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## Dyer, Bruce ~ Oral History Interview

Joshua K. Wrigley

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Maine Coast Fishermen's Association  
P.O. Box 112  
Topsham, ME 04086

Island Institute  
386 Main St.  
Rockland, ME 04841

# **Interview with Bruce Dyer by Joshua K. Wrigley**

*Summary Sheet and Transcript*

## **Interviewee**

Dyer, Bruce

## **Interviewer**

Wrigley, Joshua K.

## **Date**

September 6, 2013

## **Place**

Cliff Island, Maine

## **ID Number**

MCOHI\_BD\_001

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## **Biographical Note**

Bruce Dyer was born in Portland, Maine in 1942 and has lived much of his life on Cliff Island in Casco Bay. He participated in the stop seine herring fishery between 1958 and 1983. He has also worked as a lobsterman and groundfish fisherman.

## **Scope and Content Note**

Interview contains discussions of: family, life on Cliff Island, stop seining, gear technology, herring behavior and fishing methods, carriers, prices, fish abundance.

## **Indexed Names**

Anderson, Norman "Bobby"

Campbell, Kenny

Cushing, Carlton

Douty, Sanford

Dyer, Anna

Dyer, Cal

Dyer, Dale

Dyer, John

Dyer, Johnny

Dyer, Malcolm

Dyer, Manley

Dyer, Scott

Farrin, Kat  
Griffan (sp?), Gordon  
Hicks, Richard  
Hutchinson, Gordon  
Jones, Henry  
MacNeill, Fremont C. "Monty"  
Miller, William "Bill"  
Pomeroy, Cal  
Olson (sp?), Scuppy  
Stevens (sp?), Ralph  
Wiles (sp?), David

**Transcript—BD\_001**

30 minutes, 27 seconds

**Joshua K. Wrigley:** This is an interview for the Maine Coast Oral History Initiative to be shared jointly by the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association and the Island Institute. The date is September 6, 2013. This is Josh Wrigley and today I am at the home of stop seiner Bruce Dyer on Cliff Island, Maine. The subject of today's interview is his recollections of his career in the stop seine fishery.

**JKW:** What's your name?

**Bruce Dyer:** Bruce Dyer.

**JKW:** Where were you born?

**BD:** Born in Portland and come to the island when I was very young. One or two I would guess. No it probably would have been right back then...a week maybe in town in Portland at the hospital. And that's it.

**JKW:** How long have you been a stop seine fisherman for?

**BD:** Well I started in...making a salary with my father down on the dories and things like that. And that was ah...1958. I think it was '57 or '58. But to get into the real part of it was getting a share. My father passed away. I don't know if I'm getting ahead on this or not. But my father passed away and there was not doing much around here catching fish so I was going lobstering...catching sardines and there was a shut off every once in a while. And a shut off is stopping them. Normally you gotta have a cove to have them...they swim in and sometimes go right up on the beach with the tide up. Usually you get a good set...the better sets are high tides cause they come in with the tide, feed and when the tide starts to go...the water...they back out. And so the stop seining was fairly easy to do because you just went ashore with an anchor went ashore on one end of the nets and you had like 50 fathom, 100 fathom nets in dories and ah...you would put the anchor out...usually two guys in the dory...one setting the anchor and the other guy rowing off away from the rocks away so the next guy would come in with his lobster

boat or outboard or something like that...and I'd wear...I was...if I was setting the seine...normally I was rowing the dory.

**JKW:** How many people did you work with back then?

**BD:** Five. Five people. I can't think...I was thinking maybe there was four at one time. But ah...this is quite a story because I took over my father's seining thing...you know gear and stuff and we were still at the time selling to Peacock. And Bub, Bobby's [Norman Anderson] seining was another deal. Him and his brother and...let's see...one, two...he...ah...I don't want to get this mixed up...I think there was four or five in that group and they weren't doing anything and we didn't do anything the year before that. The seines just laying on the moorings. So we decided that come spring we'd paint the dories and get them ready and see what this year would do. Meaning would the fish come in or not to catch?

**JKW:** Was "Bobby", Bobby Anderson?

**BD:** Pardon?

**JKW:** Was "Bobby", Norman Anderson?

**BD:** Yes. Yes. I can't get around to saying Norman when I've called him Bobby for years. They had a co-op sort of...they all got together and we had quite a lot of gear. My father had quite a lot of gear. And you usually...it's not a law. It's an agreement. If you're fishing the Boat Cove or somewhere else around the islands and you put a dory in it that hasn't been fished before...my father fished it for years...so that was an agreement...you put a dory on an anchor they'd come in and see your dory and they'd go away because they knew that that was spoken for. That cove to catch fish in. They didn't always do it. Some of the younger guys would come in...anyhow...if you got tired and didn't look for fish that night and someone come in and there was fish there they'd probably catch them and say well you weren't here so we'll get these fish out and no one was happy about it but it happens and we're not going to shoot anybody. But it did happen a couple times around here. I don't even know whether I was...it might have been a younger time when that happened. But...there's just so much I can remember...you know...an outfit come from way Downeast up here and even had a plane...a plane to go up and look for the fish and know where they were. The plane crashed down here and he come to a big landing...pontoons I think...

**JKW:** When did you start using spotter planes?

**BD:** Let's see...in '58 we had a guy that was come...that's when we were fishing with Conner Brothers...because of the big fish and...Conner Brothers didn't pump. They bailed their fish into the carriers with dip nets. And the dip net usually...some of them were trying to get 17 1/2 bushel into the dip net because that was one hogshead. And the boats went for hogsheads when they said...write a yellow slip...it wouldn't be a thousand bushel...it would be so many hogsheads. And they just figure...and they would go by the bushel when they tell you what it was.

**JKW:** How many fish were in a bushel?

**BD:** In a bushel...I would say 60 to 80 pounds. If you filled...usually...that's another story...they would use scale baskets and put 'em in that...had to find out what the measurement is...you had to learn to use that too because that had a long handle on it. And there was a thing...a lever...all wood...you know...a wooden handle on it...a big net 17 1/2 bushel that's pretty heavy. So when you release that the hole is in the boat dead center. So the cabin is in the way. So you gotta put one foot out of the door and the other foot up on the rail and the rail was about this high...maybe 14 inches in...guessing...but if you're not careful when you release that...it's got a small chain in back and it opens up when you release that...you gotta be careful on the end of that because that'll swing around and knock you overboard. And that's happened many a time. Some of Cal and Carlton...Carlton was very good at it. I think he only went overboard once. Very tricky. But to get back to that...the boats from Conner Brothers...they didn't think too much of having pumps in the boats at the time. Had plenty of carriers though. Beautiful boats. They kept 'em up. Painted. They did a good job.

**JKW:** What was the function of the carriers?

**BD:** The carriers carried the fish back to the factory. They were running I can't remember where. Brunswick. Wherever Conner Brothers had the factory. It's amazing because some of them boats was only 60 feet. Quite a lot of 'em. And then some that was 80 feet. I think they had one or two that was some pretty big ones but I don't remember us getting...they didn't only take fish from us. They got a few boats that's coastal...Bailey's Island, Harpswell, Bath, Boothbay. They took fish down that way. But this one guy come up in a Novi boat and I don't think anyone knew anything about...he had a pump aboard to pump fish with. So the captains of the boat would say well you know I don't know if that would bother that much if he would pump into the carrier. He'd tie up alongside of him and put his hose into the purse seine and pump back into the carrier and it worked that way. He stuck around for a while. He was a strange guy though. He also had a plane too. He flew a plane. So he brought quite a lot with him. He had connections with Portland too. Like...family being...years ago family last name was Hicks...he died young I can't remember what it was...I mean he left probably 20 years after he pumped for us. It was a lot faster for us. Even though we could load them boats with a dip net it was much faster with a pump. He had a dog aboard the boat and he loved his dog. Him and another guy. He had a lot of food up in the Novi boat in the cabin because they have to sail for quite a long while. The dog would go up and steal a pound of butter and he'd come out and he'd be screaming at the dog. We thought it was a joke but sometimes to get away from him he'd come and jump in the purse seine dory and we would pat him and everything. But he...Bunk just passed away but Bunk didn't like the dog. I guess he snapped at him one time. So when the dog got down there he'd "Get back on that boat!" you know and the guy was kinda loose I think.

**JKW:** So did you work with the same carrier on a regular basis?

**BD:** Not the same carrier. The same company. They had more than one carrier. We might have the *Conquerer*...now I'm getting back to R.J. Peacock. Conner Brothers had different crews aboard and they wouldn't just send one boat to us. They'd send two to three. And somewhere I have a picture...film of the boats laying alongside the other boat...with me it would be the *Three Sisters* because we named it *Three Sisters* after my sisters. I was fishing with my father then. That was back before Conner Brothers. That was when we were with Peacock and then all of a sudden we caught them big fish...he passed away...and the fishing went. They didn't come to the shore. We had some bad years. Right after we got the boat...sunk a lot of money in the boat...she was a 48 foot I think Nova Scotia boat. We got it out of Southwest Harbor [inaudible] Marine. It was a boat that was built to take Boy Scouts...summer kids...this guy wanted to teach them...kinda like Hurricane...the Islands there...the teachers would take them out and they'd stay for a week. They'd teach 'em things about wildlife and about getting a fire going with a rock and all that stuff. After they got the boat in there and it was for sale...the...

**JKW:** What year was this?

**BD:** Oh God...mmm...trying to think here...I would say it was in the late 60s. I got married in '66...1966. I have an idea it was right between '66 and 1970. But we had the boat longer than that. We kinda rigged her out for tuna fishing 'cause there was nothing else to catch and we went jigging for groundfish which a lot of guys did to make a little money. You'd have a company that would take the groundfish and competition would be from gillnets from other boats. They always said that the jigging fish that we caught would keep better than the gillnets because the fish would lay in the gillnets and sometimes they wouldn't get out and they became soft. I don't know why but just leaving them in the nets too long...

**JKW:** Going back to what you were saying before, where were Conner Brothers and Peacock located?

**BD:** Peacock was located...their factory was in Portland. Like I said there was two brothers. And the other brother had...I don't really know if Peacock...because Peacock was before I was born...and Downeast I think they had more than one factory...probably...I know they had one in Port Clyde. Stinson I think was the one that stepped in and started buying all these factories up. And then there was one I noticed last night called Booth and I remember Cal when he was younger talking about Booth all day. I think Booth probably had a factory in Portland. Then there was the Trident Packing Company which...their factory was over around Freeport here somewhere...no no they had one in Portland. They had one right across the wharf from Peacock canning company.

**JKW:** So when you started fishing for herring in 1958 what did you know at that point about how herring live in the sea?

