

Interview with Maryellen Brown [MB]
Date: December 15, 2008
Occupation: Wife of fisherman
Port Community: Point Judith, RI
Interviewer: Azure Westwood [AW]
Date: Narragansett Public Library
Women's Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries
Logger/Transcriber: Azure Dee Westwood
INDEX: (minutes:seconds)

Interview

[00:00]

[AW]: Ok, to start if you could just say that you read the release form for the recording record and that you have agreed to this interview.

[MB]: Ok, so I just read and signed the agreement form, the release form and I'm ready to get started.

[AW]: And for the record, today is the 15th of December 2008 and I'm here at the Narragansett Public Library with Maryellen Brown. Mary, if we could just start by you giving me your name in your voice, your address and just a little bit of background information; how old you are, where you're from, and how you're involved in fishing.

[MB]: Ok. Well my full name is Maryellen Brown but you can call me Mary. 35 Erica Court in West Kingston, RI. I'm 49 years old and moved here when I was 14, from Connecticut. And met my present husband when I was 15 and we have been dating ever since. He's always fished, so that's all I've ever known.

[AW]: So you've been married for...?

[MB]: It will be 25 years at the end of January.

[AW]: You have you been at this present address for awhile?

[MB]: We've been here, this is our 11th year. Our third house during the course of our marriage but we've been here about 11 years.

[AW]: And have you had any family history involvement in fishing in any way?

[MB]: None whatsoever. Up until I moved here to Rhode Island, we were in, literally, central Connecticut, didn't even live near the beach.

[AW]: Different world.

[MB]: Yes. Really.

[AW]: And any family immigration history, were your parents from Europe, or first/second generation?

[MB]: My dad was born here, my mom was born here, but both of her parents were born in Ireland. That's as far out as we really go.

[AW]: And your husband, Chris?

[MB]: Chris, his grandmother was born in Scotland but I think everyone else is American born; for at least a couple of generations.

[AW]: And do you have any children?

[MB]: We do, we have three children; Maggie who is just shy of 24 and Christopher Jr. he's 22 and our baby, Sam, he's 19.

[AW]: And any of them involved in fishing?

[MB]: As little as possible. I have to say, well Maggie never went fishing and Christopher and Sam have gone sporadically during vacations and such but we both, Chris and I, have decided that they were going to college and Chris has been really adamant about almost keeping them away. So Christopher has graduated from college and Sam is just starting.

[03:15]

[AW]: At URI?

[MB]: Sam's at URI now. Christopher went to Pace University in New York and Maggie is at PC getting her Masters.

[AW]: Any marine-related degrees?

[MB]: None.

[AW]: Far away from the ocean.

[MB]: Yes.

[AW]: And I guess maybe we can just jump right in to how your husband got involved in fishing. When you met, you said he was...

[MB]: He was already fishing. His step father owned a boat and actually I think his grandfather owned the boat then his stepfather ran the boat and Chris would go during school vacations and during the summer. I think that's the only job he's ever had, was fishing or lumping down at the Point.

[AW]: And always in Point Judith?

[MB]: Always Point Judith. Then he eventually hooked up and became partners with a gentleman, Rob Bayer. Rob was the financial backer and Chris was going to run the boat. And that was in – I should know this – it had to have been late '70's early '80's that he's had the *Grandville* for. So he's been owner and captain ever since.

[AW]: So one vessel for his history.

[MB]: He's in the process now of purchasing, ironically, a small lobster boat. So he will have two boats that are involved in different fisheries.

[AW]: Will Chris have a separate person that's not related running it?

[MB]: I guess now with the licenses and the quotas and things, he could even have someone else run one or the other.

[AW]: And this would be a trusted friend and family member?

[MB]: Probably not. But my boy's have threatened. It's funny because the whole fishing industry provides an income for the boys that you can't get at McDonalds working part-time. They can make good money in a short period of time fishing. But I don't think they would do it.

[AW]: Not even a seasonal, summer thing?

[MB]: We'll see. Lobstering is something different. It doesn't have the hours and I don't think the pressures as the regular fishing does. But we'll see. They have no experience. It will be a whole new realm of possibilities.

[AW]: Now does your husband fish inshore, near shore, offshore, for days or return every night?

[MB]: He's home almost every night.

[AW]: So day trips?

