

**Interview: Hilary Dombrowski**  
**Occupation: Commercial Fisherman**  
**Port Community: Gloucester, MA**  
**Interviewer: Azure Cygler**  
**Date: October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
**Catch Share Oral Histories Project – NOAA Fisheries**  
**Logger/Transcriber: Caitlyn Lawrence**  
**INDEX: [minutes:seconds]**  
**Place: Phone interview**

Interview

[00:00]

AC: For the record, my name is Azure Cygler, and I'm here on the phone with Hilary Dombrowski. The date today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2012 and we're speaking over the phone. Hilary, if you could, just for the record that you agree to do this interview today.

HD: Yes, I did agree.

AC: Okay. (laughs) And to begin, give me your full name and your address please.

HD: It's Hilary Francis Dombrowski Junior, 24 Gee Avenue, in Gloucester, Mass(achusetts).

AC: Okay, perfect. And your homeport is also Gloucester?

HD: Yes it is.

AC: And your vessels name Hilary?

HD: *Destiny*

AC: *Destiny*. And are you in a, the sector or the common pool.

HD: I'm in the common pool.

AC: Okay and how old are you, if you don't mind me asking?

HD: I'll be 65 in another month.

AC: 65 years young, wonderful. And Hilary to begin, I'd like to just get a little bit of context about who you are, if you could just tell me where you're from and how long you've been fishing, maybe educational background? That kind of thing to start.

HD: Okay. Well I was, well let's see, born in Salem, Mass. and grew up, you know, spent my teenage years in Manchester, Mass. [I] started fishing, actually hauling lobster pots about 10 years old. And went from skiff fishing to, you know, a larger lobster boat and then, you know, got into fishing and started trawling and that led to even larger boats and offshore fishing and you know it was just a natural progression. My education was high school at Manchester High. And I attempted to go to college, Southern Maine Vocational Institute at which they had a marine course at the time and I didn't care for that too long. It was, you know, just the itch to be on the ocean, so.... [I] left that and went dragging.

[02:19]

AC: Okay and you've bought, you bought your, your vessel what year? Do you remember?

HD: Well, I've had many.

AC: Okay.

HD: You know, like I say, I started quite young. [I] started fishing out of a 16 foot skiff when I was in high school. And a little after that I got a 28 foot lobster boat. And then that led to a 35 foot lobster boat and that boat became a tub trawler. And that led to a 50, a 50, just a little over 50 foot boat that was primarily fishing, tub trawling and longlining swordfish with that. That boat led to a 80 footer, which was primarily longlining, it was originally a dragger, but then I rigged it over for longlining swordfish. And then I used to go tub trawling out of that in the winter and spring.

AC: Okay, so you weren't just crewing on all these boats, these were ones you bought and owned and...?

HD: Yeah, it, yeah basically. I did do some crewing in between, you know purchases. But, you know, I was a deckhand on draggers and whatnot.

AC: And currently, what are you fishing for Hilary?

HD: Right now I've got a Handgear A permit and we primarily jig codfish, but I also do a little tub trawling for haddock in the spring.

AC: Okay. And do you have crew on your boat now?

HD: Sometimes, for the trawling in the spring usually I have one young fellow that comes with me. He also helps out on, on jigging during the winter. And, you know, a number of times I fish by myself.

[04:07]

AC: And is it mostly inshore fishing?

HD: It is now yes.

AC: Okay so....

HD: Within 20 miles of Gloucester.

AC: Okay, so you're home nightly?

HD: Usually, yes.

AC: Okay. Okay and you've been doing this for how many years?

HD: The last... 12 years I guess.

AC: Okay and how, so you chose to be in the common pool, is that right?

HD: Well, I didn't have much choice.

AC: Okay, could you tell me a little bit about how that all played out?

