

**Interviewee Name:** Bobby Ingalls

**Project/Collection Title:** Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum 2018

**Interviewer(s) Name(s) and affiliations:** Natalie Springuel (Maine Sea Grant), Teagan White (College of the Atlantic Intern)

**Interview Location:** Maine Fishermen's Forum, Rockland, Maine

**Date of Interview:** March 2, 2018

**Interview Description:**

**Bobby Ingalls**

Bucks Harbor, ME

Commercial Lobsterman

Interviewed by Natalie Springuel with Teagan White

Bobby Ingalls, a lobsterman from Bucks Harbor, ME, speaks about the lobster and scallop fishing in his area and tells humorous stories about some of the trouble his fishermen friends and family have been in. Focusing on the changes in his community, Ingalls describes the impacts of come-from-aways, fishing in the 70s, and the competitive side of offshore fishing.

**Collection Description:**

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**Transcription by:** Molly Graham, NOAA Voices From the Fisheries

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[0:11:43.07]

BI: Bobby Ingalls

NS: Natalie Springuel (interviewer)

TW: Teagan White (intern)

[00:00:00.00]

NS: Okay. Tell me your name and how you spell it.

BI: Bobby Ingalls, I-N-G-A-L-L-S.

NS: Great. So, I just have to redo this little bit so you know what we're doing. Then, we'll hear some stories.

BI: Okay.

NS: Great. So, this project is called Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum. It's a project of Maine Sea Grant, the First Coast, and College of the Atlantic. The stories that you share today will be archives on Voices from the Fisheries. They're in an effort to preserve fisheries and heritage [inaudible]

BI: Fishing and fishermen. [inaudible] short lobsters did plenty of poaching too, if they could.

NS: Sounds like good stories already.

BI: There are some there.

NS: So, your story might be used in broadcast and publication because we're trying to capture Maine stories. Does that sound good?

BI: Sounds good.

NS: Great. So, you were just saying inside that you're from Bucks Harbor.

[00:01:03.5]

BI: Right.

NS: The real Bucks Harbor.

BI: 04618.

NS: Where's that?

BI: Between Machias – nine miles south of Machias. They changed the zip code twenty-five years ago, but I still use eighteen instead of fifty-five.

NS: Why'd they change the zip code?

BI: Closed the post office. So, the post lady called me up, said, "Bobby, you're not going to get any mail." I said, "Good. I don't want any. Keep it up there." I bet they get them visa applications to me though.

NS: How many people live in Bucks Harbor?

[00:01:35.7]

BI: Oh, I got my shirt on. I should show you. Native darn few. Lobsters confidential. Moose are few. Deer not many. One of the colorful characters of Bucks Harbor is Earl Colbeth. He lived to be pushing eighty. Wife died early, younger. He lived alone. He was known for living on birds, deer, short lobsters – pretty steady – few scallops. There's a picture of his boat and it's still in the Maine archives. It was in the *Maine Coast Fishermen*, 1952, with Earl Colbeth on the beach pulling traps on his boat. I told the guy then who was head of the Lobster Promotion Council, "If you knew how many short lobsters that boat has brought ashore, you would not have his picture on the front [inaudible]." Anyway, Earl's most famous one was – his grandson went with him, Roger [inaudible]. He said, "My job was they loaded lobsters in my boots. I could hardly walk up the beach." They all knew what Earl was doing. One day, Earl comes in his new pair of boots was home, he had the old ones; the knee was out. [inaudible] was the warden, and he said, "Earl, set down on [inaudible] box, cuz the smell that was sticking out the knee of his boots. [laughter] Anyway, the next day, [inaudible] "I think that was a trap, but he had no right to tell me to take my boots off." So, he ended up paying a fine for it. He thought (Wade Day?) turned him in, of all people. The whole town knew what he was doing for years, and years and years, but same thing.

[00:03:153.6]

NS: That's great.

BI: It was a way of life back then.

NS: When was that?

BI: That would have been – oh, that was late '70s. It went on a long while.

NS: Yeah, yeah.

BI: A long while, yeah.

NS: In the '70s, were Bucks Harbor fishermen fishing all kinds of different things?

BI: Basically lobsters. They tried to get a few scallops. There wasn't much for scallops. At times, there were. Scallops were like hit and miss then. One year would be good. Next year, there'd be not much. [inaudible]

NS: What are some other funny moments you remember?

[00:03:50.1]

BI: [laughter] I remember his brother. Of course, typical brothers, a lot of envy between them, mostly on Earl's part. I'd go to beach every morning, park my truck near the high-water mark with a trailer behind it and go from there. So, this morning, I'd gone down early in the morning, four o'clock, to go out and get a crate of lobsters to bring in to sell. So, (Leland?) comes down. It's late October and it's a dark, dingy morning, a little fog. Sees my truck – his eyesight isn't real good. He drives by the front of my truck and drove right into the Atlantic Ocean. [laughter] I said, "Hold on, (Leland?), until I can get in there." He looked out the window, he says, "For Lord's sake, how high is this tide this morning?" [laughter] I said, "Let me back her out." By that afternoon, I could see the high-water mark just about the top of his wheel well across the side of his truck.

NS: Oh, man. Wow.

[00:04:41.3]

BI: There's more, if I can think of them, between them two. Earl got a deer one time. It was a lamb because hunting and fishing went together. [inaudible] Leland went up and looked at it. He said, "Golly, you're a little thing, ain't it?" Earl said, "What are you talking about? That's a great big deer." Just brothers –

NS: How about hijinks between old-timers and young ones?

