

INTERVIEWER: For the record could you state your full name?

CW: Clifford D. West.

INTERVIEWER: Birthdate?

CW: December 23rd, '42.

INTERVIEWER: Place of birth?

CW: Steuben.

INTERVIEWER: Current address?

CW: Two Eleven Pigeon Hill Road.

INTERVIEWER: And, what year did you first start commercially fishing for any species?

CW: Any species? When I was 10 years old. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: So that would be '45, I mean '54?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Then I'm going to ask you a little bit of questions about your family before I get into your fishing background. Do you know where your family originally came from?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: No.

CW: No. No idea.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know what generation American you are?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was your family that you lived with involved in fishing?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was your father a fisherman?

CW: My father was and my grandfather was. That's as far back as I know.

INTERVIEWER: And where they from Steuben as well?

CW: Uhm. Yeah, this was my grandfather's house.

INTERVIEWER: Oh it was.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What fisheries were they involved in?

CW: Floats fishing. Longlining. They were.

INTERVIEWER: Does your wife come from a fishing family?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: From Steuben as well?

CW: Milbridge.

INTERVIEWER: Milbridge?

CW: Milbridge.

INTERVIEWER: And do you have brothers and sisters in the fisheries?

CW: Had one brother. Well, no I had three brothers. Two of them, all three of them are dead now.

INTERVIEWER: Where they fisherman too?

CW: Lobster fisherman.

INTERVIEWER: Lobster fisherman?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do your family members contribute to your fishing business? Do they work as crew, bookkeeping, dealing?

CW: Just my wife.

INTERVIEWER: Does she help with the books?

CW: Uhm. She does all the books.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any children?

CW: Three.

INTERVIEWER: Three? How old are they?

CW: Fifty-eight. [laughter]

ANOTHER FEMALE VOICE: Forty-eight. [laughter]

CW: I mean 48. [laughter] Forty-eight.

ANOTHER FEMALE VOICE: Forty-seven.

CW: Forty-Seven and 39?

ANOTHER FEMALE VOICE: Yup.

INTERVIEWER: Are your children involved in fishing?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Not at all?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: You have grandchildren? Or no?

CW: Five.

INTERVIEWER: Five. Are they involved in fishing?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Not at all? Would you encourage a young person to go into fishing today?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

CW: Because it's so—. Terrible way to make a living. It is.

INTERVIEWER: Why is it terrible?

CW: Because it's all work. Too much work. Too many headaches in it. It is.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you remember hearing any old stories from your father, grandfather, anybody like in town about what fishing was like here? Before you started.

CW: Not too much. You know, the lobsters weren't worth much. They wasn't but, and there wasn't a whole lot. You know, when my father was going. I don't know about my grandfather.

INTERVIEWER: In what year did you first start commercially fishing for groundfish?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Seventy-nine, '78?

CW: Seventy-eight?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Uhm, you bought Jim's boat in '78.

CW: Nineteen seventy-eight I guess.

INTERVIEWER: So how old were you? [short pause] You were 30, you were 34?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: You were born in 1942? [chattering]

CW: She figured it.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: That would be [laughter] 3? [short pause]

INTERVIEWER: Like 47, I mean 37?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Yeah. No. [short pause] It's not coming out right.

INTERVIEWER: Forty-two, 57

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: I'm figuring wrong.

INTERVIEWER: Sixteen, 72. So like 30--

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Thirty-seven.

INTERVIEWER: When you first started groundfishing, were you on your own boat? Or, did you work with someone else?

CW: I was on my own boat.

INTERVIEWER: Was it difficult to get into groundfishing industry at that time?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: What ports did you fish out of?

CW: Pigeon Hill.

INTERVIEWER: So that's in Steuben?

CW: Yeah, it's in Steuben, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right down the road here?

CW: Uhm.

INTERVIEWER: Is that the place?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Or, most people call it Pigeon Hill.

CW: Uhm, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you got your first boat that you use for groundfishing in 1978?

CW: I used my lobster boat, my first one. I did.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the type of boat?

