Cameron Thompson: So, this should pick up everything. You can just talk normally. Could you please state your name, your birthdate, and place of birth?

Allison Wilson: Allison Wilson, Jr. Birthdate 1/24/31. I was actually born in Rockland. That's where the hospital is.

CT: What is your current address?

AW: 98 Horse Point Road, Port Clyde 048.

CT: How long have you lived here?

AW: Almost eighty-one years.

CT: How long have you lived in this house?

AW: Twenty-four. I lived in that one. I lived over there twenty-four.

CT: Why do you live here and not someplace else?

AW: Because I love here.

CT: Okay. So, I am going to ask you some more details about your experience as a fisherman, but right now, we want a little more background information. So, on your family, could you tell me about your family? Do you come from a large family?

AW: How far back do you want to go?

CT: Well, what generation are you, and where did they come from? Where does your family come from?

AW: Well, the original Wilsons came from Nova Scotia. They came to Port Clyde, put up a log cabin, went back to Nova Scotia, and came back the next year. There's been Wilson's here ever since. But I don't know what year that was. All I know is the verbal that I heard from my grandparents. So, I can't tell you what year the first ones came.

CT: What generation do you think you are, then?

AW: Well, let's see. That'll be six, seven generations. [inaudible]

CT: Do you have a lot of family in the area right now?

AW: No, I really don't. A lot of the family moved away over the years. My four sisters all moved away, married, and scattered. But I always stayed here. I liked it here. I didn't want to live anywhere else.

CT: So, how, if at all, was your family involved in the fisheries?

AW: Not one soul.

CT: Not one soul? Are you the exception?

AW: I'm the exception.

CT: What about your spouse's family?

AW: None of them were in the fishing industry.

CT: Were they originally from this area?

AW: No, they were from the North Port and Rockland area. Her wife came from the Rockland area. Her parents came from North Port, up in Belfast.

CT: So, do you have any children or grandchildren?

AW: I have four children, all girls. I have six grandchildren. I have nine great-grandchildren. None of them live here, though. One daughter lives in Spruce Head, and one great-granddaughter lives in Warren. Two daughters live in Wisconsin. The rest of the grandchildren and children live in Wisconsin. I only have one daughter who lives in Virginia.

CT: About how old are they? You can just sort of give me ranges for your…

AW: Sixty down to fifty-five.

CT: For your children?

AW: For my children. Yes.

CT: Are any of your children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren involved in the fishing industry?

AW: No.

CT: No?

AW: I told you, I'm a [inaudible].

CT: Well, would you want your kids or grandkids involved in the fishing industry?

AW: If they wanted to, I would particularly encourage them at that point in time. But I wouldn't discourage them if they thought that's what they wanted. But I'm sure none of them ever will because they're not connected to the sea. My youngest daughter, her husband was a lobster

fisherman. He's retired now.

CT: Okay. So, this next section now, we're interested in a broader community. Can you tell me about the community when you were growing up?

AW: Well, when I was growing up, it was a very poor community because that was post-depression, the end of the post-depression times. Things were tough, and things were – this was a poor town. It's amazing to see how it has improved over the years. Not only the boats and equipment they have but also the boats and equipment they have now, the homes, and how they're taken care of and maintained. People were fighting to get something to eat when I was a little fella.

CT: How important was fishing to the community then?

AW: It was very important in relation to survival because there wasn't much money, and a lot of that food came right out of the ocean. Well, you also had the herring processing plant here, didn't you? Yes, we had the herring processing plant. We had the old coal storage down there where they used to buy fish. The boats come in. The trawlers would come in and wrapped up down there on the dock, the old coal storage dock. That was a four-story building. Ice houses used to gather ice in the winter, and of course, along came ice-making machines. All that changed. All that passed into history.

CT: Yes. So, what was the waterfront like?

AW: Very dilapidated in the early days. Very buoyant. The docks were highly safe to walk on, and the buildings were all falling down. I'm talking about when I was a kid.

CT: Yes. So, what are we talking here about? In the [19]40s?

AW: In the [19]30s and into the [19]40s until things started to improve after World War II.

CT: So, how did they improve?

AW: Slowly. The homes are better. Everybody makes a living. I was lucky if there was one car for every probably three, four, or five families. There used to be a bus that ran out of this town to Rockland twice a day, three times a day on Saturdays. People went to Rockland on the bus to get groceries, shopping, pleasure, whatever. My father and grandfather ran a store for forty five years here in town. Actually, I was basically brought up in the store as a kid. So, I worked in the store.