**BD:** How they lived...well we know when you get a lot of fish in a net which we'd done many times in later years...when I even had some big years...a lot of it was with Bub and

Cal...when you get 'em too tight in the pocket and there's a low tide you can kill the whole works because they can't breathe. They can't get any oxygen because they're so close together that there's not enough oxygen to hold that many in the pocket so you had to be very careful. That happened many times. We did it once or twice in the Boat Cove. Another Dyer that fished Chebeague Island set on a bunch of fish in the harbor where he fished he didn't like setting way down so he was kinda lazy Cal was. I'm talking about Cal Dyer and Bobby's brother were good friends. And they hung together a lot. Cal got a rig and he went with Cal for a while. Cal Dyer...

**JKW:** Was Cal Dyer your brother?

**BD:** No just a relative of mine. Like second or third cousin. Manley Dyer there the whole gang. Lot of stop seiners on Chebeague. Lot of 'em. Actually Joe Dyer who died young...I don't think he went stop seining. He went purse seining. I don't want to tell you stories but I think that I heard that he was...did good with the purse seining but he never did much with stop seining. If he caught the fish in here the purse seine was probably maybe the same size as the one we set inside the pocket to catch the fish and get 'em up tight so the pump cold pump. So they also took scales then. Some boats didn't...I don't know if Conner Brothers did because they had to run 23 hours. Where were they? Maybe Black's Harbor. Or something like that. I think they had more than one factory there too. It's not a real big run from Eastport to Campobello Island...that's the last end of the State of Maine on the water there. So...I imagine that was...if people were stop seining fish down that way you wouldn't get many boats up here because it was easy for them.

**JKW:** What was the common knowledge that you had about herring in the late '50s when you started out about how they feed and what their seasons are?

**BD:** Well you had to learn all that. I was too young to go. I was bailing out dories and not paying much...waiting for my money you know...\$20 a week or something. But then you know when I was...get going...you learn your watch you learn...I loved it because you work with a crew. Even back then we had years...the good years where our factory was in Portland and can't remember if Stinson was around...they were around...the thing is you could make \$1,000 a night when the fish were coming in. That seems like a lot of money. When you stop seine a cove you shut it off. You run a few anchors. We can go ashore and have a nap. Or go down and have a dance or things like that because you can't touch that net until the tide is down. And the best it is is in the morning...get a low water in the morning...because the fish want to get out of the cove again so they'd go down...and we would put what they call a bunt from the shore out...there'd be a bunt like a half-moon...and they would put anchors on that and so all the fish would run up in that because that's the deepest part of the cove usually and then we'd have to untie the...the Boat Cove was 300 fathom...320 depending on where you was gonna start. And so you would go over where you ended up...put out an anchor and shut the cove off and you put another anchor there and that was it. You put the anchors on and wait for so you can tow around. So what you do...you untie 100 fathom of net and you have to make noise...rattle the oars and make sure they stay down in that bunt. And then a boat would come alongside and...back then when I started you take a dory and tow the dory across.

That was probably when I first started making with my father...it would just keep going till you get to the other side. You have to keep going...you have to run an anchor ashore...we did that...a lot of people didn't...but we would slack the line when it opened up on that shore because if we didn't and the tide starts to come them fish would try to get out around the end. It didn't matter how it could be only 3 feet of water and if you had 4,000 bushel in there they're starting to get a little tight in the net. There was one time that Bobby figured that out by doing that. A lot of times with Cal he was over sardining even before my father. He was younger than my father. He'd go out...I think Cal was 14 my father was 16 then but he wasn't sardining.

**JKW:** Had your father been a sardine before that?

**BD:** Before I was there?

**JKW:** Yeah.

**BD:** He was a crew for a while. He took over...God I was trying to think who fished them before him...he went lobstering I know he didn't like it. He had a boat built to go lobstering. The name of the boat was *Dewart*—D-E-W-A-R-T—she was built over in South Portland. I don't think the guys that built her...nice boat...she was very good in seas and stuff. And they put a little galley in because they used it if they were staying aboard the boat. But the name came from...there was two boat builders and they were brothers. One brother's name was Dewey and the other brother was Arthur so they named it Dewart. I didn't know that for years. Some of the older crowd...my father might have told me it. It was a nice boat. After that he got another boat.

**JKW:** So to go back to what you were saying before when the water would draw down, and you'd set up the bunt, what would happen then?

**BD:** When you set up the bunt they would stay...they're fine...didn't go down and run into the bunt and stay there until the tide goes down and they would have plenty of oxygen unless you got one heck of a catch which we have done. But four or five thousand bushel in the Boat Cove what they'll do is if you or my father or Bob or Cal we want to get up early to go down and look in the bunt because you can guess how many you have there by the color of the water. When you got that much fish you can look for a distance and see that the water is reddish brown and what that is is there are so many fish that the sun can't get...the sky can't get down through the herring because we've got so many herring. What you do with the pocket is...once you get all the seine out...not all the seine...you have to leave 100 fathom and it's a rectangle usually and you put an anchor on each corner and it's 600 feet of pocket and the more that you can save of your net then you can fish that next night again and have that full of fish and then if you...well that one year that we was catching so many that we just run out of twine and they back up against the outside of the seine...but one time we thought that we would even fill some in so Cal and someone else went down and they hauled the net up...this is not a bag seine. Stop seine it lays right on the bottom with lead sinkers so we hauled them up and tried to keep the fish back and usually they are they're up around the coves and the boats when they're around and so they held that thing up and the fish started coming in



and didn't know when to shut 'em off that's all. You didn't know whether you might kill 'em there were so many coming into that cove. That definitely was the deepest. And we fished other places too.

**BD\_002**

45 minutes, 43 seconds

**BD:** When did the season begin? Ok. That depends. The time that's the most common is around the first of July when the herring come in. But a lot of times that's...we had a big year...let's see that was in the '70s we had a big year and we didn't...I don't think in July we caught much fish....I think we caught a little fish...we caught 'em mostly in the fall and we went right up to Thanksgiving still catching fish. Actually we had a carrier alongside, a nice guy that passed away. Wilson his name was. I think Don Wilson. He started pumping fish and it started to snow. And he says...I remember him saying, "I don't ever remember pumping fish from someone in a snowstorm. You know it was a squall but it was November and we'd get snow in November. Lots of it sometimes.

**JKW:** When did the season usually end?

**BD:** Not...that's kinda uncommon November. October is stretching it. September October. But ah...October we'd get some fish. And then we're young too then so we're deer hunters and we didn't want to catch anymore fish if we had a good year. We wanted to go up to Aroostock County and shoot deer, you know? And you can't...one man can't go sardining. Two can't either. Because there's just too much involved. One guy did. One guy went alone years ago. Years and years ago. He had his dory and he'd go over the next cove over from where Anna went swimming today. And he set the gear out and was hauling in by himself and do all that stuff. He was about I'd say six foot seven maybe taller than that. Big, monstrous guy. Name was William "Bill" Miller. William Miller. He was quite well known too because he started a marine business selling engines and repairing engines for boats...all kinds of mechanical...smart guy. He lived on Diamond. That would be when you come down the boat...that would be the first Diamond Island.

**JKW:** How did it work out for him doing it solo?

**BD:** I don't know because it was so...I wasn't even born when he was doing that. The old timers knew him and he just didn't want to take anybody with him. He wanted to do it alone. He actually lived quite old. Did ok with it. It was almost a little heavy in here. But I don't think he slaughtered the fish neither. I think he was probably like the weir fishermen. He was only catching...because one person...it's pretty hard to catch a lot of with one person. I don't...more just what I've heard through the old timers. Rough weather...

**JKW:** How did the herring fishery change from 1958 up through the 1970s?

**BD:** We could see it then that things were getting different. We could see more bad years than good years. I imagine at the time there probably was purse seiners going even back then. I'm sure it wasn't a lot of 'em but that might have hurt...not so much as

catching 'em all but breaking them up. Sardines like that don't want to be broke up. I'm not positive of this. We don't work for you know a biologist but it seems like...it would break...going to a boat...a bunch of fish...and keep doing that through the nights and stuff....they won't come to the shore. They'll stay in deep water.

**JKW:** What do you mean by breaking them up?

**BD:** Breaking them up would mean driving your boat into 'em and sounding 'em out using a sound machine. We fished a lot with the machine especially when I got in with the co-op with Cal and Bob. And Jimmy Seymour. Forgot about Jimmy. He was in the co-op too. He was my ex-brother-in-law.

**JKW:** Had you worked along purse seiners from the beginning of your career onwards?

**BD:** Ah, no. I wanted to go with this kid that was going to come over...let's see...Kenny Campbell he had a big boat offshore. The boat was the *Atlantic Mariner*. For a while he had Stinson's boat I was telling you about...it was built in Panama. Big boat. I think she was a hundred...just under a hundred I think because Kenny had some problems with his papers and stuff. I remember him saying that he got the *Atlantic Mariner* 'cause she was a small boat. She was a steel boat. I don't know. Maybe there was...I'm trying to think of the name of her. Was it *Stinson*? Something like that...They launched her down in Florida and they launched her sideways and the general manager who was over at Freeport went down to see the boat...Ralph Stevens. Another guy that was into everything. Nice guy too. So he went down to take pictures of the boat launching and stuff and he was on the boat and when they launched they launched it side-to and there was a lot of water and stuff coming up because...side-to you'll see a lot of water flying up in the air and a flying fish come aboard. Just one of them. And so they took the fish and brought him back here...the boat...I think both...he was in the boat for a while...I think Ralph decided to put it in his office...they had it mounted and put it up there...just one! And he thought it was going to be a good omen and I don't think she had a lot of good luck. I don't know. Kenny Campbell could probably know that. Someone else I guess. We'd here about her sometimes and then we wouldn't. And she'd be tied up in town...lot of money they put into her too. But they never did do the processing.

**JKW:** What was the relationship between stop seiners and purse seiners?

**BD:** I think it was ok. Except for I know Perry Island...that was on the...I can't prove the source...was from Kat. And ah, Kat...what's her last name? The one you said...

**JKW:** Farrin?

**BD:** Yep. She kinda was a...Kat was a nice person and she was kind of a roamer. She'd go down there and she wanted to do these different things. She was very talented with her hands. She'd make these paintings and it was...she didn't try to push the selling and we tried to do this because...some of them paintings could have gone for a lot of money. She'd take a piece of plywood and paint abstract stuff...but good abstract! Circles like you were having a hangover.

**JKW:** So Kat was part of the Farrin family of South Bristol, right?

**BD:** Yes. That's right. She come to the island and stayed I don't know how many years. Not long I would have to guess three or four years.

**JKW:** And the Farrins were stop seiners as well too?

**BD:** I don't know that. I really don't know that. Probably they were because I know South Bristol...they had sardine berths down there. We'd talk to Kat and she'd say, "Oh yeah, I'd like to invite this person down...that person down..." you know and she had a guy that I think was related to ah...from South Bristol and he was very handy with his hands and he fixed...she had a camp over on that side and he'd come down and fix it up for her a little bit...put sheetrock up and it was just a cottage you could look out through the siding. Wasn't insulated or anything. Old house built before I was born. Doctors lived in it...