HD: Well. As the sectors came to be, we were fishing, like I said, a Handgear A permit. And we were severely restricted in the amount of codfish we could land. So, you know our histories weren't great every year. We didn't have the huge landings like the gillnetters or the draggers. And so when they rammed sectors down our throat and then gave us 10 years of catch history, it was during the most restricted codfishing times that there were. Where, I mean, we were allowed 200 per day or per trip for a while and then 300 per trip, you know for a while. I think it once reached 400, but then dropped right back down again. So we've, you know, we really couldn't acquire a history in order to have enough poundage to join a sector 'cause the sectors were expensive to join, you know? That's a lot for small boat.

AC: Yeah.

HD: [We're] primarily a small boat fishery. And there's not all that many of us so we were kind of ignored and, you know, put in with the general lot, then, you know, we had really no choice. There's not enough history, you can't afford to get into a sector, you know?

[06:02]

AC: Okay and now do you, is there a, what was your motivation to stay hook fishing versus going back to other gear types? [It] sounds like you tried just about everything in the past, what...?

HD: Well, I'm... I like hook fishing. It's a clean fishery. It's a fishery that doesn't catch a lot of bycatch, it doesn't kill a lot of small fish and... that which I had seen the dragging and in... a lot of discard with the gillnetters also. And I have tried it all.

AC: Sure.

HD: This is just a nice clean little fishery and as I grew older, it just seemed appropriate that, you know, I was on my own and make a few dollars and you know, support a boat, and whatnot.

AC: That's great. We, I interviewed a hook fisherman in Chatham and his wife about a month ago and he had sort of similar comments. It's, it's [a] very interesting perspective. I respect that. Now, are you married Hilary?

HD: Oh yes.

AC: (laughs) "Oh yes!" Tell me about your wife and your....

HD: 46 years of marriage.

AC: How many?

HD: 46.

AC: 46! And, oh my! And do you have children?

HD: Oh yeah. Yeah, we have 3 children, 2 sons and a daughter and 8 grandchildren.

AC: Wow! And now are any of your children in, in the fisheries in any way?

HD: No. I gave them the cure when they were quite young.

[07:30]

AC: (laughs) What was the cure?

HD: Taking them fishing. (laughs)

AC: Ah ha! Okay.

HD: They helped a little bit when I had bigger boats.

AC: Gotcha.

HD: And, you know, it got them good exposure to it, so it just... so they all finished college, [they] all have very good jobs.

AC: Did you, kind of encourage school versus fishing or...?

HD: Oh yes.

AC: Okay. And your wife as well?

HD: Never love... I mean, it's.... Fishing is something that, if you're not born to it so to speak, if you don't love it after you've started going then, especially at a young age then, you know, you'll seek other avenues for sure because it's not an easy life.

AC: Right. Do you see any young, younger generation in Gloucester these days?

HD: No. No. This is the saddest part of sectors, and the saddest part of this entire change over that the fisheries has had, that it has now eliminated the opportunities for any young people to really get into this business without having a million dollar backer behind you.

AC: Okay. Okay. And are there kids, you know, friends sons or daughters who are trying and just can't do it because it's financially impossible or is there just no interest as well?

HD: Well, I, I think it's a combination of both. There's a lack of interest because there's no avenue to, to get into the fishery and licenses.

AC: Right.

HD: They know we're too... boats have become too expensive. Rules and reg[ulation]s have, have, you know... are crushing, so to speak. You know, inspections on boats and safety equipment and everything, which isn't a bad thing but it all adds to the expense of the boat. And at this point, you know, there are a lot of boats that are marginal, so...

AC: Right

HD: Young, young people, there's just, I don't see, you know it's.... I mean it's one of the things I speak about at the council meetings all the time, is that you have no avenue for young people to get into this fishery. We keep advocating for the handgear because the least, even though it's a small, small fishery, it's one of the only fisheries that a young

person might be able to get a boat and a license at a reasonable price, get started you know?

And, you know, if they don't allow us enough fish to catch and get rid of a couple of the restrictions that they have on us, some of the closures and closed areas, then, you know, it's, it's not going to be something that's going to be perpetuated and it's a shame. Because this fishery was the original fishery. This fishery started in, in colonial times on small boats. Pilgrims who came to Plymouth came to go fish codfish. I mean, it's, it's just this fishery has, has been in business as long as people have been not going away. And I think it's the saddest, saddest thing.