[06:17]

[MB]: Yes, day trips, absolutely. It's really hard I think on him to not be home, even if he just says good night to the kids, to touch base with them. He's always tried to be home on a daily basis.

[AW]: How big is his boat? What's the length, do you know?

[MB]: The *Grandville*... it's a relatively small boat down at the Point... 57' or 58'. It's just him and one other crew.

[AW]: What sort of species does he fish for?

[MB]: Flatfish mostly.

[AW]: So trawling?

[MB]: Yes, absolutely. With all this sector...the allocations and everything going on.

[AW]: That's a new development I guess?

[MB]: Oh my, that is a full-time job.

[AW]: So he will be involved in a sector in some way?

[MB]: Absolutely. He's really set the pace, originating the whole idea here. He just got back from Washington, they asked him to go down and speak down there. So he's quite politically active.

[AW]: Now, he's the head of...?

[MB]: The Rhode Island Commercial Fisheries Association.

[AW]: So he's the President, is that his status?

[MB]: Yes.

[AW]: Founder as well?

[MB]: One of the founding fathers I would guess, yes. They needed spokesmen for the industry.

[AW]: And he's filled that role?

[MB]: Oh absolutely loves it.

[AW]: Has he always been an involved person in those sorts of things?

[MB]: Not... I think as our children get older, it's allowed him to free up a little bit of time. I think he's just always been... we always used to joke about the tree-huggers and the

conservation and all this; it seemed so out of the realm for us, but he's actually very much from that wavelength. He says why destroy the fisheries if this is how we're going to make our money. He's always been very conscientious about fishing... not conservatively.

[AW]: Maybe resource protection in some way? Perhaps conscientious that that's his bread and butter?

[MB]: Right. Absolutely.

[AW]: That's good, not a lot of people are like that I would guess.

[MB]: There were a lot of cowboys if you will out there. They really thought it was the last frontier and no one was going to tell them what to do and they would go out fishing and fish and fish. He was never like that. I mean, we're not going to get rich, but it's been steady, it's been good.

[09:31]

[AW]: Just a little bit from your perspective, what's it like being married to a fisherman and that whole dynamic, is there thoughts you'd like to share? Pro's and cons?

[MB]: Initially, I think even within our community, there's a lot of negativity. Most people I work with, it's totally foreign. The whole concept of fishing, they have no concept.

[AW]: Even here, being so close to a major port in New England?

[MB]: Yes. But I think for a long time, Point Judith had a very negative persona if you will. You know, there was a lot of drinking, there was a lot of negative things were coming out of the Point, but it's all I've ever known. And we were never involved in any of that sort of behavior. I think what I like about it is I find myself to be independent. So, someone working 9-5pm and home every weekend; would not work for me.

[AW]: That's a very interesting trait that I've noticed with women who have involvement in fisheries in some way. There is that base of independence and self-sustaining nature, maybe survival, maybe whatever you want to call it. That's very interesting. I guess because he's not away for ten days or extendedly, these issues might not apply as much, but as far as managing the household, finances....

[MB]: Oh I still do it.

[AW]: Ok. Is that something that you always did?

[MB]: I used to do the books for his boat and then it wasn't a good idea to be so connected professionally. So I let that go. But I do everything at the house as far as finances, even though he is home. He's responsible for X, Y, Z and I've got everything, all the other letters. Which is fine.

[12:18]

[AW]: Is there like an ownership of the vessel that's in shared names?

[MB]: Actually, I'm Vice President of the Corporation. And he does, he keeps me aware of what's going on and how things are going but honestly it's really hard to keep track of everything with the house, and work and the kids. I let him do his thing and I do my thing. This blends and works very well.

[AW]: And that's always been the case for you?

[MB]: Yes. Even with the kids.... It's funny because we both come from very different perspectives but somehow we've ended up with three marvelous children, but I think it's that balance. Because I was there 24 hours a day and he would touch base, but it's different.

[AW]: And in terms of financial contribution to the family, would you say, percentage wise, that you contribute more or that its equivalent, you both contribute even amounts?

[MB]: It's certainly not equivalent. Basically because it's a small Catholic School that I work in.

[AW]: So fishing has contributed more?