**JKW:** So when you were talking about purse seiners before, did they fish during the same season as you?

**BD:** Oh yeah. Yep. They would fish...in later years they had quotas and things...later years. When we were fishing in the seventies. And sometimes they wouldn't...like us...they would have to go maybe Massachusetts Bay...I mean outside of Boston Harbor. That was really a hot spot in the wintertime. And not so much up this way at that time. If they were going to get fish offshore this way usually it would be summertime...July, August...maybe November...Kenny Campbell tell you all that because he did that quite a few years. He was captain of the boat. His brother went with him. David. They had some troubles.

**JKW:** Where'd they sail out of?

**BD:** Well let's see. Kenny...David had a home on Chebeague. Kenny did too. Kenny was brought up on Chebeague. I think Kenny went...Kenny went there in the later years got into the lobster business. But he had the *Atlantic Mariner* which was a big steel boat...something bad happened to her too...I know that he'd got rid of her...I think Stinson owned that boat...so he...before that he had the *Luanne* which was a nice boat...a carrier. They had the old *Luanne* they had...they took it to Nova Scotia I think to do some work on it...and they hauled her out...the builders...the carpenters who were going to fix it. They went to whoever owned it then...Stinson or Booth one of them...they had so much rot in her that they decided to build another *Luanne*. Back...all your carriers then...your cabins were on the back end. When they built her they put the cabin on the forward part so she looked odd. She ended up in a tragedy. She went down off New Jersey in a storm. Whether she was outside on the ocean or up...what...I don't even know what they were catching but she rolled over. And the crew died. They couldn't get out. I don't know if there was anybody left or not. But...rough weather. Big boat too. So it had to be...

**JKW:** Did the purse seiners also use the same carriers that you were using when you'd make your catches?

**BD:** Yeah unless they were bigger boats but they usually like I was telling you earlier...they just couldn't judge how many fish they caught. So a lot of the bigger boats had a hold in 'em and they'd pump the leftover from the carriers and that was...talked to Monty MacNeill and he'd go out...he had a carrier. Everyone knew Monty...great guy...

**JKW:** Was he from Cliff Island?

**BD:** No, he was from Downeast. I think his father was...from...I was thinking maybe Nova Scotia...don't know...but I remember when I'd go aboard the carriers [inaudible] I remember Monty and he was a teenager with the boat but I was a lot younger than him then. He was another hunter. He loved to go hunting. He had a nice...got one guy with him...Joey...can't think of his last name now...he passed away a few years ago. Monty married a girl from Chebeague.

**JKW:** So what would you say your best years were in stop seining?

**BD:** That was something Anna was gonna go get...I know it was in the '70s, mid '70s. I would say '74, '75. Cause I remember my father walking out...my father passed away in...I'd say '76. We were having some great years then.

**JKW:** You mentioned that in 1959 you caught 60,000 bushels of herring. Did the size of the catch tend to increase or decrease as the years went on?

**BD:** No, it decreased but we didn't get the small fish....we didn't make much money on small fish. Peacock was coming down all the time. Almost every day because they weren't packing many fish. They couldn't pack them. They finally did...

**JKW:** Why couldn't they pack them?

**BD:** Because they couldn't get them in the cans. They had no market for them big fish. And they were coming down and coming alongside and we would have to dip in with the purse seine to get a sample for them to look at to see if they got small ones.

**JKW:** How big were the herring then?

**BD:** Oh God, they was...I'd say a lot of them was 10" to 12" long. You see 'em today...Stinson and the Conner Brothers because they knew all that way of...someone was a good cook or bad cook. But they knew how to smoke fish down there. A lot of the places in Nova Scotia and places...fish was a very important thing for that area down through there. And smoking was a big thing. And Portland had...I think Portland had two, maybe two—one good sized one—smoker. And when we'd take the boats and go up in the harbor...mostly smoked haddock and we would go right in because we knew the people in there and they would either give us a couple or we'd buy them. In later years we'd buy them. Depends on the person if you knew 'em or not. But boy did that smell

good. We could smell that from two miles from Portland if the wind was to the westward. I loved them. They were great. In later years because of the haddock dropping down...

**JKW:** When was this?

**BD:** Oh God that must have been I'd say thirty years ago and I might be off by ten and the other way...I don't know...but I do know I had my boat then. My boat was built in...'65 I think. 1965. I had a picture here somewhere...

**JKW:** So what would happen with the herring that were too large that couldn't be canned?

**BD:** Too large? They pretty well...Conner Brothers pretty well cleaned us out. It took a long time. They were here. And it was kinda neat because most of the time they'd send two or three boats so when they loaded them...God coming on a breeze and everything going across the Bay of Fundy, they're rails was only sticking out of the water. But their boats were really built and their captains were really, you know...I don't know of any boats going back that got in trouble...I remember the guy that run the place at Conner Brothers really thought it over. He says, "I don't know. It's never run that far." We didn't have a phone on the island. We had a mobile phone. And we didn't get a telephone down here till '62, 1962.

**JKW:** This is Cliff Island we're talking about?

**BD:** So Monty said, "I'll haul these big fish for such and such 10% of what you get and take them for fish meal in South Portland." They had a big fish meal plant there and another I think one on the other side. They were only getting 44 or 45 cents a bushel. So Sanford Douty, the nicest guy in the world he started fish mealing them right away. I don't think he caught as many fish as we did there in the Boat Cove. But ah, he decided for some reason he could have used the Conner Brothers' boat. But he kept going to the fish meal and getting 45 cents a bushel when we were getting \$1.44—something like that—and the most we got for fish was in the '70s I think we got \$3.00...\$3.40 something like that...and that was almost unheard of back then...

**JKW:** Why did the price spike then?

**BD:** We had better fish and less factories but ah...better fish and it seemed like the stop seining went down because I think in places they have bad cycles. We happened to have in this area down around Harpswell...Chebeague there was a bunch of seiners that seined the Harpswell area...it was called Haskell's Island. Then there was another guy—German Joe they called him—he got into it quite late learning the business. He would go up to Cape Elizabeth go around the Cape and catch fish there. And he did pretty good for a few years. The years when we did good he did good. So the fish was probably coming the same ways south. And they would hit the Cape and that would act as a leader—Richmond's Island—so they'd hit that instead of going offshore...that line of fish would break off and go into his [inaudible] stop seine. Quite a lot of fishermen there that went lobstering and they had fish pounds—traps they called them. My

brother Johnny went with one guy there. Johnny lived here and went lobstering and went sardining. Then he decided...Oh he didn't decide. His wife decided. That...super bright girl she wanted him to get out of the business and she wanted to go to work too. And she had an education so they moved to Portland and that's how he...wanted a fishing job so he went around Portland dock and saw this guy that was...Gordon Hutchinson I think his name was and he had a mackerel pound. Had it for years. There was another guy, Scuppy Olson, that had a big family and he had a pound. He had a trap too. And they would catch...sometimes they would catch Bluefin. That was a rarity. But there would be a tuna fish chasin' 'em. They'd come in and they'd see a bluefish in the trap. They didn't have purse seines. They had a bottom on these traps. So it was a net. And the way you had to dry them out...they bailed these with dip nets. They didn't even have carriers. They'd have like all kinds of different fish but mackerel was what he was selling. And they would make...it was hit and miss with the market. Sometimes you'd have a good market. And it was usually his pound started in late-May, first of June he'd catch a lot of mackerel and they'd catch the tuna—bluefin—I don't think he got real big fish but he got some small ones there. He'd shoot 'em. That's how they'd do it. They get the seine up...because a lot of them would just go over the floats you know you'd lose them. But they tried to put a boat on, a punt, a skiff to lift them up so they couldn't do that. But tuna fish can go a long ways in the air too so I think it was just luck. But they did get a few. I know Johnny said that he got...he had only seen three. Another fish that they made good money on was salmon—Cohos. And that was a big...when he got salmon they were in the money. The best spot was on Small Point...a guy by the name of Charlie Pie and he had a pound there and he'd catch all kinds of salmon there.

**JKW:** Wait so were these Cohos [actually] Atlantic salmon?

**BD:** Ah, that I don't know. I guess they were. What they did is...they released them. The state released them. I think that's how they got here. We got them in our stop seines here. We weren't catching many of them. But something happened. They just either died or I don't know. They weren't like the big old salmon. What do they call the name for that one? Got the funny jaw on them and they're huge. Cohos were probably like that. [motions with his hands]

**JKW:** So two feet maybe?

**BD:** Probably less than that. One thing about it was that summer people were rigging up to catch them on hooks and if we had fish we had to be very careful because we told them we didn't want them fishing next to the pocket because there were Cohos in the pocket. And we had some close shaves. We picked a lot of hooks out of the net. Out of the pocket we call it. Bad because at night if you're shutting another cove off you can't see them hooks. The boat that's towing you if the captain thinks that them fish...got a sound machine on...they're making a break for it to get around the net he'll push her out quite hard. The guy in the stern of the boat he just stands there and pushes his feet in like that as close as he can because that twine is coming out of there fast and three hundred fathom you can't see the guy rowing the dory neither. Hardly see the boat...the cabin. You know? But that was...he wanted the money. I didn't set that much. In later years I did and Bob I always tell him, "Take it easy on me. Take it easy on me." Cause he

wanted to catch the fish and I did too but I didn't want to be in the bottom of the dory at the time.

**JKW:** So was this during the 1970s?

**BD:** Yes, the '70s. We had a good year just before we doubled up as you say. We joined forces against the fish.

**JKW:** Who were you fishing with at that point?

**BD:** At that point I was fishing my father's rig. And I can't remember...Yes I think my father...might have been his last year. Cause that was a good year. We took out 32...33,000 bushel and we was getting up to \$3.75...\$4.00 then per bushel. Then all of a sudden we hauled the dories and gear up. We used to haul them up by Bob and Cal's and we did after I got hooked up with them. But we'd haul them up in a nice little cove down here and then we'd work on the twine because when you have fish in a pocket there's predators and the predators are seals and dogfish. When a seal goes in he'll just bite with his mouth...bite a big hole in the outside of the pocket and go in and eat a lot...he's in heaven! Can eat all he wants you know. So we had to, ah...I don't want to say that...some warden might have me arrested...we'd have to do 'em. A few of 'em anyhow. It was funny because...

**JKW:** How often did you have to deal with seals at that time?

**BD:** Just about every set. Sometimes it would be just one around...two around. And sometimes it would be almost like one is going to get out and go down to Green Island and tell his cousins, "Go this way!" Cause there'd be a lot of seals. We had a power block later on so we didn't have to haul the nets by hand. And that was miserable doing that cause we had heavy leaded gear so...the leads was awful heavy. The lead man in the dory...there was usually four of us...I had the twine I was the smallest so I'd haul in the twine...then the floats Cal was so good at stacking 'em neatly in the dory because you wanted to get 'em very good in the dory when you set it out at night you didn't want the leads to catch onto the corks...that would sink the corks. It would be a mess and dangerous for the people in the dory too. So Cal he could lay them corks in there. I never had the corks. There's still some of them around the islands...[inaudible].