CT: What was that store?

AW: It was almost directly across from the Ocean House down. The hotel right in the middle of the village.

CT: What did you guys sell?

AW: Everything. General store clothing, marine supplies, fishing supplies.

CT: Okay. Maybe we can come back to the community's progression and change over time later. But I think we're going to move on to your experience in the fisheries. So, could you just sort of list what fisheries you've participated in?

AW: Lobstering only.

CT: Lobstering only?

AW: Yes. I've done a – I filled in a few times when they were (sinking?). They stopped sinking. I'd done a little scalloping, but that was for my own personal use. I started clamming the very first year. To be truthful, I hated it. Well, I decided with my butt was closer, lower than my head. I did not have an upstanding job. So, I said, "There's got to be something better." That's when I turned to lobstering in that first year out of high school.

CT: Did you ever do any other work besides fishing?

AW: Yes. I had my captain's license, and I put the pilots on and off big ocean-going ships into Searsport, Bucksport, and Bangor for fifty-four years. If you understand what that means, the big ships bring in oil, freight, coal, tapioca, granite pulp, all these. Once they come in by the three-mile limit, they have to have a local pilot. Somebody has to put them on that ship if somebody has to take them off. They're outbound. That's what I've done along with other men that were involved in it. I've done that for fifty-four years.

CT: In all kinds of weather?

AW: In all kinds of weather, and every day, minute you can mention of the day.

CT: So, do you consider either one of those your primary source of income? Do you consider fishing?

AW: Lobstering was my primary income.

CT: How did you first get started? Or in what year did you first start working in the first Lobster?

AW: I started in – my first traps went in the water in May 1947. I never missed a year until 2004, when I quit to take care of my wife.

CT: So, you were eighteen then when you started?

AW: Seventeen.

CT: Seventeen?

AW: Actually, sixteen.

CT: Sixteen?

AW: I quit high school. I couldn't stand inside the floor walls. I just couldn't take it.

CT: So, how did you get started? I mean, nobody else in the family fished?

AW: Well, in those days you want to go fishing, you could go fishing.

CT: Did you have your own boat, or did you stern?

AW: No, I went with Ash Wind as it's called. I rode

CT: Okay.

AW: Thirteen foot, half round, left street doorway. I started by rowing. That fall, I bought a little, what was that, twenty-one or twenty-two-foot small bow. In 1948, I had a brass, spanking new seventy-two-foot lobster boat built for me over in friendship.

CT: So, it was pretty easy to get into then?

AW: Yes, it was then. There were no restrictions.

CT: Were you fishing on your own?

AW: I started fishing on my own right from day one. I had a lot of help, and I had a lot of encouragement from the other fishermen. They gave me a lot of advice.

CT: So, you had those three boats to start with. In [19]48, you got your first lobster boat?

AW: In [19]48, I got a thirty-two-foot lobster boat. In [19]66, I had a thirty-three-foot one-belt, and I've used that until now.

CT: So, what was your seasonal round lake with lobster?

AW: Well, when I very first started, I fished from about May to the end of November. Then, oh, I don't know, [19]49, I think, was the first year I fished in the winter, and I fished every winter. I fished twelve months a year for the next, I think it was twenty-nine years.

CT: How far offshore did you have to go in the wintertime?

AW: We're going off there.

CT: To (Metinic?)?

AW: Oh, no. We didn't go out that, then I fished off that, let's say five, ten, or twelve, thirteen miles. It would be outside the three-mile limit. You'd have to have a federal license to fish out there.

CT: So, when you first started, what sort of gear did you use?

AW: Wood traps, what they call the half-round wood trap. Build them yourself. Get the heads.

CT: You would hand haul them?

AW: No. When I first started in that Durra, yes. But when I got into a boat, they had a power hauler. The first ones were made out of the rear end, usually [inaudible]. They called a stand-up. Then somebody invented a brass one that runs up smoothly. Then, of course, today we have hydraulics. My first hydraulics was in [19]66 in the boat. It was built in.

CT: So, when you started, where did you typically fish?

AW: What we call the Port Clyde area.

CT: So, you are pretty near shore then?

AW: Yes, basically. Yes. Usually, most of the time within right around him. Close to – oh, except for in the winter, about seven miles off.

CT: Even when you got your second boat, was it your twenty-two-foot boat, you would go out?