CW: It was a Repco fiberglass boat, 37-foot.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: That was your second boat.

CW: Yup, that was the first boat I went fish dragging in.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know the gross tons?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: The horsepower?

CW: It had a 455 Buick in it.

INTERVIEWER: And so you were driving?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go gillnetting?

CW: Not then.

INTERVIEWER: Not when you first started?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: But you did later?

CW: Later, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How many other groundfishing boats did you use over your career?

CW: I used a 42-foot Bruno and a 44-foot Stanley.

INTERVIEWER: So there was three, total?

CW: Total. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When you first started fishing for groundfish, what species did you target over the course of the year?

CW: Mostly flatfish.

INTERVIEWER: Uhm. How important was fishing to your overall income?

CW: That's all I done. [laughter] It was.

INTERVIEWER: What percentage of that was groundfish, when you first started?

CW: Probably half and half. Between scallops and the groundfish.

INTERVIEWER: What times of year would you go groundfishing?

CW: About the last of April we'd start and quit sometime in October; to go scalloping.

INTERVIEWER: You'd quit in October and then you were trying to target the flatfish?

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Did that vary? Would you target the groundfish for the whole time you were, I mean, will you target the flatfish for the whole sort of season?

CW: Mostly. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Would you be able to get those for like from April to—?

CW: October. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: October, yeah.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did the gear used vary over the seasons?

CW: Not much.

INTERVIEWER: Not much?

CW: Not much. No.

INTERVIEWER: What was the mesh size on your net?

CW: I think when we started it was three and a half-inch. I don't know. Now when I got done I think it was six and a half. It was.

INTERVIEWER: How long were your trips when you first started?

CW: We was day tripped. We was.

INTERVIEWER: How many trips per year would you do?

CW: [Laughter] I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Would you go out like six days a week?

CW: If the weather permitted.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: We would. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How many crew members would you have when you first started?

CW: Just one.

INTERVIEWER: Beside yourself?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did this change over time? The amount of crew members you had?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: You'd always just have one?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you always just go on day trips or did you ever go on multi-day?

CW: No, when I got to Stanley I went on three-day trips. I did.

INTERVIEWER: From Steuben?

CW: Uhm.

INTERVIEWER: Where would you go fishing when you first started?

CW: Outside of [Tippmann End].

INTERVIEWER: How far from shore would you typically be?

CW: Well, at the last of it we was off 50, 55 miles. We was.

INTERVIEWER: That was when you ended groundfishing?

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: When you first started how far would you?

CW: Oh, probably 20 miles.

INTERVIEWER: 20 miles?

CW: Yeah.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: And you set net I thought of this.

INTERVIEWER: That's a beautiful picture.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: A friend of ours hand dipped this. This is when the pound (inaudible) you went by looked like this.

INTERVIEWER: Wow, and then somebody mending the nets.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: It's him.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, it's him? Oh wow. Oh, really?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Yeah [laughter].

INTERVIEWER: Nice.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Oh no, the light is shining on it too.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, now, I can see it. Cool.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: It doesn't usually have that [shelb]. [laughter] I guess when you're working, you're concentrating.

INTERVIEWER: When you first started you'd go like 20 miles offshore?

CW: Uhm.

INTERVIEWER: And then towards then end, your career for groundfishing you ended up around 50 miles.

CW: Fifty miles, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Why that increased?

CW: Well, the boat was bigger and you had to go further to get the fish. We did.

INTERVIEWER: What was the furthest you traveled?

CW: Probably 60 miles.

INTERVIEWER: Was it like west, or?

CW: Just about south.

INTERVIEWER: South?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When you were doing this further traveling you were in the bigger boat?

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: How big did you say it was?

CW: Forty-four Stanley.

INTERVIEWER: Forty-four, okay. When you were doing this further traveling were you still dragging, or was that?

CW: Yes, still dragging.

INTERVIEWING: When you first started groundfish fishing, dragging, what condition do you think the stocks were in at that time?

CW: Plentiful.

INTERVIEWING: That was in '78? Did you see an increase, or decrease, over time?