[10:32]

AC: Yeah and do you feel others in Gloucester share, share your perspective on this?

HD: Oh, I think so. I think there's lots of...

AC: Yep.

HD: ... you know, fisherman of my era that have, have seen good times and the bad times and, you know, feel very sad that there are no, you know, young people going to be able to really get into this business unless they're going to somehow work on deck and work their way to the pilot with somebody else, you know.

AC: Yeah.

HD: [It's] impossible.

AC: Right. Now how, how about your neighborhood, do you feel like it's a fishing community or people in your neighborhood understand some of the things you're experiencing as a fisherman or...?

HD: Oh I think they do. You know, it's not a... you know fishing community as it was 40, 50 years ago, that's for sure. You know the *Gloucester Times* does a lot of reporting on the whole situation and on.... It's fairly well read as far as coastal communities go online, you know? The commentary comes back [about] the fisheries and the state they're in. And the blame, you know, generally fingers get pointed at NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and at the council a lot.

AC: Yeah it sounds like you attend a lot of these meetings just....

HD: I have over the last few years, just advocating for the small little group of fishermen. We have a small, loose association called the Northeast Hook Fisheries Association and we try to be present, 1 or 2 of us, at all the council meetings and....

AC: Okay.

HD: Just keep ourselves in front of them so they don't forget us.

[12:19]

AC: Gotcha. Now in terms of the, your social networks, that sounds like... do you spend time with this association, the members in the association?

HD: Well we, we talk on the phone and, and meet, you know, at council meetings or groundfishing committee meetings and things like that.

AC: Okay and in, as in wider fishing community circles, do you feel like you're, you socialize with other fishermen and their families or in your free time when you're not on the water? Or how does that work and how have maybe sector's, sector based management changed that, if they have?

HD: That's actually (laugh), that's a, a tough situation in a sense. Like I belong to this Saint Peter's Club in Gloucester here and it's a social club and we play cards and, you know? And it's a, it's a general meeting place for a lot of the, you know, the offshore boat's and the inshore boats captain's. So, though there's a lot less of them now than there used to be. And the fellows that were in the sectors and have gained, you know, multiple licenses and, and, and hold a lot of permits, a lot of, a lot of history because of it and so the quota is fairly large for them and they've, they've done well. [It's] created a rift, you know, between them and small boat fleet that ends up selling most of their quota and not fishing anymore, you know.

AC: And has that rift changed the dynamics at the, at the club then? Have you seen...?

HD: I would say it has actually. It, I, I do believe it has. It's, it's not quite the same, the camaraderie or the jovial, you know, banter back and forth, it seems to have gone away.

AC: And replacing it, is it, is it a mistrust or is it a, just a...?

HD: Yeah, I'd say, I think it's more of people not.... You know, "that fellow is basically hurting the way I would like to make my living" type of thing. And, so I don't think the atmosphere is ever quite as friendly as it used to be. I mean, it's not hostile by any means, but it's certainly not as friendly as it used to be.

[14:42]

AC: And, and, and... Do you find that your time with other fishing families, like the wives and do you spend time with other families in sort of one-on-one context? Like barbeques or...?

HD: I would say not that much, no.

AC: Okay, is that recently changed or has it always been that way?

HD: Oh, I'd say it's pretty much been that way.... Running a boat and owning a boat you don't socialize all that much with your crew, unless it's family and.... So, you know, I don't think that's the way it is.

AC: And did you say, Hilary, that your crew do have occasionally, is that the same person or is it different?

HD: Yeah, it's the same person. Another older fisherman and once and a while there's a young fellow that comes out with me. [He] has his own landscaping business and loves to fish but doesn't always have time.

AC: And they're both local to Gloucester?

HD: Yes. Yes they are.

AC: Okay. And how have your, has your family's longer-term life plans changed, if they have changed at all since sectors started? Is there things like retirement or buying/selling homes, boats, those kinds of big decisions, have those changed for you guys or not?