AW: No. That I fished it very close to shore here. That first year was after I had the other one the following year.

CT: So, starting in [19]48, though, you would go out into seven-mile waters yourself?

AW: Yes.

CT: Did you have a federal permit for that then too?

AW: Didn't have to have.

CT: Oh, in [19]48.

AW: No, it did a permit for that thing.

CT: So, how long were your trips? Or how often would you go out?

AW: That depends on the time of the year. Summertime you try to go every day, have some traps to haul every day. In the wintertime, you might go once a week. That might be all the

weather you get and all that is that they go every day regardless. Is a fable. It doesn't work that way. Mother nature's your boss [laughter] to a point.

CT: So, when you got into it, how important was the lobster fishery?

AW: Well, now do you mean that in comparison to today, the amount of fishing that was done or?

CT: Whatever comparison you want to make.

AW: Well, it was very important to this village. Yes. As it is now. This is basically a fishing village. There isn't as much diversification now as there was back then. Because there was the herring, sanding, the dragons, the gill netting, the trawling, scalloping, which we had. The dragons are the only other fish other than the lobster. In here are dragons right now. Yes. In fact, I don't know if there's a dragon in the east of this point at all. I think this is the largest drag fleet north of Gloucester. I think so, which is a very [inaudible].

CT: But were there a lot of other fishermen or boats doing lobstering when you started?

AW: Not compared to now. There weren't as many fishermen then as there are now.

CT: So, there is a lot more now?

AW: Oh, yes. I don't know how many there would've been back then but I would say about half what there is right now.

CT: What was the typical crew size then? Or was there a crew?

AW: Back then? Just about everybody went along. Maybe those that went winters like I did too. You took somebody with you in the winter for safety's sake as much as anything

CT: Did you take on the stern?

AW: I had a stern then. Didn't usually go with somebody until about, let's say, last week, October, the first week of November, or something like that through to the 1st of April, I would have a stern man. Sometimes in the summer, when the fishing was good, I wanted to haul a lot of gear out. If there was somebody available, you'd take a stern man. In those days, the stern man didn't have to have a license, or the skipper didn't have to have a license to cover it as they do now. They have three-tier licenses that I can buy now for lobster. If a single operator bought a boat, he could have a stern man. He could buy a license. The boat owner could buy a license that would cover both of them, then he could take anybody he wanted. But let's say the stern man was sick or got hurt. He could get somebody else. He can get somebody else to go, or he's got to find somebody that has a license so they could go. That can be hard to do sometimes. Very hard to do it. Or you can have a license to take two sterns in as the boats got bigger and they went further offshore. So, sometimes, they have three men on board. Now, I'm talking about over here. There are boats that fish outside that have a lot bigger crews than that. I'm

talking about eighty, ninety, to hundred-foot boats outside but not here in town.

CT: So, what were the markets like then? Who did you sell to?

AW: Sold to the local buyers right here in town. When I first started, there was one. I guess there were three people buying here in town. One of them was seasonal. The other two bought the year round. The first hundred pounds of lobsters I ever had was in the Dory rowing. When I went out that morning, there were twenty-five cents. When I came in, there was twenty cents. Wasn't I disappointed? [laughter]

CT: So, how have the prices changed over time?

AW: Comparative to other things, they really haven't changed as much as many other things have. The thing that has changed is when I started, we had that it had eighteen to twenty-five million pounds production, say twenty-five million. That was a good year. Last year we produced ninety-three million.

CT: How many did you take?

AW: The State of Maine produced just over ninety-three million last year.

CT: So, the stocks have changed quite a bit.

AW: The stock has changed, but the fishermen have worked hard to change the situation. A good percentage of the laws that have allowed it to happen were strongly backed by the fishing.

CT: You see these regulations being directly responsible?

AW: Absolutely. The regulations. We have to put all the seed lobsters back in the ocean. We have increased the measure. We don't take quite smaller lobsters as they used to. That has increased over the years. So, that increases the weight. Although you might not catch quite so many lobsters. So, sometimes, they do way more.

CT: What do you think about the maximum size limit?

AW: Leave it alone. Leave it alone. They started that in 1933.

CT: Did they?

AW: Yes. That's when that first started.

CT: Was it the same five inches?

AW: Yes. I think so. I won't swear to that. I think it stayed the same.

CT: Yes. The small gauge is now three and a quarter.