CW: Decreased over time.

INTERVIEWING: How much would you typically catch when you first started?

CW: I don't know. Cuz, we had small boats, small gear; you know. Two, 3,000 pounds.

INTERVIEWER: What would the mix be typically fished?

CW: Mostly dabs and blackback flounders. Gray sole. Some cod.

INTERVIEWER: What were the prices for those fish when you first started?

CW: Ten cents.

INTERVIEWER: For which ones? The cod?

CW: The cod was probably ten-cents, the flatfish was 10 to 20. And Pollack was three-cents.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. When did you notice the fishery starting to change?

CW: Oh, I'd say 10-years after I was in it.

INTERVIEWER: So around like '88?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And what were the changes you were seeing?

CW: The flatfish was dropping off bad, it was.

INTERVIEWER: You were having to travel farther to get them?

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: You changed your fishing rounds sort of then?

CW: Yeah, we target, you know, went after the pollock and cod fish, and stuff like that, and grey sole. To get a little bit better price for the grey sole.

INTERVIEWER: What year did you switch over to gillnetting?

CW: I haven't got a clue. It was in the '80's.

INTERVIEWER: You said you noticed a change in like '88? Did that prompt you to change gear?

CW: Well, there was a lot more cod fish around right then and I never liked gillnetting but we couldn't seem to make it dragging so we changed over to gillnetting.

INTERVIEWER: When do you think that was around '88, or was that before or after?

CW: I'd say probably around '88, I'm guessing.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Then you would just gillnetted 'til the end?

CW: No, I gillnetted for about, I think four or five years. The cod kind of dropped off and went back to dragging.

INTERVIEWER: In the early '90's you switched back to dragging, only?

CW: Uhm.

INTERVIEWER: So you did like four or five seasons only gillnetting?

CW: Gillnetting, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Instead of dragging?

CW: Dragging, right, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was the last year you went groundfishing?

CW: What year did I sell my boat?

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: I can't remember, honey if it was '97 or '98.

CW: Cuz, I used to go to Boothbay Shrimping [on us], and then come home and go dragging.

INTERVIEWER: So it ended when you sold your boat.

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So, you sold the permits with the boat?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: When you were fishing, out for groundfish, how many boats would you say were fishing out of the Eastern Maine fishing ports? When you first started?

CW: When I first started? Probably 30.

INTERVIEWER: Thirty? Eastern Maine is like—?

CW: That, you know, what we would see would be from Bar Harbor and Stonington east, it would be.

INTERVIEWER: How big were these boats?

CW: Some of them was 60, 65 feet.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really, the ones from—

CW: Well, I guess there was a couple that was 78 feet. [Vick Lubeque].

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah, he is a big one.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But, were there that many of those boats that large?

CW: No, most of us was small boats.

INTERVIEWER: Was it more typical to be in the like 40-foot range?

CW: Forty-foot range, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know like the division between gillnetters and draggers when you first started groundfishing in Eastern Maine?

CW: There weren't many gillnetters. There's wasn't. There was a few out of Jonesport, there was.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever see other non-local boats that fished on Eastern Maine fishing grounds?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And where were they from?

CW: Some was out of Portland. Some was out of Gloucester.

INTERVIEWER: They were dragging?

CW: Dragging, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know if they ever landed their fish here?

CW: Never.

INTERVIEWER: Never, okay. So now I'm going to ask you questions about markets. Did you use ice?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you get the ice?

CW: Mostly in Herrington.

INTERVIEWER: Herrington?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: From who?

CW: [Cliff Look]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

CW: [Ralph Look], over that way.

INTERVIEWER: So, there wasn't any ice here in Pigeon Hill?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Where or to whom did you sell your catch?

CW: We sold to Jim Salzburg, and Jimmy [Bautmann] in Addison. I sold to a guy in [Elva]. Some of the fish went to the auction, and some went to Boston.

INTERVIEWER: Were these all people that were buying? Buyers that were from Steuben?

CW: Jim Salzburg was from Steuben. He was first from [Risolto].