[MB]: Absolutely. But the only reason I'm working is... when we first got married, because we had known each other for so long, we were going to get married and have a family right away, so I was able to stay home and not even think about working. It was never even an issue. Because of his working schedule, I was going to be home, which I embraced; that was awesome. And then when those first rounds of fishing issues came up...

[AW]: Regulations?

[MB]: Regulations, shutting off different fisheries. Again, it was about 12-13 years ago, at least, it could have been a little bit more. We started to get a little nervous. We were like, this may have a negative impact. So I had already had my Bachelors so I went back and got my teaching certificate. And with the help of my parents babysitting for my youngest, I went back to school and I ended up teaching at the school where my children were attending. It was awesome. Sam was in my third grade class.

[AW]: I would have been a much better third grader if my mother was the teacher; straight as an arrow.

[MB]: So I've been there ever since.

[AW]: What's the name of the school?

[15:14]

[MB]: It's Mont Senior Clark School, just up the hill. And actually now it's more of, it provides health insurance.

[AW]: For the whole family?

[MB]: For the whole family.

[AW]: Where fishing can't do that.

[MB]: Right. We would just have to purchase it ourselves. So between the insurance and the health benefits, it makes an impact.

[AW]: But not 50/50?

[MB]: No, I would say probably maybe 40/60.

[AW]: So still a chunk of...

[MB]: It's enough that we would feel it.

[AW]: And you've been at that job at the school for...?

[MB]: This is my 11th year. When I went back to work, that's where I've stayed. I've never interviewed for a job.

[AW]: And I know your husband is the president of the Fishermen's Association, but are there other sort of support groups that you're aware of that are out there, not just for fishermen but for

wives, partners of fishermen, that offer some sort of financial loans, or are there things like that that have helped you guys along in Point Judith?

[MB]: Not really. I have to say, Chris has... when we were, literally growing up in the business, because we were so young, most of his peers, I can't even say they were peers because they were quite a bit older, but even socially, we were the kids, we were young. So we weren't really active in any of... I know there was a women's group, I want to say 100 years ago now. A lot of the wives got together. I think it was more social than anything.

[AW]: A club type thing.

[MB]: But there was a good ten year difference between us at the time, when you're 20 something and they're 30 something, that's a difference. It closes as you get older, but at the time, I never really... I honestly have never really gotten too involved down in Point Judith.

[AW]: And social networks then were more fishing related and now aren't or have never really been fishing-related? Friends and off-work...?

[MB]: For us?

[AW]: Yes, for you and for him.

[MB]: Chris always... everything; social, business – everything was Point Judith related. For me it wasn't. I think because I went to college after high school and he didn't so it just was a little bit different. But I know I consciously – this is going to sound terrible – almost stayed away, separated myself.

[18:37]

[AW]: Too close.

[MB]: Yes.

[AW]: Boat insurance, is that something that he has?

[MB]: He does.

[AW]: And does he cover that just through expenses?

[MB]: It's a business expense.

[AW]: We've heard that it's risen to somewhat unaffordable levels for some people.

[MB]: It has, but I think because he's so conscientious, his premiums are as low as they can be. He isn't one... I don't know if he's ever... maybe one claim in his history. And again, he was on the Board for the insurance company. The Point Club, so he was involved in that also. So it was only hurting himself if there were unnecessary claims. But safety is always of utmost importance. And now I think it's just awesome, the drills they do now and things, that are mandatory...

[AW]: Yes, all the safety training.

[MB]: Yes, which is huge. One of my sons for the first time actually had to go through some of the drills, which they should. They should know how to get on those survival suits.

[AW]: You say one of your sons, was that when he dabbled in fishing?

[MB]: Over the summer when he was fishing. With the timing of it, he happened to be... Chris said if you're going to go, we're going to do this. And he did, and he thought it was fun.

[AW]: He just did this for one summer, you said he was fishing?

[MB]: Not even a whole summer, because they both... to explain. Both my boys up until this summer have played baseball quite seriously. The older one was actually on a baseball scholarship in college. He was supposed to be playing independent ball and now he's recuperating from knee problems. So both the boys played all summer. So that was, baseball is the priority, making money was the second priority. And fishing allowed them to make some money when they weren't playing ball.

[AW]: And it was only on their father's vessel?

[MB]: Yes. Nowhere else.

[AW]: And it wasn't enough to sway them into the industry?