**JKW:** What were the corks made out of?

**BD:** Cork. They were made out of cork. Cork and some kind of adhesive I guess. They stuck together. Whether it was tar or not...it didn't seem like it was tar though. I remember when my father was seining with them and the twine was not nylon either. It was cotton. So you could do a seine in in one year. And they cost a lot of money. They weren't cheap.

**JKW:** How often did you have to do repairs?

**BD:** Repair it? Sometimes we used to quit right in the summer and we had to take the nets up because if the storms and stuff and the boats weren't getting down here or the market wasn't that good, they'd come but they had to wait a while cause they had quite a few seiners in so you had to wait your turn. We'd have to take them cotton nets up. I shouldn't say we because I wasn't even going then. They let me in the dory to pick out seaweed and stuff. They would salt it—they put 100 bag of salt and brine on and that would keep the cotton pretty good. It was a solution they made up. Another time if you get a lot of seals which we did and dogfish back then was really a problem back when they had the nets—cotton nets I mean. There was a field over...halfway over on the other side of Cliff Island. A big farmer's field. And they would mow it and they take 100 fathom cotton seine and run it out in the ball field—not ball field, farm field—and they'd stretch it right out and they would bring chairs up and they'd set in the chairs for two or three days depending on where the fish was. If the fish were coming in, they were gonna do it in a hurry. And they wouldn't bother sometimes with the dogfish holes. And even the seal holes the fish would go around and around in that pocket and they couldn't find them holes. But you would lose them just like that if you had a tear from the floats down to the foot line. Especially the foot line because if they got scared they would lay on bottom. And that's when they'd find a slit...we'd lose 'em a lot of times and didn't really know why too. They'd find a way to get out.

**JKW:** What years were you dealing with the dogfish most?

**BD:** Well when I was sardining with my father I probably was maybe in junior high. We had an awful lot of dogfish that year. There's a Kennedy's Cove and Anderson's Cove. Anderson's Cove was Bobby's...named after Bobby's father. There's two big coves. That's where they all go swimming and stuff. We had all kinds of fish in them coves at night but we just couldn't set on them. There was just too many dogfish. Manley Dyer from Chebeague he had Kennedy's Cove. He had Kennedy's Cove for a long time. There was a little bit of business. Not with us much but some of the newcomers because he didn't live on Cliff Island so he shouldn't be having that berth. But everybody got along pretty well that way after a while. But he caught a lot of fish. Manley caught a lot of fish. He was a nice guy too. And he had two boys. Probably getting ahead of myself...what was I thinking about? Something I was going to tell you about the dogfish...Oh. He put a powerblock in the *Maude* [?]. We called it the house boat. We didn't have one.

**JKW:** What's a powerblock?

**BD:** Powerblock's a...you put the seine in a block that's way up high and it's hydraulic. You have the hydraulic shifts like on a backhoe and stuff. The wheel is about that big around on a mast—mast and boom—it's all aluminum. Very rugged. And they put that in and then push in gear and then that would go through that and come down and you'd grab it and you didn't have to pull on it. You just take it and stack it. Just like you did with the dory...we did dories and then we got a seine boat which was a Coast Guard boat that they bought. She was a lapstreak boat and had her for quite a while. Put a powerblock in her. She was one of them Picayune boats bow and stern you know...probably WWII type. So we had...sometimes we would get 300 fathoms of nets in the stern of that boat and you'd be wondering if you're gonna make it or not. Not



sinking! Because when they swing that stern in and they swing the bow in she wasn't that wide...but they're very seaworthy. You had to be careful. To be careful we would take up 200 fathom at the most and then untie and put it in the mother boat or a dory usually an empty dory because you have an empty dory when the nets are in the water. So you would go alongside the dory and take them two nets in and neatly...go get the other one or two to make it safe. We come awful close to sinking. Sometimes I was very scared looking at the stern...

**JKW:** So did the powerblock help with the dogfish?

**BD:** No. well it helped pulling 'em out. But if you didn't get to them. Let's see they wouldn't jump over the floats. They would go down and a lot of the herring...some of the herring was small enough to get the little thing on their nose into the mesh and then they'd die and that's what the dogfish liked. They'd be outside and they'd see 'em hanging there. Even when we had the stop seine out they'd do that so that's when the dogfish come in and hit that fish. Sometimes some of them were still alive cause they just been doing that...most time that happened when you was towin around too. Because they was still in the running twine. We call it running twine. That's the same as the stop seine. And they do a job...they really do a job.

**JKW:** What part of the net is the running twine?

**BD:** Running twine is stop seine. It can be...it can also be called a leader that you put out. That's another thing I haven't talked about. One year we set in the Boat Cove...we set 29 days in a row...28 or 29.

**JKW:** When was that?

**BD:** Well I was in highschool. And Ralphie, Johnny, there's three. My father....Johnny, Ralphie. Myself, my father. Someone else we hired. I can't remember who it was. I think we had Gordon Griffan. He never...use him to work the purse seine mostly because we could do the night work the four of us. So what they do aboard the carrier too when they pump. They pump and they get one fish. Dogfish and they've got a poison horn on the back of him. You shove that in your hand you've got to get to the hospital fast because that gives you blood poisoning. Starts in the hand if you don't get up quick you could die with it. So they all have them but you get so used to grabbing them by the tail. We never left them alive. We used to take and swing them like that. You know and hit the side of the dory and throw them out. Everybody did it but...the powerblock was terrible because they'd get mashed in there and a lot of times there'd be a few alive. Say on a Friday night we caught fish, made a pocket...we wouldn't usually get a carrier down until Sunday afternoon cause the packers always had Saturday off. They'd quit on a Friday had Saturday off. Not all the time. Sometimes the cutters would stay there to make the money on overtime. They made good money. They really did.

**BD\_003**

1 hour, 37 minutes, 49 seconds

**JKW:** So what was your best year?

**BD:** 1976.

**JKW:** What did you catch?

**BD:** Probably 30,000 bushel or 32,000 bushel. That is not a huge set but it's good money because the price was about triple to what it used to be. So financially it was a good year.

**JKW:** What was the price like before that?

**BD:** Well when I started it was like \$1.40 a bushel, \$1.44 a bushel. I can remember that 44 because it was kinda like when you buy something and add a...quarter or something...I don't know...but yeah that was a good year. Since we've been married I think there's been only four good years. The biggest catch was in '58 or '59 and that was the 60,000 bushel that the Conner Brothers come up from Nova Scotia and took the fish because it was so big. So I was in highschool then and wasn't married so I was just getting paid for bailing dories out and cleaning the fish out of the nets and taking things like that. So I did good that way. When I got the half share, was...well that was actually...that's not right...I did get half share later on because I think it made the paper or book or something somewhere and all my friends wanted to know in school if I had any jobs waiting for them in the summertime.

**JKW:** What year was that?

**BD:** That was '58 or '59. So I was...

**JKW:** When you had your year in 1976, the big year, were you still selling to Conner Brothers at that point?

**BD:** No, no. We only sold one year to them. And the next year I don't remember. In 1960, '61 but we had a long wait for the fish to gather up. Some summers are very dry. If you go sardining you're living on the island here. You've got to back the sardining up with something else to do because sometimes you'll get a dry spot of three to five summers when there's no fish around. Unless you're gonna take a big boat and go where some of the fish are going to the shore. And we only once did that. And we didn't go very far. Just to Peaks Island which is only a five mile run you know. But we had a nice mother boat then to do that in. But...we have some poor years. Sardining's a great business you know you have four or five in the crew but it's not that reliable. And it also might just have a good July and just quit. So you've got to get your traps off then.

**JKW:** So you said in 1960 and '61 they were late?

**BD:** I don't even know. I have some information but I didn't get to them in time. But I don't...the '60s weren't a good year. What I went through and found out wasn't a great year for us now I'm saying Casco Bay area wasn't...might have been fish but they just

weren't coming to shore where stop seining...you had to have them in a certain depth of water or your seines would be...they'd sink. Usually what we'd use is 42 feet of net or 7 fathom. And if the fish...there were a lot of times we tried to reach these fish because they just would hang and hang just outside agitating because they wouldn't come up far enough to reach 'em so we decided that we did a lot of work to start out you do you have to get your dories painted you have to get the nets in the dories and...a lot of work. We tried a few times to set...stop off a place we never tried it before. And maybe 5% of that we did make some money and other times we just didn't have the right nets to fish that way. And the factory got involved with it because they weren't doing much because the fish just wasn't coming to the shore anyway. Anywhere on Casco Bay. And so...we would just try and we'd get lucky and other times we wouldn't get lucky. Now we had...there was a plane from Chebeague and he...we had some planes before that they'd get 10% on whatever he'd spot the fish and that was kinda nice when because we didn't even have to look for them. If he said, "Hey they're in the cove" and [inaudible] we'd shut it off. And...

**JKW:** When did you start working with the spotter plane?

**BD:** I would say...I'm going back to when I started so that...started to get paid...was in '58 or '59. I got a little money before when I was younger but as I said I was bailing dories out mostly and helping a little bit cleaning seaweed and stuff off the nets. And I would you know ask for the money right away...

**JKW:** Did the spotter plane fly out of Portland?

**BD:** No, Chebeague. Chebeague. I can't...It might be a guy by the name of David Wiles. I think he might have been a school teacher and he did this as something to make some spending money with. It was nice to have him. If he was the same guy he would also come over to the islands and stop at the ferry boat...ferry wharf...steamboat we all...and he'd give people rides for like \$2.00 and something...you know...get in the plane and he'd take 'em over the islands.

**JKW:** Was that mostly summer people?

**BD:** Nope, everybody. I went and I can't remember...we're pretty young then. I think them planes was two seater...at the most maybe four seater. There was a couple other planes too doing that but they wasn't involved in spotting fish. And that time that guy that come up from Conner Brothers in a Novi boat he come up to pump fish for Conner Brothers and they hadn't even asked him to come up but he heard about them going a long ways from Nova Scotia to Cliff Island and he thought he'd just go up and take a chance and they didn't think much of the pumps but they sort of gave in. We liked it because it was a lot faster. And this guy was named Richard Hicks and he...

**JKW:** Was he a representative of Conner Brothers?

**BD:** No. Just independent...he was just trying to get jobs down there and there wasn't much going on. I don't think Conner Brothers would even think of coming if the years'd been so bad down there at that time. I think...

**JKW:** You mean in Nova Scotia?

**BD:** Yes. I think they had a slow down like 15 [or] 20 years they couldn't do much. They got into the weirs and other things to keep 'em going but they just had that going on. In later years when I was lobstering we went I'd say 15 years without catching any fish...after the fact of...

**JKW:** No herring?

**BD:** Herring, yes. For a while. Late years I wasn't even fishing. I was just lobstering and they weren't showing up that well to anybody. They were staying offshore...possibly the purse seiners were doing very well for the factories and they for some reason might have bothered them...they probably [inaudible] spawned fish...the fish that come in here...what canneries that are still existing that got cut down pretty bad because of no work...