BI: Oh, there's some of that. Putting a tire on over a buoy. Something that sinks. You know how hard that is to get off? A lot. But not too much.

NS: How about today? What are you fishing for today? Still fishing for lobster?

BI: Lobster, that's it. Yeah. So far.

NS: Yeah. There's still time. Plenty of time.

BI: Yeah, right. [laughter] I hope so.

NS: Any scallops?

BI: All I want to do is eat them.

NS: You and me both.

BI: I just get raw ones. Yeah. [laughter] The raw ones are the best.

NS: Yeah.

[00:05:41.5]

TW: Have you noticed your community changing much over the years?

BI: A lot more CMAs, come from away's. It's like somebody the other day was moving in, was buying a house in East Machias from New Jersey. I felt like writing on Facebook, "Don't bring New Jersey with you," but I didn't. I tried to just scroll by it, keep my thoughts to myself.

NS: Does it change the atmosphere?

BI: It does, yeah. On the planning boards, you've got to have people from away just as long as they don't make it what they left. But if you work all day, you can't up sit up in them meetings and listen to the B.S. that goes on. If you do, you're going to fall asleep in your chair, worked all day. But that's the way it is.

NS: Yeah. Do you have any kids?

BI: Two boys.

NS: They fish?

BI: They fish, yeah. Now one boy told me one time – he says, "I never want to do what you do." I said, "That's fine." I said, "Stay in school because you will be." Well, six years of college, he's home with a new boat fishing.

NS: He's getting into it?

BI: Yeah, he is. He's doing better than me. The students always do better than the teacher anyway. Yeah. So, it's good.

[00:06:55.1]

NS: Great. Anyone else from Bucks Harbor that we should track down to hear some good stories?

BI: (Benny Crocker?) if he shows up. Old Benny. I don't know if he'll be here, but he would have some good ones.

NS: Yeah. Any other questions?

TW: I can't think of any.

BI: If you do, I'll be around.

NS: Thanks for coming out.

BI: Okay, yeah. There's some funny ones. I'll think of some more probably.

NS: Yeah, yeah. How about any seasickness ones? You ever have anybody on your boat seasick?

BI: Yeah, a few times. I can't say I have been myself. Although when I had exhaustion, it was making me squirmish. Oh, yeah. They try to hide it, go over to the other side. Like the saying, if you see them green under the gills, you know they're about ready to – and it's always something they ate for breakfast. [laughter] Like them corncakes going down the washboard. That's what did it. Yeah.

[00:08:04.0]

TW: Has anybody ever fallen overboard?

BI: My son had a narrow escape on Kennebec River. That's the one that's fishing now. He got hauled out of an outboard boat. Luckily, he can swim, which I can't. Swam ashore and two guys come along. The boat was circling like this. You think you're going to find a body. They got the boat, saved it and brought it in. It was a lesson learned for him, I'm sure. That's why these float suits they have or coats are important.

TW: The orange ones?

BI: Well, something you could work in, like a [inaudible] halter type thing would be good. If you can swim, it might give you a few more minutes.

[00:08:52.9]

NS: When you fished in the '70s compared to fishing now, what's changed out there?

BI: Lobsters. There's a lot more now there ever was then. You had to work hard for what you got. The way I see it now, there's no respect like there was then. Back then, you didn't make money, you had to rely on your neighbor to either tow you in – it's like they said, the tow rope works both ways. Whether you like somebody or not, you tow them in if they broke down. When money got in, it's like, "I don't need you, so screw you. It's all for me and hell with the rest of them." That's the way it seems to be. Maybe it will change.

NS: So, more lobsters. More people have gotten into it.

BI: Money is the root of all evil, like everything.

TW: Did people ever set on top of your stuff?

BI: Oh, yeah. That's why I just stay in shore now. Sometimes, less is more. You get out there and fight through trawls. Stay away from it. Get what you get. Live with what you make and call it a day. It's good.

[00:09:54.7]

NS: Did you used to go offshore?

BI: Yeah, I did. Yeah. Went out around Seal Island, which is the Gray area now they call it, supposed gray area. It's fished by Grand Manan, now guys from Nova Scotia. So, it's a rat race out there now. There's some factory boats from Nova Scotia, processors that have boats and crews. They send them out. If you do away the owner/operator, it's dead in the water. You've done, you've lost it. The independent operators, it's no good.

NS: I didn't know they were coming from all the way over in Nova Scotia.

BI: They are, yeah.

NS: Wow. Has that been going on for a while?

BI: Oh, yeah. You could talk to Kristian Porter in there. He could fill you in. He fishes right there, Cutler. He could tell you a lot more about it than I could.

NS: Do you ever see the Canadian boats all the way inshore?

BI: They can't come in so far. I've seen them fished around the –

NS: Yeah. That's a big change.

BI: Yeah. Okay. I'm going to put my stuff in the truck.

NS: Well, thanks so much. Good chatting with you.

[00:11:00.5]

BI: [inaudible] the same. Take care.

NS: You too.

TW: Nice to meet you.

NS: Wait. I have to take a picture of you. Just so we remember you and your name and your voice, so we can put it all together. Great. Thank you.

BI: You're welcome.

NS: There we go. [laughter]

BI: Take care.

END OF TAPE