[21:18]

[MB]: They really just don't enjoy it. They are anxious to try the lobstering, you know, and in all honesty, Chris is a tough captain. His standards are high. There's nothing that we've done to encourage that.

[AW]: Now just sort of jumping into changes in the fishery over time, that's something we like to get a grasp on. What are some of the effects you've seen over the years, maybe sort of the last 5-10 years if that's relevant. You were saying the last ten years there was that bulk of regulations that came down the pipe. How have those sort of affected your family, your relationship even, on a personal level – feel free to go at any depth that you want or not. Those sorts of things.

[MB]: Fishing has always been a profession that... there are a lot of unknowns. And I don't know if it's any different from any other profession. I hear – my brother's work for insurance companies and they say, "Geez, am I going to get my pink slip?" – So I think every industry has its issues. In fishing, you have good years and you may have not so good years, the lean years, just because of what's around; oil spills, whatever, natural causes, you'll always have your ups and downs, and you're always prepared for that. I think what these regulations have done is created obviously man-made ups and downs and I think the worse part of all of these regulations is in the unknown. I just always feel like no one is definitive about what they're going to let you catch or when you're going to catch them. It's just this on-going process that's never-ending, I feel. So at the end of the day, at the end of the year, it's funny because our income has always pretty much remained the same. Chris has always done so well because he's been willing to change, he's been flexible, he's smart. He's not thick-headed and he's not going to change because... he adapts really well. The boat is small enough; the overhead is low enough that he can go with the flow and change. But I think he's always trying to stay a step ahead of what's coming down.

[24:25]

[MB]: And he's so involved politically that he knows more than I think other people know. He's always trying to be prepared.

[AW]: And does he have State permits only?

[MB]: State and Federal.

[AW]: So he does both. For groundfish permit, is that one of the permits he has?

[MB]: I don't know how they are actually classified but he has a number of them so that if one, for whatever reason, time of year etc. he can always go to the other for back-up.

[AW]: Does he do squid fishing?

[MB]: Yes.

[AW]: So that's diversifying his suite of options.

[MB]: Yes, absolutely. So he really looks to see what's... kind of fortune-telling; what's going to happen? What do I need to do? How can I put my ducks in a row? But it takes a lot of time. I think he puts more time in now into fishing management than fishing. Which in a lot of ways I think he enjoys; I think he likes being on land and fighting for the cause.

[AW]: And does that mean going to meetings, like you said Washington?

[MB]: He was just down in Washington, but it isn't unlikely for him to have 3-4 meetings in a week. So he's very, very active.

[AW]: Does he sit formally on any Councils or management bodies? Or is it more sort of advisory?

[MB]: I know he's involved with the Northeast Coalition.

[AW]: Northeast Seafood Coalition. Based up in Gloucester, right?

[MB]: Right, so he has to drive up there for meetings, which is a whole other.... So he's involved in a lot of Boards and he has relied on... he's always at the State House giving his input, different aspects.

[AW]: So has his ability to adapt, it's worked well for fishing, but has that energy taken away from...

[MB]: It drives me crazy. It does, because I can see him trying to... I think the work on land is a full-time job. And he's not reimbursed for it.

[27:12]

[AW]: It's an act of love.

[MB]: It truly is because I don't think there are that many active fishermen that can either take the time or have the background. He said there are a lot of guys that want to put time in but they don't like to speak publicly, they don't speak well publicly and you've got to have the presentation.

[AW]: It's true. Politics in any industry is a game that you have to play according to its rules.

[MB]: When we were younger, if he ever said that he would be in Kennedy's office in Providence, he would say no, never do it, never put a tie on, and never go. And he was just up there last week, in awe of the pictures, he said, "Ah, Mary if you could have seen the pictures of John Kennedy." He was in Patrick Kennedy's office. I would have loved to have rewound the tape and said, "Twenty-five years ago you wouldn't have thought this was so cool."

[AW]: So it sounds like more of a need that he moved into that role rather than a natural....

[MB]: Well, I think he feels responsible for the industry. He truly does. It's not cliché, he really, truly feels responsible for the industry. He wants to see it left so somebody, even if it's not his own sons, but that it's there, intact for the future.

[AW]: And is his angle that we should do what we can to first protect the fishermen and then the resource or – this may or may not be a perspective that he has – or is it the other way around?