**JKW:** Was this in the '60s?

**BD:** Oh this was...I don't know about the '60s. I'm sure there was some. But they really got...In the '80s they were getting a lot of fish outside purse seining. And...I don't know if you've seen canned sardines but they had a way of making them even better in the can because them fish offshore are quite big fish. And so they'd stake 'em instead of putting four to a can they'd cut them down like you would like a halibut or something like that...you cut this way...

**JKW:** So you'd take the head off?

**BD:** Take the head off and then they'd junk 'em. I think that was done by machine. Not done by packers. You know people packing 'em. You might have had to...I'm sure they had to put 'em in the cans but I think a machine cut 'em. I remember at the end of one of our good years there they wanted to do that anyhow...as fish got bigger and they found out that...put the word out everywhere the best they could do and they had machines brought over from Germany and they were for cutting all kinds of different fish. They were modified...they'd do big herring, groundfish, stuff like that...so they did bring some over and by that time they probably was using 'em just for that...staking 'em. And I'm not sure of that...I think we were talking about that 10 years ago and I heard someone say they were using them machines. They [inaudible] got a lot of them right off too because I think that made the *Portland Press Herald* doing that. Then later on they also had these pogy boats from overseas...Russia and the Japanese. And they'd come to us...

**JKW:** When was that?

**BD:** Oh that was in the '80s and '90s I think. I'm pretty sure it was in the late '80s and '90s. And the Russian boats would be able to come just outside of...from Cliff Island out was probably 5 to 6 miles laying there. Processing boats. They was pretty big boats. And they were purse seining pogies and herring so the purse seiners...the outside purse

seiners would come in to them and sit...go in mainland and...Boston and Gloucester, Boston Harbor to the Eastward and sell their fish...they could put 'em right aboard them...

**JKW:** So they'd sell right to the processing ships offshore?

**BD:** Yes, yes. The pogies we heard later on...most of the...pogies are very greasy fish and they had use for the oil plus fish meal for gardens and stuff and...I don't know if they actually ate them or not. I know we never did in this country. Not...maybe years ago but...they had menhaden factories years ago. You read about that...and I think that was oil too but...awful good lobster bait.

**JKW:** Did the pogies come up often?

**BD:** No they were very on and off. I think when this...purge in the '80s of...we had purse seiners from Gloucester and some Downeast and...this is a menhaden the real name for 'em...they would come up between the islands and purse seine into the pogies and then we're waitin' around till they get the fish ready lobstering at that time. Another boat would go alongside and pump us them and get the bait off that boat. So there was a waiting period to get out and get your fish and start hauling again. But they were so fresh that it seemed so nice to have 'em...if they lay over for 2 or 3 days you put salt on 'em in the bait boxes but even so they get greasy so fast you almost have to have a pair of spikes on to keep from slipping overboard...baseball spikes, you know? Lobsters love 'em because of the grease and...groundfish we used to try in the fall when we'd run offshore a ways. There were certain fish...you have haddock racks and the head...they were about the poorest groundfish...they didn't seem to fish good at all. But if you got into codfish that way...find some codfish in town...flatfish and stuff it worked pretty well but haddock would catch crabs most of the time. And we fished a few times where we caught a few lobsters on haddock but usually it was a last resort if we couldn't get anything else and we had to put something on so we'd put them on...

**JKW:** In what year did the stop seine fishery end here on Cliff Island? What was your last catch?

**BD:** 1983. And you probably could say it ended...I would say it ended in I would say...1977, '78. And in '73, '74, '75 that's when we were sort of in a co-op I was...with people on the island had a co-op and we had some pretty good years there. The Cliff Island Boat Cove is...Chebeague has one too on the southwest end of the island...Chandler's Cove and Cliff has what we call the Boat Cove...Cliff Island Boat Cove...and Chebeague...if the fish come in you can get up to 10,000 bushel in one set and the same way...I think Chandler's...you catch a lot of fish there...there's kind of a deepwater place so. We did have 10,000 in...we had 3 pockets out and that was when the Canadians come up and we had big fish...penned up we had 35,000 bushels at the time.

**JKW:** What year was this again?

**BD:** That was the year that Conner Brothers came up because the factories here couldn't pack the fish we had...because of the size of them. Just didn't have the right kind of...pair of scissors to cut a fish that's almost a foot long. That's how they pack 'em. And so they would come...our factory from Portland was just a short ride to Cliff Island so they was always hanging around and coming down and we'd test them for them and I'd just tell them that we can see 'em and the percentage is...they're still pretty big. They took some big ones...smaller ones they could cull out some for fish meal and some to pack. But we did a couple sets later on...when money was made with the Canadians late in the fall that the smaller fish had come back for a while...I think we had the *Luanne*...

**JKW:** Is that the brit herring?

**BD:** Pardon?

**JKW:** Is that the brit herring?

**BD:** No, these were the regular 7 or 8 to a can which is our norm. Was our norm around the island. Every once in a while...in the fall we called 'em snippers...a sardine about probably 4 or 5 inches long and that would be a special pack. The packers like I was telling you earlier...they run the show anyhow because these people that pack...they were older people and they got paid by piecework...by how many cans they pack themselves. And when you get into them snippers in the fall it takes twice as much to pack 'em. That was interesting...We loved to take 'em home and you put 'em in the fry pan. That's...a lot of people didn't know back then...a lot of the summer people and some of the island people...that sardines were so good to bring home fresh right out of the pocket...we'd cut the heads off them and clean 'em out and put 'em in a fry pan with Crisco and get 'em nice and brown and they were just excellent to eat. I liked them better than the canned sardines. It was one of those things...sardining, if you have a good year you're awful tired and awful busy so if someone called up and said, "Would you bring some sardines?" and you'd have to think about it. "I'll tell 'em I forgot 'em or forgot 'em" or something you know...cause you're tired! The year that Conner Brothers...we weren't getting for a week we weren't getting hardly any sleep because we was bailing fish night and day and then when they get down so we would have enough seines then we'd go back to stop seining them again while they were there catching more. That went quite late...probably into late-September I would say. Then after that the little surge of the small ones came down...came in and R.J. Peacock brought the boats down and that was the norm then but... It was kinda too late for the guys that run the carrier because they...we probably only had a month with the fish and everybody was catching them too right in a certain area so the more you fished with Peacock you'd have to wait your turn so if they were [inaudible] over Chebeague then they'd get a turn and you would get a turn. They had to keep going that way. They couldn't stick...they wouldn't stick. They could but they wouldn't stick to someone all the time. Might be a safer berth in the fall would be nice to do that. If you have them nice berths and its rough out here, they'd probably say well it's pretty rough so we'll go to Sanford Douty's and Chandler's Cove and get some fish off them. "We'll get to you when it calms down. Just give us a call." Cause Cliff Island is the last island out here except for Jewell Island which is you know...we get a southerly wind from the ocean, nothing is blocking it so southerlies were

bad to fish. Even when we had them good years, we had calm nights, beautiful nights. But later on in the fall we'd be fishing...stop seining and all of a sudden the wind would come up southwest 25, 35 mile and hour and you got a big carrier on your pocket. It can get pretty nasty. We almost lost a carrier down...I'm trying to think what year that was...probably mid '70s. '75 something like that. And there was some of the boats Downeast was coming up to us and this boat...we tried to get more anchors on her and by that time he had 2 anchors on...we almost put 2 or 3 anchors on the carrier just for backup. Just for safety. Well that wind...it was calm when we went down to take 'em up and didn't listen to the weather report or we didn't care because in the fall we wanted to get the fish out because these storms come on and you can lose the whole works. All the fish and if it gets bad enough you could even lose your net.

**JKW:** Did that ever happen?

**BD:** Oh yeah. Yep. Not so much in the Boat Cove...a lot of guys that fished the other side of Cape Elizabeth...straight shores and stuff. One guy that sold to Peacock and Stinson. He was new at it. And he was right out on the other side of Cape Elizabeth and Richmond's Island...he was actually catching fish at Richmond's Island but that was a place that he was...he thought he could fish it there. And he did. He caught some fish there but he also had a mess. He lost some gear and lost some dories and things like that you know. So we didn't...we only had one berthed and that's another thing. We not only had the home berth on Cliff Island but we had on the northeast end of the Cove we lost two other places that had dories in them on the northeast side of Cliff. And our worst place was on the Jewell's Island shore. It's a straight shore and it's always rough there. Cause it's...just the other side of it is No Man's Land. So we would keep away from that one unless there was a lot of fish going into that berth and you knew that you could get carriers the next day or the same day and get the fish out. Sometimes it would happen that way and some...you know you'd get hit by a southerly or something and you could lose 'em. Because...It was a straight shore so the fish had to be off a ways to get a good set. If you got in too close couldn't do much with towing the net around [inaudible]. And another version of doing that you can in nighttime which takes extra work you can put a pocket in back of your running twine, make a pocket empty and you put all kind of anchors on it then 2 or 3 guys go down and they sink the running twine and they sink one end of the pocket and what that does is them fish will want to go out but they'll go out and hit that pocket. And watch and watch and keep an eye on...then you haul that up. We had Crisco cans and we poured lead in the cans for a form and we had them...two of them strapped on each line so this was...like that that's a float...we'd put 2 on this side and 2 on that side and they'd go right to bottom so the fish would hit that kind of like a weir deal you know they had years ago...

**JKW:** So they'd be led down the net?

**BD:** All sardines want to get out usually when the tide goes wherever they are. They want to get out. It's unusual to sometimes you make a set and you have to hire some lobster catchers or kids with outboards and go way up on the beach...they didn't want to come down. Like they had a...they was educated or something. They didn't want to come down you know because they knew they was going to be food instead of being alive.

**JKW:** How difficult was it to locate herring at night when you'd set out?

**BD:** Well that's the best time in the world. Daytime I remember one big year...I was trying to think...Conner Brothers...I don't think so...but...let's see...I gotta slow down here a minute...I gotta take a rest...