HD: No, not really. I'm fortunate enough to have a, you know a small 38 foot boat. It's quite old, but it's not in bad shape and fishing basically pays for its maintenance and its dockage at this point. (laughs) And that's, you know, that provides us with plenty of good fish to eat so....

AC: Excellent, that's the... great bonus.

HD: (laughs) Yes, it is.

AC: Now are...?

HD: And, now my wife and I also have another business that she got started about 20 years ago, which is a garden nursery. And so I put time in there too and....

AC: Oh! What's it called, the business?

HD: Goose Cove Gardens.



AC: Goose Cove Gardens, okay. Excellent. And that, that's year-round?

HD: I'm sorry?

AC: Is that year-round?

HD: No. It, it's seasonal. We open up in the middle of April and we just closed... Columbus Day every year

AC: Okay. Excellent. And that, has that been... seen more business recently or less? Or how has the economy affected...?

HD: It, it's a good business. It has grown over the years substantially and we've been fortunate to be able to expand with the gardening market that has expanded. My wife started out 20 years ago as an organic gardener and grower and that was unique then but it's become the thing to be today. So it's, it's... she's ahead of the curve.

AC: That's great. (laughs) And you, so you eat delicious fish and fresh organic vegetables? That's....

HD: Exactly! Yes we do.

[17:30]

AC: You must be a healthy man.

HD: (laughs)

AC: So you're planning on fishing, continuing to fish for several more years? Or how, what does retirement look like for you?

HD: [As] long as my body will hold up, I'll, I'll go. I don't, like I say, I don't have to push like I did 10 years ago. [We] used to beat the hell out of ourselves here.... Hardcore fishing years ago, everybody did.

AC: Right and probably....

HD: It's just taken its toll, lot's of arthritis, bad knees, things of that nature.

AC: I see and you just sort of work through that? Push through those pains and aches?

HD: Oh, what else [are] you going to do? (laughs)

AC: (laughs) That's, that's true. That's... now would, would you say sort of, quality of life, in the big picture of your quality of life, would you say that that's changed at all since sectors started? I know that's a big question, but you know that includes sort of when you look at your life as a whole, your overall wellbeing, which includes a lot of different elements, but would you say that that's changed for better or for worse or not at all since... have sectors affected that?

HD: Well, you know, they've affected me in, in the way that I've described, because a few years back when we were all on, on quota, and the day boats were on quota, everybody was, a lot of small boats, they were running out making one very short tow and coming in with their quota. Gillnetters were going out and hauling, you know, just a couple of short nets and had their quota and they came in. And everybody was fairly cheerful about it all and got along, you know, because there was no problem to catch what they would allow [you] to catch and, and go in. And you didn't have big expense or had to spend, you know, days on the ocean in order make a living. So, you know, it was as the codfish were coming back and since sectors came in and the big boats were able to buy up, you know, inshore permits and Gulf of Maine cod permits and that, they've actually devastated the codfishing here.

You know, big boats... it reminds me of, back in the '60s when I was on Georges watching the Russian fleet, you know? There's all these big boats who basically pulse fishing, any sign of fish comes across the Bank and there's 10, 12 boats in a row, pounding on them. And you know, sectors have not been a good thing for me and that's one of the reasons I started going to the council meetings and advocating for the small boat and the handgear people.

And all I would say, I've had many of, I don't know if you'd call it stressful, probably sad, more sad than stressful moments thinking about how the deterioration of the small boat fleet is, is happening. [When] I was kid, there was... Chatham had 25 or 30 jig boats. Every, every harbor had a few. Gloucester had a dozen or better, I mean, that's how I got started in the fishing industry was going out 15 and 16 years old, so many dollars to jig, jig codfish. And, you know my first time out, I think I was 14 years old and we got into pollock, we had 1 jig and 4 teasers and I had 5 pollock on and they were so big, I couldn't pull them in. (laughs) So, I don't know. I'm rambling here, but...

[21:11]

AC: No, no, that's good, that's a good... a part, piece of your history.

HD: You know, I, I, you know, I would say it has left me with many sad moments thinking about [the] fishery and where it's going and how there is, again, no, no way for young people to get in. And, and the small boat fleet, which used to, you know, a large portion of all these harbors along the coast, it's just gone away.