[MB]: I think it's the other way around. I think the resource takes priority. He's unfortunately come to blows with fellow fishermen because they don't see it that way. I think initially he took,

they all did, they took all these regulations as a personal attack. But he has embraced the notion that it's the resource that we're trying to save and they're not attacking the fishermen and if they just work together.... Even like with the scientific body of knowledge, how inaccurate it very often is just because the ocean is huge and you can't necessarily take a boat out of URI and have them go and try to catch fish and mimic what someone has done for the last 30 years. And if you don't butt heads with them but if you can work with them to improve the way they're trying to catch the fish; improve the nets, to make it a more realistic sample, that it's better.

[30:38]

[AW]: So has he done research directly with his boat?

[MB]: Yes. And actually he's been a number of times they have commissioned him to go out and do research.

[AW]: With the State?

[MB]: With the State, with the Federal. He's always got someone on the boat doing some sort of fish counting and whatever they do.

[AW]: Samples. That's very interesting. He has a unique perspective.

[MB]: He is. He really is and I think it... I do think part of it is – again I hate to not put the responsibility on the children – but as they have become educated, he sees it's not just going out and catching fish. He understands that the need for education... he's educated himself in all of this. Hopefully using education in a positive way.

[AW]: And a Bachelor's degree, did he get his Bachelor's?

[MB]: No he didn't, he is self-educated. He graduated from high school and was a good student. At the time, he got out of high school and said, "Oh, I can make X amount of money fishing or I can go to college." So he never went. Now he is so frustrated that he didn't because very often if you have that piece of paper....So no, he never did.

[AW]: Unfortunately the society rewards for self-education are not as high as.... But you did get a Bachelor's degree?

[MB]: I did and I'm working on my Master's now.

[AW]: In teaching?

[MB]: Guidance and Counseling. My daughter is actually doing the same thing; she's the one that got me into the program. So she's graduating in May.

[AW]: From?

[MB]: PC. So I can figure everything out.

[AW]: If you're comfortable speaking in a little more depth maybe how in your relationship, how these changes in his, the ebb and flow, his increased involvement in the management has affected you.

[33:22]

[MB]: I think part of me... when he...he's so involved on land, I don't know how else to say it; on land stuff. If you're on land, you're not fishing. And to me, it's unnerving because I think it puts more responsibility onto me. And maybe that's just a perception. But that's how I feel. It's a

necessary step I guess. Part of me wants to say, “Isn’t there anyone else who can go to this meeting.” But part of it, he just loves it. He loves it. But it does, if you have a meeting at noon tomorrow, you’re not going fishing. And that’s like someone retiring to me, almost. I almost see that as these couples that they go along, go along, go along, and when the husband is home all the time it’s like “who are you and what are you doing here.” That’s almost what it’s like.

[AW]: So it’s disrupted a flow that you weren’t quite prepared for until maybe a later time.

[MB]: Yeah, he’s home, I feel like, all the time. And even my kids; everyone is home. There are five of us. I almost embrace getting up and going to teach middle school. We joke, the kids and I will say, “Is daddy fishing?” “Daddy is not fishing.” “Is he ever going fishing?”

[AW]: See that’s a very unique situation as well. We speak with a lot of women where it’s the opposite; they’re just never home and they want them to be home. But that hasn’t always been the case, this is a recent thing?

[MB]: Absolutely.

[AW]: In the last how many years?

[MB]: That this is really having an impact, probably the last maybe two years at the most, the farthest back, that he’s been really so busy on land.

[AW]: He’s driven by that goal or calling.

[MB]: Yep, absolutely. And I think it’s because he does get a lot of positive feedback and recognition. He’s doing a lot of good. What can I say?

[AW]: Do you have any sense of the resource itself, the fish stocks, are they doing good, are they doing bad, does he have a sense of that that he share with you or maybe your own personal opinion?