INTERVIEWER: These others that you mentioned, did Jim Salzburg phase out and like other people took the place, or were they all competing?

CW: No, they was kind of all competing. They was, you know—in the market.

INTERVIEWER: How would you choose who to sell to on that when you landed your fish?

CW: Just to change, just change around; you know, different places that was all.

INTERVIEWER: The fish would be sold to these people and they would truck it down to either Portland or Boston area?

CW: Most of them just trucked down to Portland.

INTERVIEWER: Did a broker then sell your fish?

CW: At the last of it they did, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a broker that you used consistently?

CW: For a while I did. Some lady in Portland. At the fish exchange. But I don't remember what her name was?

INTERVIEWER: Was it Barbara Stevenson?

CW: It probably was.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever sell your fish locally?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't have a preference for who trucked it?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: No?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: So, your fish didn't really go down to Boston, you said.

CW: Some of them did but, you know, we didn't.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a preference for Portland or Boston?

CW: Didn't make much difference, you didn't get a good price either place. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever land your groundfish in a different area than Pigeon Hill?

CW: Addison.

INTERVIEWER: Addison?

CW: Addison, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Who would buy the fish there?

CW: Jimmy [Boutman].

INTERVIEWER: [Boutman]? He would truck the fish down to Portland?

CW: Portland or Boston.

INTERVIEWER: Boston?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You would choose between Addison and Pigeon Point?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What would make you choose one landing?

CW: Just to change.

INTERVIEWER: Just to change?

CW: Just to change, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know if your fish went to Canada for salting?

CW: No, I don't.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What form were your fish in when they were trucked?

CW: In fish totes.

INTERVIEWER: Where they headed and gutted?

CW: They weren't headed, they were gutted.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you head the hake?

CW: Yeah, we had a few hake, not many.

INTERVIEWER: You don't know where they were processed?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Where there any fish processors in Eastern Maine?

CW: Not when I was fishing, I don't think.

INTERVIEWER: What were the prices like?

CW: Anywhere from ten cents up to fifty cents.

INTERVIEWER: I mean throughout your career? The prices changed and fluctuated.

CW: Yeah, the last of it we got better prices. They weren't big prices but we-, Eastern Maine's the end of the fisheries, and we didn't get big prices.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know the price you would get for the fish when you put it on the truck?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a consistent price that you would have to pay for trucking?

CW: Yeah, pretty much.

INTERVIEWER: Was it like consistent by year?

CW: It stayed just about the same.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: Most generally ten cents a pound to truck them.

INTERVIEWER: Would your fish fill up a whole truck?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: No?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Would you hold your fish like on top of the deck, or did you [inaudible]?

CW: No, put them in the fish hole. When we first started they was on deck. Then after we got the other two boats they was under the deck.

INTERVIEWER: What was the biggest trip you ever got?

CW: Ten thousand.

INTERVIEWER: Ten thousand? Did you think the prices for the fish were fair?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Why, why not?

CW: I don't know. The fish from down Eastern you just never got the prices. If you wanted big prices, you had to go to Boston. Or, come into Portland with a boat.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever land your fish in Portland?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: No, never?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Only Addison and Pigeon Hill?

CW: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know whether you have your groundfish landings? Or, where they ever recorded?

CW: Yes, some of them was.

INTERVIEWER: You have some here?

CW: The landings? No.

INTERVIEWER: No.

CW: No. [laughter] I've done away with that crap.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you got rid of all the records of the landings?

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Not for a long time but, then, you know, after so long a time.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a limited access multi-species groundfish permit?

CW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But you don't have it anymore?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Alright. Now I'm going to ask about the future? And assuming groundfish stocks return, in your opinion, what would need to happen to revive a groundfish fleet in Eastern Main?

CW: I don't know. I think they will return, I do. But, I don't know when. And, I don't know how you'd rebuild them.

INTERVIEWER: Rebuild? Rebuild the fish or rebuild the—?

CW: Rebuild the fishery.

INTERVIEWER: Or the fisherman?