AC: So it sounds like you don't consider each year, getting in, you know, joining the local sector.

HD: Oh. You know, there's no avenue for me to join a sector. I mean the cost of joining is, I don't know if it's 25 or 30,000 dollars. A percentage of your catch, 1% towards that and you know, paying all the dues or whatever. It's just not economically viable.

AC: Okay, gotcha, yep. And just sort of looking a little bit more at your, your income, household-wise, has that changed since sectors? Has your other business, sort of, been able to compensate for changes in fishing income or how is that?

HD: Oh yeah, yes it has.

AC: Okay.

HD: We've grown the business to a point where, you know, [it] gives us a living.

AC: Yep.

HD: Just... still can go fishing.

AC: Yeah. So, maybe... percentage-wise, would you say, what percentage does fishing contribute to your household income? Currently.

HD: [In the] past it was set, but the last 12 years, I would say it is insignificant.

AC: Okay.

HD: A few thousand dollars a year at best.

AC: Okay and in the past you said it was how much percent?

HD: Well it was 100%.

AC: 100%, oh I see, okay. Gotcha. And how, how is it being in the common pool? How does that function for you?

[23:14]

HD: Well, it's tough because, you know, we get just this scrap of quota.

AC: Yeah.

HD: And, you know, one small dragger can go out and catch enough of the quota in a couple days to actually have them start cutting the amount of fish that, you know, you can catch. And if it reaches the, you know, 85 or 90% of the quota being caught then they shut the fishery down, which has just happened this year in the first trimester, which they have just instituted. [A] small boat dragger had gone out and caught a majority of the quota of the white hake. And the white hake was a fish that we were listed as, as a groundfish, so it shut down all the fishing.

AC: I see, so....

HD: I think that, you know, we addressed this at the last council meeting, and they are making, you know, going to try and pass some legislation there that NOAA will go along with, where they're going to exempt the handgear boats from the white hake quota. Because we catch an insignificant amount, less than 1% of the quota is caught by the handgear people, so.... You know, hopefully we won't get shut down next trimester because of that, if this passes, we'll be able to continue to fish.

AC: And so it's by trimester, you say, not fishing year.

HD: I'm sorry, say again.

AC: It's by trimester, not fishing year? Did, did you say...?

HD: Yeah, well they've broken up our fishing year in the common pool into 3 sections. And, you know, 4 month sections and allotted a, an amount of quota in the groundfish, the cod and the haddock, and the hake and pollock, to each trimester. And so, that, you know, if your, you know, heavy in, in, in one species in that 4 month period early then the rest of the time in the, in the sector, you know I mean in the trimester would be shut down. That's what the hake did and so the last 3 weeks of September was shut off to all fishing in the common pool for groundfish.

AC: And now, would hake be considered a choke species, is that what they mean?

HD: It was this year, yeah.

AC: Okay, so gotcha.

HD: Like I say, in the common pool, [the] way the council set this thing up, if you didn't join a sector you were getting punished because the amount of quota that they gave you is very small compared to what the sectors are, are working with.

AC: And, why was that? Was that just sort of the, the remaining...?

HD: Yeah, they did it. I think this was the, basically the way that Doctor Lubchenco wanted it and she was going to modernize the fleet and eliminate the marginal fisheries, and have much fewer, you know, much less boats catching the fish that was to be caught.

[26:37]

AC: I see. Now, Hilary do you have health insurance?

HD: Yes, I do.

AC: Okay, is that just a direct pay?

HD: It's through our other business.

AC: Okay, and that covers your family?

HD: Yeah, my wife and I.

AC: Okay. And insurance for your vessel, for you boat?

HD: No. Nobody will issue insurance for a 46-year-old wooden boat

AC: Oh wow. So that wasn't, was not even an option?

HD: Not even an option, no.

AC: Do, is there extra precautions you take or is that just sort something you...?

HD: Oh, I maintain the boat very well.

AC: Okay.