**JKW:** Take your time. [pause]

**JKW:** I had just asked how difficult was it to spot herring at night.

**BD:** Easy, very easy. Especially when there was no moon and it was between the new moon and the full moon that...when it was dark. The fish...you can get in a skiff or go over them with a sound machine...but...the sound machine will tell you... but also a guy can go up and climb a ladder if you're using a boat for tuna fishing...someone will put a ladder up so...go up and spot the tuna fish...had a stand on the bow which is a thing that comes off the bow and they stand in that...because the fish when you lay down and look down at the water it "fires". We call it "fires". It lights up with all the plankton in it. So it's a beautiful thing to see because the herring go along and course if you're making money with the herring...you can very well...that'll tell you...if you're in the cove and you can see 'em...if you can't see through that it's like a white mass on bottom and up in the air without any breaks in 'em that you got a lot of fish there and you gotta try to catch them which we did. In the moon that gets a little tricky because when they come in with the moon they'll go up and feed and they don't like light of any kind. They don't like flashlights that well and so they decide they're gonna eat for a while then they're gonna get out so you have to speed the process up. You have to get the dory ashore. Get the anchor out. And we had a big year one year that way that we were catching 'em really at 6:30 at night when the ferry boat comes in that was in July so broad daylight. And usually when that happens that happens with the herring coming in like pogies something chasing 'em. You see 'em go right up towards all the lobster boats and feed upon the beach with the tide up. We knew that they're not going to stay that long. And they're gonna back off. Sometimes they back off just to meet...just outside where the lobster catchers are catching lobsters and they might go a mile a mile or so but they stay there and then the next night they might come back in again. So you can catch...I almost think that we...our biggest sets in the Boat Cove were on a full moon. Just that it happened to be a...maybe just a...just lucky I guess. A bunch of fish...big bunch of fish was here. I remember setting down straight shore when they wouldn't come in the cove it was...they come right up to almost where you could reach 'em but they didn't want to come anymore into short water. So we just tried these "nut" sets we used to call 'em. We'd set on a straight shore and you had to set fast and then one time we even went further down the shore and...the Boat Cove is the biggest cove on Cliff Island. And so we tried some...got some heavy leaded gear we got some mushroom anchors instead of the regular seine anchors we figured they were heavier would hold...but that's deeper water and you get a...straight shore you get a lot of tide because the water's deep and the tide comes up you know that way. We had shut...we had...that night we had set 700 fathom or maybe even more than that. Another crew doubled up with us. They fished



somewhere else but they was from Cliff Island. And they weren't catching any fish. So we set just about all the nets we had between the two of us. And...

**JKW:** When was this?

**BD:** Pardon?

**JKW:** When was this?

**BD:** This was in...this was in...I would say the '60s. Early '60s maybe. I was out of highschool so...yeah it was about the '60s. I don't think we had a good year that year because to have a good year you have to be able to reach the fish and we didn't have the deep nets or heavy leaded nets but we had set that I think it might have been over 1,000 fathom actually because that was a long ways the set...we didn't set on the straight shore. We actually set slash ways and set right up to where we could catch a few fish close to the cove and go right in to the ledge that was that far away from where I started and I think it was the next morning we had a plane there and I can't remember what was the spotter I think it was too late in time to be Dave over Chebeague. I wasn't even going. I was younger then. He was a guy who would take up rides and everything...But he went over the fish and said, "That's the most fish I ever saw between a seine...inside of a net that I ever saw in my life." And I asked him...some of the older guys Cal Pomeroy and Bobby—Bob was lobstering then—but Cal and my father and Carlton and Malcolm and they said...Carlton and Malcolm was the other crew...they were the other crew that doubled up on. And he says, "40 or 50,000 bushel and if you could get 'em out you wouldn't have to worry about Christmas presents!" We did get some out. We got probably 2,000...3,000 bushel and we decided instead of building a pocket which we didn't have much for a pocket and sinking the corks down there—the floats—that we were gonna try to tow it. Take the net apart and try to tow it in. And that was it. We did get one part of the pocket in there but we didn't make a side pocket. We just run 2 anchors out and this was the shore line and we didn't have a side on it there so we had to go to town that day and we got...the same day that the carrier come down. I think it was 2 boats we had there. Monty MacNeill, *The Conquerer* come down took one trip. Someone else waiting around. And then we cleaned that pocket. Come to a little bit of money anyhow. And so we had to go to town for some reason that day. We went to town and the carrier was ok. She'd got back to town and when we come back down we had left the pocket there and the pocket was on the beach. And all the anchors had pulled together because it was on a full moon tide. High tide. We knew that when we tried it. And we also knew that this would be a bust or not a bust. You know...But we thought maybe that if we got a net around them fish they might have come down somewhere and said well we can't go this way...we'll go up where we could catch them before...and we had a power block that year. A guy that was seining up around Portland there he did everything went groundfishing and he had a nice, nice real seine boat it was like a 40 footer...but it was a...

**JKW:** A purse seiner?

**BD:** No, he was sardining. He was sardining with a guy out the Cape there for a while. He did everything. So he let us borrow the seine boat because they always interested on us setting so much seine and man oh man when you set 1,000 feet...1,000 fathom of...remember this is 1,000 fathom I hope I didn't say 1,000 feet...then you've got a lot of work to do if you don't have a power block taking all that stuff up by hand. And so this guy said, "I'm not doing anything, he says I'll bring it down. I might stay one night over there or I might charge you a little bit...wouldn't be much." And he did that. And then he went back. Someone took him back to town and he says use it. Great rig. We had a smaller one we bought it actually was a cat boat which is a sailboat. They're wide and not all that long but very wide. Very able boats too. And a guy Downeast had a...for sardining for stop seining and he got a bigger one and that one was on sale so we bought it and used that for a while but she...probably when we got that boat she was 35, 40 years old. She didn't have a steering wheel on her she had a handle on the side of her. You steered her that way with a cable or a rope. So you're setting over here and you're turning the rudder back and forth and it's not even in the middle of the boat. It's on the side. Used to take us about 2 hours to go to town...city when we had a problem sometimes we'd take her over to Williams Brothers where they would fix the block and do stuff like that.

**JKW:** Where was the Williams Brothers?

**BD:** Williams Brothers was very close to Casco Bay Lines. They were...well...Casco Bay Lines now was south of it one wharf but actually the older wharf...Williams Brothers was the other side of it. This would be...I'm trying to think the name of the wharf...Custom House Wharf that was the name of it. It would be...there was a coal place there and then that place...it was a big machine shop. They did a lot of work for marine stuff. Putting in big engines in groundfish boats and...had a lot of lathes so they could fix stuff on the draggers.

**JKW:** When did they close down?

**BD:** Woh...good question. I think they might have shut down the latter part of our sardine years like in the...I'm gonna guess at this I would say...highschool...well it had to be I would say in the '70s. Late '70s. I graduated in '60. 1960. I think there was a company that took over for a while...Jennings...that was over in the Old Port area where all the little stores are...I went to highschool with a kid that...his father had the business and he took machine shop...his father was...that was before he was in so he took it...I always remember about that...we'd go back and those industrial...there was a study and we all took that. We all that was interested in marine stuff and everything. Engines, trucks, cars...you had a choice. You had a choice of either taking automotive, or machinist, electrical...I think there was one more...where you're doing blueprints and stuff. Mechanical drawing they called it back then. I took...oh I forgot about that...I took woodworking and I stayed three years doing that. But he stayed in machine shop and they...it said that he wasn't there but like 2 months he could tell...do stuff better than the teacher could cause he grew up with it in the machine shop with his father. And he'd become so good that when he passed away all the groundfish boats would come in...have a problem...a real problem...you know a real couldn't figure things out...and he'd go

down and he'd figure out what was wrong and fix the engines or all kinds of stuff that...he'd draw stuff up. He made these hauling blocks for lobstering they made 'em out of...we just had a pulley with a...hanging on a we call it a crane but it's a davit—the real name D—A—V—I—T. And had his name on it and that one there was quite big and it had a place where you could squirt grease into it because they get a lot of wear and tear lobstering because it tends traps all day long hauling that things is spinning all the time. At the time we had a winch head we didn't have any hydraulic hauler at that time...once we got into that everybody said well when this hauler came out, Hydro [inaudible] they said that, "God, Jeez this is so good that we don't have to pay a stern man because it's so easy with the hydraulic hauler." You know haul the things up and you just bait 'em and swing 'em around. Well it didn't work that way. What it worked was they could put more traps off and they'd have 2 men in the boat instead of 1. And so the traps kept building, building up...One guy on Bailey's Island had...he was one of the biggest...they started with big fishing a lot of traps before anybody did. And they would take and have guys building traps all the time down there. Well they got 3,000 traps on. Now 3,000 is probably only 1 or 2 guys down this way that had that many traps. But...then I'm not going to mention the island on this but there was an island not too far from us that they started on the other side with a lot of traps to compete and there's probably just a couple guys on Cliff Island that got up not that close but they got up to...when we were fishing 500 they got up to 800, 900 traps. And we had a small trap on Cliff Island it only had a kitchen and one head. That's what we called a trap flat...you seen a lobster trap? When you're on your Downeast...

**JKW:** The old ones? The ones made out of spruce?

**BD:** No, no. They're made out of wire now. But the old ones yeah were made out of oak. They put two parlors in 'em. The parlors are where they come into the kitchen the bait is right there and then they see this other opening...

**JKW:** Is the kitchen the first?

**BD:** The kitchen is the first with the two hoops on it. The hoops are where they go in to eat the bait so they have to straighten around and I'm...was thinking I have a trap...we used to have a trap for a coffee table [motions to the floor] and they'll shoot with the tails and they'll go in this parlor that's one and they'll stay in there or they'll be...lobsters around so they'll fill both of them full but that trap is gone from...I had 32" traps. They've got to 4' traps and higher. And there's no wire back then. They're out of oak. A company in Falmouth, Cumberland...Anderson trap I think it was. They were building 'em just as fast as they could because if you wanted to go winter fishing it was the trap to have because it stayed on bottom better and you could fish the deep water. And if you put a lot of bait on you weren't too worried about letting 'em...if you couldn't get out 3, 4 days sometimes a week they still held the lobsters.

**JKW:** What allowed them to stay on the bottom better?

**BD:** They...what you have to do with any trap you have to put 'em off and you have to put sinker...a lot of guys use window weights...or old window weights that come out of the old windows...

**JKW:** Window sashes?

**BD:** Yes, window sashes, right. And you have to...we'd get 'em on the island here by people tearing stuff apart but they found a place in town where they instead of junking 'em they were selling them to these merchant places that tend to the lobster catchers and stuff. They'd get 'em from these old places and charge you pretty good but they were a lot better for sinking traps because what happens if you put rocks in traps which we used to do we used to have to go on the beach and pick 'em up...and what would happen is if you wanted to go right outside in the spring if it got rough, them rocks had barnacles and sharp edges on 'em and so they would ruin the heads in your traps so then they went to bricks...

**JKW:** The head is the knitted part?

**BD:** Yes, the knitted part. That's the parlors. They usually would ruin the parlors. Try to...you have to balance the trap if you use rocks. Also, a trap dry already has weight in it. You can use the window weight both ends or you can use bricks but that's permanent. Because when you're fishing 'em even though they sink you want them to stabilize not to flip over because if that trap flips over you can't...it doesn't fish. And once in a while you might get a lobster in it for it went out but usually you don't because the door is on...the top of the trap is on bottom and the bottom of the trap is up here in the air you know from the top there so...they had all kinda things. Long Island has come out with probably might have been the first I think that started building traps a little bigger and higher and I would say that Cliff Island and everybody around it just spread and the traps today are probably from their building them that way cause they fish so much better. That was all...technology you know? Bait bags was an old, old thing way back. And redfish [*Sebastes fasciatus*] got high and got scarce and that was the number one bait for lobstering. Redfish. That's ocean perch. The real name for it. We called them redfish.