CW: Yeah. I don't know how you'd do that.

INTERVIEWER: Why, because?

CW: It's just such a hard process.

INTERVIEWER: To groundfish?

CW: To groundfish.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: Cuz the thing is, most of the environmentalist stuff don't want nobody fishing anyway. They don't. They don't even want us lobster fisherman fishing. They don't. But, we are [inaudible] and they can't do nothing about it, I guess. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: What was a typical day going out groundfishing for you? When did it start?

CW: Weekly at 3:00 o'clock in the morning. Get home sometimes at 9:00, 10:00 at night.

INTERVIEWER: Six days a week, probably.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think to revive ground fishery in Eastern Maine would there need to be any new services or infrastructure for them?

CW: No, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: No?

CW: You know, if the guys wanted to go to do it, but I don't think you'll ever see fishing in the Eastern Maine again.

INTERVIEWER: Because of the regulations?

CW: Regulations, uhm. The big boys is got the licenses and I think they're going to keep them.

INTERVIEWER: They want to.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: If you could, would you like to fish for groundfish again?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

CW: That part of my life is over.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so say it wasn't like a hassle with the regulations; you still wouldn't want to go?

CW: No, I wouldn't. No.

INTERVIEWER: Just because it is long hours?

CW: Right, it's long hours and I'm too old.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: What's wrong with you say probably most of you probably couldn't with age now. [laughter] Cuz you enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: So you enjoyed it. Why?

CW: When I done it, I did, I enjoyed it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: Yeah. Shrimping was my best.

INTERVIEWER: That you liked the best.

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that having a groundfish fishery would be important to your community?

CW: I think it would be, yeah. If there was plenty of groundfish I think it would be.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

CW: I think it would take pressure off all the other stuff. You know, the fishers.

INTERVIEWER: I give some other people another fishery to be in and so that there's concentrated.

CW: They wouldn't all have to target in. Mostly everybody is targeted now for the lobsters. And if you had another fisheries, why it would take the pressure off the lobsters.

INTERVIEWER: How did you end up getting into fish? You said your father and your grandfather were fisherman.

CW: Right.

OTHER FEMALE VOICE: Lobster fisherman.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That's sort of just how you learned?

CW: Right, I went with my father.

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't have anyone to teach you how to groundfish?

CW: No.

INTERVIEWER: So—,

CW: You just jumped into it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you experience a learning curve?

CW: I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. But you still like the first year you went groundfishing made enough so that you thought it would be something to continue?

CW: Did that I wanted to do? Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. The rest of the year after groundfishing you would do; you would be shrimping?

CW: Scalloping.

INTERVIEWER: Scalloping?

CW: Scalloping.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

CW: I never went shrimping 'til I got to Stanley.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. That was in '90s?

OTHER WOMEN'S VOICE: Probably the end of the '80s season.

CW: Probably the end of the '80s, I guess somewhere in there.

OTHER WOMEN'S VOICE: I think you went to Boothbay for nine years, [in winter].

INTERVIEWER: When you went to Boothbay you were landing your, uh?

CW: Shrimp, in Boothbay.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think would be good for me to know about groundfishing here out of Steuben?

CW: Just a hard place to fish out of.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

CW: Like I told you. Because of prices are never good; that's all.

INTERVIEWER: But what about the location, in terms of fishing grounds?

CW: I think we have good fishing grounds.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: We do. Cuz, all the boats come here years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: You know, the big boats.

INTERVIEWER: The big boats [inaudible]?

CW: Even from Russia.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

CW: Into the Eastern part of Maine to fish.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever see the, nah you were fishing in '78. So you never saw?

CW: Saw them, no.

INTERVIEWER: No.

CW: No. But they all used to come. I see a piece on TV one time, a guy from Russia, and he said he was outside of [Tippman End] fishing. So they used to come.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

CW: That was when there was a lot of fishing guests. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: But we kicked them out, right? [laughter]

CW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, well if there something else?

CW: No, well I guess that's it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Transcribed by Darlene Perez 2/21/2023