HD: Very solid. It was built well. And you know, I see a problem, I fix it. I don't ignore it.

AC: Gotcha. How about, in terms of Gloucester, the shore side infrastructure, have you seen that change?

HD: Oh God yes. It has shrunk to almost nothing.

AC: Is that due to sectors or did sectors affect that at all or...?

HD: Oh, I think it, it has exacerbated the problem. It was shrinking as the fishing got, you know, as this fishing deteriorated back in the '80s and the early '90s, you know the infrastructure started to go away because there wasn't enough fish, there weren't... you

know the boats were falling by the wayside. So a lot of the support for the boats, you know, we used to have 5 or 6 outfitters in town and you know we only, we ended up with 1, so you know...?

AC: What...?

HD: Fish houses, probably 15 or 20 fish houses that got fish, fresh fish here in Gloucester and now there's 1 or 2.

AC: And does that affect the price you get for your fish then?

HD: Well, I don't think that the price of fish has actually kept up. I think sectors, they claim that, you know, overall, the value of the fish has gone up, but... I, you know, it's only because of, of, you know, fellows with the big boats that have the quota and, or are buying quota if there's... a lot of these gillnetters have to buy quota. You know, overall, it's, I don't see a significant increase in price to tell you the truth but all our expenses have gone up and the cost of buying quota for those draggers and gillnetters is, is high so that, you know, a lot of times they're only working on 25, 30, 40 cents a pound after they pay the buck or buck and a quarter that they paid for the quota. That, you know, has not helped.

[29:36]

AC: Okay, now have you ever had to buy or lease fish at all or...?

HD: I would not do that.

AC: Would not, okay.

HD: Well first of all, you have to be in a sector to do that.

AC: Right, okay.

HD: Okay, so it's not even available to the common pool. Or in our fishery anyway.

AC: Gotcha. Okay and you can't purchase it either then? You can't, it's just not an option.

HD: No, no. What we were on is an overall cod quota, haddock quota, pollock quota and we're limited in the amount of cod that we can land per trip or day fish.

AC: Okay.

HD: 300 pounds per, per trip.

AC: How much was that, did you say?

HD: 300.

AC: 300, per day? Or per trip?

HD: Yeah.

AC: Oh, per trip right. Which is the same as a day?

HD: [It] is, is usually the same as a, as a day trip yes.

AC: Okay, okay. And what do you think the future holds, we've... you've touched on this but, just asking it directly, what do you think the future holds for, for your fishing community? How does that look to you? Is there hope or change in store?

[30:52]

HD: Well, there's hope in a sense that there will continue to be a fishery here. I'm hoping that at least the handgear guys will survive. There'll be a few large gillnetters that survive and a few of the larger offshore boats, but I see a much reduced fleet and a much less diverse... and I think the way of the day boats is almost going to be gone.

AC: Okay. Have you seen boats tying up to the docks there that are, that you've never seen before that are big from other places or?

HD: Oh yeah. There's boats unloading that come from New Bedford and boats from Maine and that come down and put their fish in the auction. You know, we have a couple of auction houses here now that handle the fresh fish for just, most of the, not quite, but most, most of the boats go to 1 of the 2, one or the other auction.

AC: Okay. And, and, and, and are they kind of seen as outsiders and no one talks to them or how does, how are they received?

HD: No. We aren't like that. I don't know. I mean, they come and they go. They're not tying up or if they are, the crew goes home and, you know, comes back, gets their bait, you know, I mean, their fuel and their ice and they're off again. So, there's not a lot of interaction on the docks or in the community as far as that goes.

AC: Okay, okay. In terms of your, sort of, other health either mental/physical health effects, you talked a little bit about the just physical wear and tear and... that is associated with fishing for your life, but is there other effects that you've felt, maybe specifically recently? You mentioned often feeling sad about the nature of things and where it's going for the small boat fleet, are there other sort of feelings that you've had or

thoughts or effects that you've felt, stressors, those sorts of things that you would want to speak about?