[36:24]

[MB]: It will vary. I really feel comfortable and he expresses that the resources are there. That the science wasn’t always good. But that’s improving as far as taking accurate counts and getting accurate data. He’s willing to do whatever he can to help improve the pool of information. For the longest time, the scientists were the enemy. Because they would come to the meetings and have all their calculations and information and they didn’t want to be wrong – of course, no one wants to be wrong – and of course the fishermen didn’t know what they were talking about because they didn’t have the science behind them. But now they are kind of coming together. I really don’t feel like the resource is in bad shape from Chris’s input. I would be lying if I said that I understood all the subtleties of the regulations because I can’t keep up with them; I can’t. And I’ve really just like handed that off to him; “I know you’re going to do whatever you need to do and whatever is best for us.” But overall I feel like they’ve done the right thing in a lot of fisheries in that a lot of the fish – either through the regulations or just through nature – have come back. There was a lot of overfishing. Those boats got really big really fast. There was a lot of abuse.

[AW]: And he never wanted to buy a bigger boat or anything like that?

[MB]: Never. I think because he liked having his boat paid for. He likes watching baseball games, when the kids play; he was able to do that. Finding crews, you know. Dean has been

with him now for quite awhile, but to have to be responsible for 4-5 guys, that's a whole other world that he just never wanted to get involved in.

[AW]: And his crew, you said has been with him for awhile. How long would you say?

[MB]: Dean has been... wow. I'm trying to get a sense of how long he's been... probably 7-8 years. It's awhile. Typically he has somebody that stays quite awhile. They make good money. It's a good job. They do well.

[AW]: And has he sort of become part of the family in a sense or is that a very separate relationship?

[MB]: Very separate. He has a couple of young children. I mean I know everything about his family, if you will, because they talk but we don't socialize or anything like that.

[39:49]

[AW]: If we could actually talk a little bit about, you were mentioning some physical and mental health issues that have been associated with fishing. That's something we're very interested in learning about, if you could elaborate on that.

[MB]: Physical. It's funny, Chris is 50. That's not funny. But some physical, like literally physical, like his knees are starting to bother him and he really thinks it's the rocking of the boat. And back issues, like he's tried to do everything he could like putting a mat in the wheelhouse, but literally keeping your balance against the waves and things for so long, is going to have an impact. So he's had back problems for quite awhile and now his knees are his latest issue. But I do think the diabetes is, to me, I really think it is stress related. Improper eating and I think part of that is because of the schedule on the boat. Like he would grab... you grab a candy bar because you need the boost. You get up 3-4 o'clock in the morning and you may or you may not have time to eat something, grab a cup of coffee at the most. Things that are quick to eat on the boat typically higher in fat, you're not going to sit down and eat a salad. So I think years of that and I think the stress of working on these regulations and things.

[AW]: And this was recently that he was diagnosed with diabetes?

[MB]: Yes, in August.

[AW]: So very recently.

[MB]: Yes. And it's funny because he's so good about keeping his records of his blood sugar and they will go up after a meeting. Because he didn't believe me. I would tell him, "Chris, this is definitely stress-related." But he'll have a meeting and he can take his blood sugar and it will be up. It's amazing. The correlation is so right on.

[42:24]

[AW]: That must be hard on you seeing not the return on the meeting as one thing for the family but then also this physical toll.

[MB]: Absolutely. So I think he was always in... I think you have this notion that you work hard... and he does work hard on the boat, physically hard, but it's a quick kind of lifting, it's not that endurance exercise. So you have a toll on your body and then you add the emotional, psychological stress to a body that's not prepared for it and it was like the perfect storm. So he's embraced it, and he's recognizes it, which is awesome that he's recognized it; we've caught it so early, that he's got it totally under control. It's just unfortunate, I think it's definitely a stress related onset.

[AW]: But he's not cutting back on attending meetings?

[MB]: Not even slightly. Just fishing less. It's funny because most people will say, "Oh, the fishing, it must be hard on your family?" It really wasn't. I don't think my kids would be able to survive in any other type of environment, in terms of fishing goes. And what dad did, dad's role. Very involved but almost from a distance, you know, I don't know how else to say it. Like it there was something at school, I went. But they always knew dad was there. These meetings, they feel more of the impact now, even as young adults. What it takes out of him.

[AW]: So he can't give his energy to family?

[MB]: They feel like – and it is – totally consuming. Because if he's home... You know, the kids are older too, but he's on the computer. He has dozens of emails, all the time. Or he's preparing for something...Almost to the point, like I said to him, he was talking about leaving a legacy in this whole sector; he feels so responsible for...he's leading the charge. And someone wanted to write about him in a book and it was about leadership and it was about what you have to do to get things done or to make changes. What you have to do. He was like the classic, like the perfect... this is what you have to do, but I was like, "Chris, look what you lost doing it?" It takes so much energy. It's like working at anything; it doesn't matter what it is, if you're writing a book, writing a novel and you give it 95 percent of your energy, there's only 5 percent left.

