard economic times are just that. We are not immune to that. We are along for that ride. So you couple new management, aging fleet, aging fishermen, regime shift, recession. It's almost a perfect storm of events which could drive people to think that this is a very bad thing. They're too simplistic in their assessment of what has led to this. They can't tease out what the real downward fall was on their success.

AC: Chris, in terms of your income distribution in your family, have you seen that change? Are you now contributing more or less versus what your wife is contributing or is it the same since sectors started?

CB: No, I would say my income... again, the groundfish part of things we're not that dependent on. My income is pretty stable, and has been. Traditionally, we've gone up almost every year we've owned the boat.

AC: Okay. And retirement? You were saying your wife is planning to retire.

[45:03]

CB: She's going to retire. She's going to get done fishing, or get done teaching rather. And I don't know if she's going to pursue another career. She talks about teaching yoga and playing with grandkids.

AC: And you feel that that's...?

CB: I owe that to her. She started teaching as a result of my inability to provide a single income that was adequate to raise children on. She jumped back in to pay the bills, because in an ocean that we had beaten down to nothing, where there was virtually... there was nothing to catch. I couldn't do it. You know she met me at the door one day with the kids and she said "You either have to make more money or take more time off." It was like "What do I do with that?" You know, it's going to have to be... I can't fish more, 'cause I fish every day. And I can't catch any more, 'cause there isn't more and then it takes me away from home. And I can't be home more, 'cause I have to fish more. And it was a vicious circle.

And I had a sort of an epiphany that diminished stocks equated to diminished family health. You know? I don't know how you can... if you look at yourself as just another critter in the food chain here, how could my family health be any greater than the sum of the health of the ecosystem I'm dependent on? You know, if I want to be healthy and strong as a family and have a healthy, strong community, and harbor, and friends in the industry, then we have to have healthy stocks. We're as dependent on fish as Indians were [on] buffalos. You know, it's the same thing. I mean, we've been called buffalo hunters. I don't like to use that analogy, but if you are dependent on an actual resource, you had better find it within yourself the wisdom to take care of it.

AC: So in terms of your long-term thinking, you can make it work if...?

CB: Yeah.

AC: If she retires you're not worried about...?

CB: No.

AC: Losing the house or...?

CB: No, we've already agreed that if things get tight then we'll just live on less because she has earned the right to be home with her grandchildren.

AC: Any retirement for you or are you just going to...?

CB: No. I'm going to just keep fishing as long as it don't break. You know? And then just stay actively involved in the industry. Just keep the grey matter rolling around, you know? I don't want to stagnate.

AC: Maybe one of those doing crosswords?

CB: No. We're not going down that road.

AC: I have a feeling that's the case. Is there anything else, Chris, that you'd want to add for posterity's sake or a story or a thought or an event or something you just want to close with today?

[47:49]

CB: I would encourage NMFS and the people who would read this document to realize that the people who are trying to make a difference are not as vociferous as the people who don't have a clue. And that just because you don't scream doesn't mean you don't care. A lot of times, simple hard work and thought will have to substitute for ill manners and profanity. They are not the same thing and they will not produce the same results over time. We're going down the right road. There are bigger things at play here than simply fishermen's success and failure. You know, if you look at climate change as being a real phenomenon, which I firmly believe in, you know, one of the outcomes of climate change is systemic loss of productivity. We have to quit squandering food. There's a big picture here. 10,000 feet that no one's talking about.

I think we've been close enough as a nation in the last ten years to not feeding ourselves that it doesn't make pleasant conversation at the dinner table for the White House. I think we're within one Mad Cow disease or one chicken plight or one heart disease of being without adequate sources of protein. I think we should look at, you know, the ocean off of our coast as, I don't know, national strategic protein reserve. You know, really? It is food security. It is huge.

So we have to look for ways as an industry that was given the right to go in there and harvest things from it and turn it into money and a great life. As having an obligation to not compromise everyone's ability to count on that on very short notice. So there's a different view and people don't think about that often times, but I think they should, and I think you know, thinking about grandkids and thinking about your own kids having kids and it just makes you look down that road a little bit. Or it should.

AC: Excellent. Anything about your sectors in general or your involvement that you would want to maybe close with as well?

CB: Well, hopefully we'll create a success story that attracts youth and our fishermen will bring their own kids into it when they see fit. We have successfully ushered our own children away deliberately as a community. We told them to go elsewhere and find work because where I work doesn't look very good. Now hopefully we create a different reality and the youth recognizes that this is a success story and a very cool way to make a living and they do come back in and grant us sort of a revitalization. You know, a renaissance if you will. I think it will happen, once we start making money and the word gets out and things are generally better than they are worse, I think you won't be able to keep kids out of this business.

[51:15]

AC: Perfect. Any other thoughts?

CB: No, I'm good.

AC: Alright, well thank you very much Chris. It's been a pleasure.

CB: Alrighty, thank you.

END INTERVIEW

[51:28]