[33:05]

HD: I'm, no, I think I've pretty much said it, I mean, I do feel sad at times when I see what's, you know, coming out of NOAA and the restrictions and whatnot. It does sadden me. I've been able to live a relatively enjoyable life being a fisherman, and it's going away. And thank God I don't have to make a living and support a family by fishing today. You know, but I truly feel that there are no opportunities for young people like I was. And that's a sad thing.

AC: Right. And any of your fishing peers feeling that health effects that you've seen or have kind of seen it in the wider community at all?

HD: I mean it, down at the club I've seen it there, you know. You know, some of the old fellows of my age or older and that saying how they're glad to be done with it because it's no fun anymore and that's an expression you'll hear a lot of times.

AC: That is true.

HD: "No fun anymore. I used to look forward to getting up at 2 every morning to go fishing 'cause I couldn't wait to get out there and I'm glad I'm out of it now because it's no fun." All the regulations, all the rules, all the restrictions.

AC: Now, is, is dockage space changing for you guys there?

HD: Oh yeah, it's expensive.

AC: It's, so it's gone up?

HD: It's expensive. Yeah there, well, first of all there's, there wasn't a lot of docking areas and you know, anywhere that was available for a small boat, like at the state fish pier, you know. There was a, a, you know, it's a fishing pier down there that had a lot of lobster boats and gillnetters down at and now there's becoming, you know, spaces are becoming available and there's less, less gillnetters and that's.... But, it's you know, I have a private dock because I can't get insurance. [You] have to have insurance on it at the federally subsidized pier where the rents aren't quite so high. So I'm at a private dock and I have to pay, you know, a lot more. (laughs)

[35:26]

AC: Okay, and the federally subsidized pier, has that always been the case? It's always been...?



HD: They did this, I don't know, let me think... Early '90s I guess they did an expansion on the state pier in Gloucester here. And they put it, basically a small boat marina for inside and some large boats outside. So it was built with, you know, federal and state funds, and has been run, you know, by guys of state and federally funded program, I guess. Anyway, you know, they have a nice facility, but and they don't pay as much, but like I said, you have to have liability and hull insurance in order to tie there.

AC: I see. And is the private dock in jeopardy of being sold at all? Is that something you hear?

HD: I don't think so. I think it's a money-making proposition because it's more yachts and small, you know, sport fishing boats than commercial boats.

AC: Okay, so you're tied up right amongst the seasonal...

HD: Yes.

AC: ... tourism vessels and, you know, private, private pleasure boats.

HD: Yes, exactly.

AC: Huh, okay. How is, is there any, you... discussion by your vessel neighbors about, you know, you being....

HD: Well, no there's only one other lobsterman there and he's a nice guy. [He] fishes a small string of gear. All the rest of them are bass fishermen and sports fisherman and I'm gone before they get to their boats and sometimes I'm not home until after they've gone so....

AC: Okay, so you don't intersect often.

HD: No.

AC: Okay. Is that a good thing do you think or...?

HD: Oh, it's, it doesn't bother me. I, you know, I mean (laughs).... It's, you don't see them anyway so what's the difference?

AC: That's right. Now Hilary, how has all these changes in, in, in your industry affected your home life and your marriage? Is that changed at all or...? Do you guys discuss fishing more or less than you used to or how... what's that dynamic like at home, for you?

HD: Well, it's, it's, we've probably reached a, you know, a pretty good understanding, you know. And I was, a few years back when these changes were starting to come, you know, quite, you know, voicing my opposition and, and complaining about what was happening and, and what was going on at NOAA and everything. And, you know, my wife said finally, you know "That's enough. You can't complain about it unless you're willing to do something about it." And so I started going to all the council meetings and making all my opinions heard.

AC: Now has she gotten involved in anyway?

HD: No, no.

AC: Okay.

HD: There's enough to do with the garden business and that keeps her very busy.

AC: And do you work in, at, at the nursery part time or in any, at any point?

HD: No. I help out a lot.

AC: (laughs) Okay. [It] takes 2 to run a big business like that, I'm sure.

HD: It does, yeah. [We] say she's the grower and I'm the maintenance man.