[46:08]

[MB]: Which is different than physically not being there because you're fishing.

[AW]: That's a very interesting perspective, I haven't heard that but it makes sense.

[MB]: And as far as the fishing, I'd have to say what really has closed the gap as far as... phones, cell phones. When he started fishing, there was no way to get a hold of him. It was the Ship to Shore, that awkward thing. But now, you're next door. We're always on the phone. So not being home fishing isn't... you're still connected. And even now with the computers and how they have the... we actually had talked about and I don't even know if they were doing it, they had some classrooms connected to fishing boats...?

[AW]: They did that up in Maine or on the Cape I heard as well.

[MB]: They were talking about it here in URI and we said, "We should just do this ourselves." And I said I don't know if this would be such a good idea; "Hold on guys, Mrs. Brown has to talk to Mr. Brown!" But this new interest and these new missions are more consuming than fishing.

[AW]: And there's no real telling where that's going to go, you're just hunkering down?

[MB]: We're going to go lobstering. Which is so random, that we have a lobster boat. That used to be like the anti-Christ, lobstering. Oh yes. This is bizarre.

[AW]: Oh, so it's like going to the other side or something?

[MB]: Yeah. And I think... I don't know. He's all over the place. Do you retire? Do you not retire? I think he feels old sometimes. Even at 50, maybe he's just had enough, but it's just too bad that they couldn't pay him to do all this.

[AW]: Some of the Councils they do get... I think it's for the big fisheries management Council, they get some kind of compensation.

[MB]: Right, but compared to what he makes fishing. We're at the height of expenses, one is supposed to be in college; we're there, at the peak of what we need. Once it goes down, it might free him up to do whatever; I don't know what more he could do.

[AW]: We're getting close, so maybe just a little more to wrap up. I feel like I could talk to you for five hours, I mean this is great.

[MB]: Well, if you ever want to get together again, it's no problem.

[AW]: Thank you, I might, after transcribing it, if there are a few other questions we might just call you, if you don't mind.

[MB]: I'll probably get home and say, "Oh, why didn't I say this!"

[49:25]

[AW]: Yes, and that's something you can write in to the transcript if you'd like. Is there anything else that you would want...like I mentioned, this is going to be used hopefully and eventually to inform social impact assessments so that managers can say there's these other factors that changes in the fisheries affect that aren't maybe so tangible but are equally as important which are effects on family and relationships. So is there anything with that in mind that you would want to add or close with?

[MB]: Well, I think if the regulatory bodies or the State, the Feds – I don't know who I would address – but they do need to embrace the individuals in the industry to make changes. They all have to work together. If they could somehow support them for their efforts, like if we wouldn't feel like they're going to put their time in... provide health care, or provide some sort of compensation that if they're all going towards the same goal, something along those lines. And the process just seems so disjointed and you go to advisory committees and you go to this committee and it seems like a lot of the steps are drawn out and prolonged. But I think if they could just support those individuals or the community a little more, that would be a win-win.

[AW]: And that would take some of the strain off of the families that have leaders in them like your husband who is giving so much to help.

[MB]: Right. That would be very helpful. It would... I think no one wants to see the industry collapse or to not flourish, but sometimes I don't think it gets the respect that it needs. I don't know how they could balance that.

[AW]: One other thing I thought of; have you ever been on the boat?

[MB]: Yes.

[AW]: For more than one trip?

[MB]: Actually, he'll update things, do things, even painting, we always have to go down and see the new paint job on the boat or whatever he fixed, this computer he put on. I've only gone out literally once.

[AW]: That's not uncommon.

[MB]: And I was so sick. I can still feel it. But it's funny, Christopher, my older son doesn't really have a problem with it but my younger son, Sam, gets so seasick. He has to use those patches. So I think he got that from his mother. But no, I do not go that often. [AW]: That distance, that separation you were speaking of.

[MB]: That independence.

[AW]: Well, to respect your time, I will say thank you very much.

[53:18]

[END OF INTERVIEW]