**JKW:** When did the redfish get scarce?

**BD:** Man, they got scarce...I got out of lobstering 1986. 1986. And I couldn't buy it then because it was so darn expensive. They used to get it 70 miles south of Portland offshore deep water. But they had to go way off or...at the end of it some of the redfish were coming from Iceland, Germany shipping it over here and they were making more money on the bait than they were the food fish and it's a great food fish. A really nice food fish. I worked in Maine Fisheries years ago so I saw both ends of big boats coming in from could be from...they had steel boats some of them were 140', 150' so they catch hundreds of thousands of bushels...of pounds...not bushels no. I used bushels because of the sardine and lobstering business. But they would come in and they'd unload and they'd have haddock in one part of the hold. They'd have codfish. Redfish was the number one money maker at that time to go get 'em because they still couldn't sell 'em to the lobster

catchers all the time. Because when I got out I think 5 bushel of redfish was \$100 bucks. 5 bushel. And I was talking to a guy just last year...I was talking to him this year. They...don't even...if they're getting...yes. He said they were getting redfish coming in once in a while through the bait people. Bait people are the people who get the bait for the lobster dealers. Sometimes the lobster dealers have their own bait market somewhere. He said they're getting \$185 dollars now for five bushel.

**JKW:** And that's today?

**BD:** Yes, that's today. That's...you figure...anybody who goes out between your bait, your fuel and...everything else you gotta have...for something to make your business work...necessity, you've got to almost have to catch...probably now you'd have to catch 200 lb. before you start making money. But God Almighty when I was lobstering I had 500 traps off and I got 200 lb. I'd think that that was a pretty good day's pay! But I had...cod heads...I was trying to get...they even made a fish oil bait. They made it...they'd grind it up in a grinder it would be all kind of stuff in it...everything in it. Someone said they even had hotdogs in it. And they'd make a sock, a long sock it'd keep going they'd coil it up but there were so many other ways they did it too. They had 'em in 5 gallon buckets and they had a scoop. They had a plastic like you'd put chewin' tobacco in about that big a little bigger and some holes in it fine holes. It had a cover on it. And they'd dip it into the bucket. I bought some. I tried it out. And then you'd just put 'em on the trap and no smell to it or anything. No bones...

**JKW:** Did it work?

**BD:** No, no. That was one of the worst ones. The best one I guess is the sock now that they're using it. But it's still not...I don't think it's nowhere near as good as the real stuff.

**JKW:** You mentioned when we were having lunch a little while ago that when you were hauling one time and you were out with your father and you encountered bluefish off of Cliff Island here.

**BD:** Yep, yep. We were hauling and my brother-in-law, ex-brother-in-law...not well...he's passed away but him and his son was over on the other side of the northeast end of the island. There's two big coves there. And we were just getting ready to clean up the boat and...see I remember more now than I did when I was talking to you because we were I was eating...but you can edit all that out...but so he says...called me up and I answered the phone we had the VHF phones then. Might have had the CBs. Probably CBs but he says, "You gotta come over this way. You got fishing rods aboard?" and I said, "Yes, we have." And I said, "We're bout ready to go home get out of the boat. We're just washing the boat down." And he says, "We just caught a couple fish in a bunch of pogies over there and they fight, they fight and we don't know what they are." And I said, "Well they gotta be stripers or salmon, you know? What else? Pollock or something like that?" And Jimmy knew his fish pretty well. And...he'd lived here. He was a native so...He says, "Well this is fun. So I'll get back at you. You've gotta come over." And I said, "Yes." And he says, "Any place where you can get some heavier line?" Or "How much equipment

you got aboard your boat?” Cause his equipment was going fast with these fish because they was rigged for catching mackerel.

**JKW:** So that was pretty light equipment?

**BD:** Yes, mackerel and...I don't know what else...no just about mackerel I guess. There's not too many fish that'll bite a hook off a wharf and stuff. Smelts will but we don't have the smelts too far out really here. They get 'em at that time of year in the summertime. August September. So we went over and I think that's when the boat might have been brand new at the time. We went around the bluff as I call it and went into the cove and just as we broke in from outside there running through we could see the pogies going every which way you know it was a calm day too a nice calm day and I see Jimmy was in Kennedy's and I come in and he didn't even know I come in because he was so enthused about hauling these fish...catch 1 and lose 5 that's what he'd do. Then finally we get alongside and he said, "You got a spare rod and reel?" And we had quite a few. We had company that summer that fished. I took 'em out fishing so I still had them aboard the boat. But when I...we got as many as Jimmy did I think. 4 or 5 and we could have caught a lot more than that but we had nothing to catch 'em on. You know? Everything was gone...Jimmy's stuff was...he had not only the lines were gone but the rods themselves had snapped off. You know? So he had these little trout wands and his son was still fishing with one. Was about this big! When he left the pole was about that big and what do you call it the reel there was...So fun to catch. And you know with the bluefish when...they were great lobster bait. Great lobster bait. And you'd get a lot of them cause they were big fish. Them fish were huge.

**JKW:** Did you say this was the first time that your father had seen a bluefish? Right?

**BD:** That's right. Yes. I forgot that. Yes. Right. He had fished everywhere and when we got over there Jimmy was...here you know find out what they are now because John Dyer's coming over. And he'd fished on the water all his life offshore and everywhere. And he looked at the fish and they're looking at it. And he looked up at Jim and says, "I have no idea what that fish is." And Jimmy says, "You don't?" And he says, "Nope, I don't know what it is. So you gotta go find someone that's fished somewhere else or probably a professional, not a commercial fisherman but a professional one that goes all the time for everything but not...just catching the fish for the fun of it...would probably know what that fish is. And we did. We found someone on the island and also people who got the fish books. Got two or three of them out we're looking and that looks something like it...but it really...the book didn't do it because they show...in the books they showed them much smaller...not only showed 'em but they have the information there...so they come up with the bluefish...I did but in the meantime Jimmy had called this guy on the island and he says, "That sounds like bluefish. We catch these all the time down off Cape Cod." And we just never heard of 'em. And I think that at that time. At that time there weren't that many around but the next year they hit and I didn't make a lot of money then even though the lobsters was there cause every time we'd haul a stringer the bluefish would bump up with the pogies and we said this is too much fun. And we're catching bait!

**JKW:** What year was this?

**BD:** That was...Scott was sterning with me. My son...so that had to be late '80s. Maybe in the late '80s. 90. '90s. Cause he ran a business over to Long Island for a company called Casco Bay Lobster.

**JKW:** And what year was it that your father first saw the bluefish?

**BD:** Oh that was...I would say that probably was...Maybe late '70s...in the '80s...cause we didn't do a lot of good sardining in the '80s. We didn't catch many sardines at all if the menhaden—the pogies—were here. And not just here everywhere. The sardines did not want to be around the pogies and so they wouldn't. They wouldn't come to the shore or anything even if they was around. But them bluefish you'd tune into another channel on your CB to reach out farther and you could hear boats a hundred miles from Cliff Island catching bluefish. And so everybody says, "Wow, we're gonna have some fun." So I got a lot of bluefish for bait and I had the highest lobster trap that I had ever had. And I had pretty small traps that if you see one now you'd laugh. And I put...

**JKW:** How large were they?

**BD:** The traps?

**JKW:** Yeah.

**BD:** The traps were 30". Mine were 30" by 10" high. 10" high. With just a funnel hoop in each side and a head side the kitchen part. And then one parlor on the other side. All no wire and balanced. Has balance in 'em. And so...they come the next year they come the next year I think and everybody was just cutting 'em and either taking 'em home and eating 'em or giving 'em away...

**JKW:** This was the bluefish?

**BD:** Yes, the bluefish. And they became a pretty good food. You know a lot of people liked 'em. Bruce Thompson was talking about he likes bluefish and he likes the...what's the one he catches there? Can't think of that one...striper. Striped bass. And that came later on the stripers come later on. Quite a lot later. Then when the pogies left after that for a while there was a few fish caught around Chebeague and stuff but we'd...if it was in the '80s which I think it was...the early '80s sardines were here neither. So...we'd see a...we even quit sort of quit looking then. Because you could see now that a lot of the factories were folding up. Some stayed with one factory and got rid of...closed two down because they just didn't have the market.

**JKW:** Was that the Conner Brothers?

**BD:** Conner Brothers had a real dry spell...I was telling you that for quite a few years and that was...that was...I would say...in the late '50s when they had the dry...that went a long while in that area. That was Nova Scotia. They didn't get any fish so...a lot of their

fish they would run to Eastport in that part the State of Maine which is a lot closer than we are. I don't know what the hours would be from Nova Scotia to Eastport...Campobello Island...you know and I think that's the last...probably the last big island. That's where Roosevelt had his second like Camp David...that's where he went for vacation. And...

**JKW:** So a lot of the factories were closing down when...at the tail end of the stop seining era in the early 1980s?

**BD:** Yep. Yes, right. Because we did ok in the '70s but even in the '70s it didn't sound good even though we were getting...I think Peacock...no...Peacock shut down. We was getting...selling our fish to over here in Freeport...Yarmouth...they had a...the name of it was Royal River Packing Company but Stinson bought 'em out. Stinson was buying everybody out. And they got to be pretty well the only ones sardining in the State of Maine here except for a couple of little ones down in Penobscot Bay that was what they called Delray that Bobby's mother-in-law worked for. They took and packed blueberries and sardines and she also...sold clams. They'd get 'em all shelled out and sometimes to make a little more money they'd let her shell. I think it was piecework. She'd get paid by how much she could do in a day. But that Delray I think is...I think Bobby says it's closed down now. It might be open for smelts and clams. I don't know that.

**JKW:** So how many sardines did you catch your final year in the fishery?

**BD:** Final year was '82 or '83. Not much. We were trying things and we...in the fall...September the lobsters have a thing of...sorta slowin' down...not catching as many...in July and August the best months and all of a sudden they have to be another shed because everybody's caught the first shed up. Now in July and August usually there is 2 and when 2 go by then you have to wait again for August September somewhat. I mean you go out and haul and still would make money and as long as you made a profit because this was being just a seasonal business you had to stay out you paid for your bait paid for your fuel and you made a hundred bucks or eighty bucks or fifty bucks you're still out of the what do you call it? Out of the red. Right? Or. So that's the way I fished and Bob and I, Carlton, Bunk...that's four boats...we would go and if I could get aboard my boat I'd usually go because Anna was not making much money then she was just clerking at the post office. We did picking crab meat. I mean she picked crab meat for quite a few years. And that's how I...crab meat...I put that addition on. Every bit of that money in that addition was from picking crabs.

**JKW:** Anna is your wife?

**BD:** Yep that's my wife. And they got into it big in another house. Her and a cousin of mine when we first got married and we bounced around the island cause we didn't have a house so we rented a place for a winter. They were picking 35, 40 lbs. because they had a...she had another friend who was doing that for a business in Portland so she'd come down and the connection was her husband was a Cliff Islander but not then. He was a...whole family was on Cliff Island and then they moved off...