AC: (laughs) Now is, is there something, sort of that you would want to add about your experiences and your thoughts that you haven't said already before we wrap up over the next couple questions?

HD: I don't, I don't know. I'm... I'll think about that.

AC: Okay, we can come back to it.

HD: I've been probably 45, 48 years on the water in some capacity. [I] made a living off the water to some, you know, to some degree for those 48 years. And I think it's a shame to think that the opportunities that I've had and, and the enjoyment that it has brought me, won't be available to 16 year olds in a skiff or a 22 year old buying his first boat, being able to go fishing. And back then we could fish for anything we wanted, we switched fisheries, we went, you know, for groundfish, we went for flounders, we went for swordfish, you know, and it's different now. It's, it's, it's so restrictive and so expensive. If I had anything to say to anybody that would listen, things should be different. They should have consideration for the small boat industry and have an avenue for more a young man or woman to go fishing today.

[40:23]

AC: Do you think that through, sort of the scaling, the cutting back, and hopefully potential resource benefits from that, that there will be an opportunity down the line or...?

HD: I don't see how.

AC: Yeah.

HD: The sectors are, you know, going to control the quota and a lot of outside interests have started buying up quota because the small boats of people that couldn't afford to keep their quota or didn't have enough quota found that it was economically more feasible to sell their quota than to fish it so.... Control of the fish is shrinking and shrinking and shrinking to fewer and fewer people so....

AC: Now, so sectors are here to stay, do you think?

HD: Yeah, I think they are. The lawsuit in the courts may have an effect on it. I don't know if the judges will have the guts to do anything but, I think this whole thing was kind of, illegally has been rammed down the fishermen's throat. A few have been vetted but the majority haven't taken a vote, which they were supposed to do, would have turned it down.

AC: Okay. Now Hilary did you, does your, does your wife help out with any bookkeeping? I should have asked this earlier, I just thought to ask.

HD: We, we do my books together, we always have.

AC: Okay.

HD: You know back when we had crew and share settlements and whatnot. We used to do them all together.

AC: Together, okay. Okay. And if you could replace sectors with a different management tool, what would that be?

[42:22]

HD: I probably would go back to the quota system like we had it before the sectors. Like I said the fish were rebuilding quite well at that point. Everybody was, you know, seemed to be fairly happy. There was a lot more boats and everybody was catching, you know, what they were allowed and, and, and it wasn't too bad. And it was enough to make a living. You won't see that happen. Like I said that sectors have allowed the big boats into the inshore grounds and they've cleaned them up in no time so....

AC: So you've seen the resource depleted then?

HD: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AC: Across the board or just for certain species?

HD: No, across the board.

AC: Wow. And Hilary, to conclude is there a story or a memory that you would want to share with people that maybe highlights the good experiences or, or just something that was memorable to you over the course of your career?

HD: I don't know, I've had a lot of adventures.

AC: (laughs) I'm sure you have.

HD: (laughs) I've had boats sink under me. I've been rescued by the Coast Guard. I've seen trips where we've filled the boat in 2 and a half days. [I've] made a lot of money. [I've] seen storms that you thought twice about ever going back fishing again.

AC: Oh boy.

HD: It's, it's been a, I guess, I guess you'd say a true fisherman is an adrenaline junky because there is always something happening.

AC: (laughs) That sounds about right.

HD: Yeah. And I don't think I'd have traded too much of any of it.

AC: Yep, you should write a book one day.

HD: (laughs) Would you believe it?

AC: Your logbook, you could just give it to a publisher, you know, block out a few coordinates and then there you go. (laughs) Instant novel. Well Hilary, if you could just hold on the line and I'll just wrap up unless there's anything else you would want to add?

HD: Nah, I think we've covered it. Primarily about my, my feelings towards the sectors and, and, and what's happened to the fisheries is disgusting over here.

AC: Right. Okay. Well thank you very much for your time. Like I say, hold on the line for a second here. And just to conclude, I'm interviewing Hilary Dombrowski from Gloucester and today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2012. Thank you very much Hilary.

HD: You're welcome.

END INTERVIEW

[45:22]