**JKW:** Where was the packing facility?

**BD:** For the crabs?

**JKW:** Yeah.

**BD:** We just pushed ‘em around the island and stuff. We would pick ‘em here in the sink and you had to be careful because they said that was ok as long as everything was neat and clean and you know because afraid of seafood can be very dangerous in the summertime if it’s left out something like that. Meat does too but...so they got pretty strict about that finally. Chebeague became the biggest on crab meat. They started...The lobster catchers when they decided it wasn’t going to be a great year they’d save the crabs—sand crabs—and they have good meat in ‘em and so they set up some businesses over there. They’d have to get a license by the state. They had to have cement floors. Stainless steel stuff. They couldn’t pick in the house anywhere. They had to have a separate building. I think that’s the way it worked then. Maybe then they took a room in the house and did the same thing. But it had to have doors on it and couldn’t go in there and had to be vented good and new stuff. New cookers. New whatever they wanted.

**JKW:** What was the general consensus among your crew when the herring fishery was declining?

**BD:** You know, I was sad about it because probably I was the most one that worried about it because I liked it so much. And I had my ups and downs with lobstering anyhow. And like I said I just loved working with a crew and catching the fish and...lobstering...lobstering is boring really. You put the traps off. Now when I first started in my punt, it was my punt and outboard and I was probably 13, 14 years old then and it was kinda fun because you’d get in close you know and...back then even back then probably the traps were 400, 200 a day they’d haul or the whole 400. Back when I got out of it, they got up 700, 800 was kinda small but that’s why the trap limit was...finally got the trap limit. You gettin’ it ok? Am I...

**JKW:** I think we’re getting it.

**BD:** Yep, ok. I gotta stop talkin’ here! I gotta...so what else you want to know?

**JKW:** I think we covered most of the subject. Most everything under the sun.

**BD:** I didn’t tell you...let’s see...now. One time my father and Manley Dyer who owned the sardine rig...did I tell you that about the whale?

**JKW:** About Henry Jones and the whale?

**BD:** No no. I’m not gonna tell you that one...that one was stupid.\*

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\* Bruce had related a story the first time I met him about the stop seiner Henry Jones who lived in South Bristol, ME and who fished with the Farrin family. According to the

**JKW:** No, I didn't hear the other story.

**BD:** They were fishing the government wharf over on Jewell's Island that's where during WWII that was just for the military over there. They had guns on the back shore and stuff. Barracks. A lot of civilians on the island here went over there to get a job. So the civilians worked with the Army most of the time and the Navy I guess building. Anyhow he...about 5 years later on they did away with the place the government did...this was even during the war...they dumped the whole...they never finished Jewell's Island they never finished it they just took everything out during the war. They wanted it somewhere else and they spent a mint on the place. Big towers you know. Kids would go over you know no one on the island and get up in the towers. There was a lot of vandalism going on. They'd go into the...there was a theater over there. A good sized theater. What do you call them? Places to eat...mess halls you know. There was even a prison. Jail place. They had everything on the island. Bobby's half brother worked over there as a civilian. Going over here from here...

**JKW:** Did something happen with a whale on the island?

**BD:** Yes, the whale...not on Jewell's Island. Later years the wharf was in good shape and Manley, my father or whoever was sardining found that fish go in there. They go in by the wharf. There's a ledge lines up with the wharf but they go in and they go in to feed. Same way as they always do stop seining. They began to get carriers in there and take out quite a lot of fish. They wouldn't catch as much as a big cove cause it was kinda short water but they could load a boat there...like 1,500 bushel. So it became pretty good especially for Manley cause Manley had it for a while there. Then later years Carlton and Malcolm and the other group that was seining they used it and bout everybody used it. We used it for a while there. We got it for a while. And he was out watching the fish and he was in a dory and this is pretty primit- what's the word I'm trying to say? Primitive. Nothing...sound machines. I doubt they had sound machines then. And depth recorders whatever you call them. But he saw these fish outside the wharf further down the shore and all of a sudden he...the mother boat was laying there...the crew was there and they're waiting for him to say the word and they'd start stop seine. And so he was looking with a flashlight. You'd put the light on quick and shut it off quick. Cause that was the way that they could tell how...what was worth catching the fish. Usually that way if you put it on and you see 50, 60 under a light then you'd know it's good. It's good enough to go. Problem is it wasn't all the way it. So he told his crew, "Tide is coming and I think they're gonna come in eventually." They came in eventually ok because all of a sudden he was there and they started pouring in and Government Wharf, the hole there was about from that window to not probably here and the ledge was a long ways down too going that way and that's how the herring come in was that way. And all of a sudden he put a light on and he said they got thicker and they was on top of water and he said they was sailing, swimming for the shore! He said, "Jeez, get ready to get the..." you

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story which Bruce said was apocryphal, Jones had somehow become attached to a whale while in a dory and had been pulled a long distance. The punchline was that when the Coast Guard finally located him, he was somewhere off Gloucester.

know he hollered to the guy wasn't too far they anchored usually out by the ledge there. *Maude B* was the name of the boat. Nice little house boat. So he said, "Well something's going on here. The fish have ended up..." but he says, "I got something coming and it's not...it's not sardines" and they said, "What is it?" He says, "It's a whale." It was a whale. Big old whale too and he was chasing the sardines to eat you know cause they would open up their mouths you know so many of them. And Manley was in the way. Couldn't get out of his way. And so he started chasing Manley so Manley said...so Manley got ashore, left his oars out and run up on the bank to get away from the whale. And I think that was a true story because there was a lot of things stop seining years ago on the northeast end of Chebeague...that was later years too that probably was in the late '60s or '70s. The Rosses who fished sardines for a long time they were fishing kind of an iffy iffy place up on the point of Chebeague eastern point. They kept hearing this noise at night but they didn't...they didn't catch any fish that night but they couldn't understand what that noise was so they decided they were tired. They went home and the next morning or someone else called and they said whatever but there was a big huge whale and he...it got stuck on the ledge right off the point of Chebeague and it grounded out and he was on his side and the noise was the tail flipping because he couldn't seem to get himself over to make the water because the water was quite a ways from him. He was up there quite well. But not connected...just...not connected with Chebeague.

**JKW:** What year was that?

**BD:** I'd say that was in the '60s.

**JKW:** And in what year did Manley Dyer encounter the whale at Government Wharf?

**BD:** Oh that was before my time. So that was a long time ago. It might have been after World War II—'45, '46 something like that...There weren't many stop seiners around back in that era. There were some small purse seiners but...traps were...weirs and traps...Cliff Island didn't...bout that time Cliff Island was totally lobstering to make the money. Lobstering and clamming. And you know they just didn't have the money to get the gear and the factories weren't...not many factories going at all. I think Peacock come in just after World War II.

**JKW:** To buy sardines?

**BD:** Yeah, put a new factory...right across from him on the wharf was another factory...I mean you could walk across the wharf and go into his competition which was Trident Packing Company. They got along I mean if...for some reason...Peacock probably had more money than the guy that owned this place so he would have more areas, more fishermen because they'd get to you faster and Trident...I don't think Trident Packing Company had over 3 carriers. At that time Peacock just kept building carriers or buying used ones. They used carriers for other things like running out to the islands and things you know. Monhegan had a carrier for years and I think it was like 5 years ago or so...that's what she was...she was a sardine carrier and they converted her into a ferry boat. Actually they got one now I never thought about that but that was the *Double Eagle*. We put fish aboard her in the Boat Cove in the '70s and I went down to talk to the

guy. He was aboard the boat and I wanted to see...cause I remembered the *Double Eagle*. That was from Conner Brothers that boat. When Conner Brothers folded the Japanese took it over for a little bit but even they couldn't make any money with it. I talked to this guy this summer and I said, "That boat you got there..." he was down aboard the boat and you could tell that he was into something else. He wasn't into sardining. Groundfishing or it looked like he was dragging for flatfish and usually that's inner-bay stuff you know. I said, "Is this the *Double Eagle* that used to carry fish?" and he said, "Oh yeah this is it" and I said, "Well, do you know the history of it?" "Oh well yeah" nice guy, quiet. Dale was there you know, my son was there, listening to him. I said, "Boy she looks nice. Are you sure that she ain't a replica...not restored....but re-...they have a name for that..." But no he says she was built in 1935 and I didn't know that so I wrote it down cause I'd love to... I always wanted to get the carriers and take a picture of them to put in my shop to show everyone and especially the ones that came to Cliff Island which was a lot. So I said to him, "Yeah we put fish aboard this boat quite a few years ago in Cliff Island, Maine." So he says, "Cliff Island, Maine where is that?" and I said, "Well you know where Portland, Maine is? It's one of the outer islands" and so I took about 5 pictures of that. Anna has them somewhere. She'd...you come down again and I'll show you them because that's when we went to Monhegan and Dale took...I took a few but Dale took a lot...probably 500 pictures down there just snapping pictures left and right. And he was taking pictures of me pointing. I wanted the pictures because I said this is Prospect Harbor where we was leaving from. R.J. Peacock had a factory here years ago and Stinson did too and I think...

**JKW:** This is up in Monhegan?

**BD:** Up in Prospect Harbor, right close to Rockland and Stonington and that area. Quite a ways between the two. Rocklands quite close there. And so he said, "Right over there that's where the factory was. See that wharf?" And I said, "Yeah I do but it doesn't look like much room" and he says, "Can't you see what the wharf's built on?" And I got looking over and I did have a pair of glasses and I looked through the glasses. Where the wharf was was all stone put in probably granite back then because Stonington was one of the biggest granite sellers in the world at the time down there. Cutting granite. Stonington is where it got its name. That's where they had the quarries was Stonington because all that stuff they'd chipped out or dynamited out or something became...what did they buy that for? Because they brought all the granite and brought it over to Chebeague on the backside of Chebeague and that's where they laid there and worked with it. Someone...oh I know what it was. It was the moneyed people in the cities. They were buying it to make the Empire State Building...these big tall buildings back then. There was a guy—very famous millionaire even back then he was a...an engineer...what's the name for a building engineer?

**JKW:** Architect.

**BD:** Architect, right. He was one of the famous...Wright I think his last name was. W—R—I—G—H—T. He was the one that had developed high rise buildings and fancy mansions and stuff all over the country here and he became famous. So...

**JKW:** They were using Stonington granite?

**BD:** Yes, pretty sure of that. I think except maybe...I don't know about the Caribbean I doubt it but somewhere maybe even Mexico or something they was getting a type of that...but not like the Stonington...Stonington was pretty white and when they polished it and everything it would get some kind of like black spots on it...that piece in there that's marble. That's real marble. And they could make the granite look like marble because it had certain colors in it you know. So...I think....

**JKW:** Well, thank you very much for speaking with me today, Bruce. It's been a great pleasure and I definitely appreciate hearing your experiences in the fishery and living on Cliff Island.

**BD:** Yep, thank you. See you again sometime.