AW: Yes. That used to be three. Yes. I think it was three. I think it was three, then it went to three and a sixteenth. Three in the date. Because it takes right now for lobster to be legal on the small end. That lobster is somewhere between seven and nine years old before it's legal to be called.

CT: So, when did you first really start noticing a change in stocks? You said it used to be down near twenty million.

AW: I think the changes started probably in the [19]70s. A little bit in the [19]70s, early [19]70s. It has gradually increased over the years. Of course, it goes this way, too. But it's going this way, too. Yes.

CT: Up and down.

AW: Yes. Well, it cycles. Depends on the weather, water temperature. Depends on lots of things, how much survive. Another big thing that's helped the lobster industry is when I first started the general practice was if you change the oil in your boat, you drained it in the build and then bumped it overboard because we don't do that nowadays. We were doing this to ourselves when we were polluting the waters. But, like so many things, it starts out innocently. When they first started putting an engine in the boat, you don't think much about it, then you get more and more and more and more boats. There are more and more and more pleasure boats. So, you pump more and more into that ocean because we were cutting our own throats.

CT: That is not much, much cleaner.

AW: It's kind of like breaking the eggs. Are you going to get any chicken? No.

CT: So, sort of going back a second. When you started, you just sold right on the dock, or would you…

AW: Yes. I sold all my lobsters at the dock. We'd sell every day when we'd come in.

CT: Is that where you buy bait and fuel up?

AW: Yes, but I've got a bait there. They always had bait.

CT: So, you would not worry about…

AW: For those that used power boats, they had the fuel farm. The lobster boats back when I first started were probably what, 98 percent gasoline. That was probably 98 percent diesel.

CT: This was a private buyer, then? You didn't…

AW: No, it was a private businessman buying and selling.

CT: He would take…

AW: Send to the fisherman, you sell to him, he'll have your bait because If you don't have bait, you can't go out. So, he can't buy your lobsters. So, he's working for himself, which also works for you. Like lobster, this fishing is a lot like a farmer. It's almost impossible to tend your fields and sell the product at the same time. A lobster might – it's almost impossible to go hunt for bait, take care of it, and be able to lobster it at the same time. So, you each have a place in business. One needs the other. You can't survive without each other. Or one person can here or there, but the industry can't.

CT: Did you change who you would sell to? Did you ever sell to a cooperative?

AW: Oh, yes. Over the years, some went out of business. There's nobody in business that when I started, they're all pushing up daisies. The buyers come and go. Businesses come and go. It's like stores or automobile dealers. They come and go.

CT: Were you ever involved in the cooperative, though?

AW: No, I never was involved in the co-op.

CT: Okay.

AW: No. That co-op is a very important part of this community. Yes, it is.

CT: So, trying to just get at some of the major changes that occurred in the fishery. Can you pinpoint any of the big changes or events that you had to work with?

AW: Oh, yes. One of the first big changes was nylon. When nylon came out to knit potheads out of. That came out of World War II. DuPont made nylon, invented nylon to make the shroud lines of the paratroopers. Well, after the war, they didn't know what to do with it. It devolved itself. We used to use something called sisal or manila headed twice which the manila was a little more expensive. If you took good care of it, that probably would last a year and a half. The sisal would last about a year. The stuff would deteriorate. Some of the old fishermen used to heat boiling pots of tar and dip those heads in them and dry them and use them, and you get longer use out of it. [inaudible] of nylon. We were all very suspicious of it.

CT: Were you fishing metal traps at that time?

AW: Oh, no, no, no. Metal traps didn't come in until what, late? This is hard to remember. The late [19]70s when they first started coming out. They were poorly constructed. The very first, like everything, they evolved through experiments and became very efficient now. We used to have wooden traps basically made with oak. We would hand-build each trap in the base light. We'd knit the heads, put them in a fish trap. The first traps I ever owned that first-year winter, I was, like I said, I was clamming. I was buying material out to build some traps. The trap itself costs less than $4. The trap right now of a four-foot, twenty-inch, four-foot trap, I think, is right close to $70 or $71. Yes. That's what they tell me. I haven't bought any for quite a few years.

CT: But did you adopt the metal traps?

AW: Oh, yes. I adopted. Oh, yes. We all come to metal traps. They fish better than wood ones. The wood ones have more buoyancy on the water. Even though they soak up and you weigh them down, one of the biggest drawbacks to the wooden traps was the worms would eat them. About ninety days is all you could keep them in the water and make them last a number of years. So, you were rotating traps all the time. The old wooden buoys that we had on them, if you had out a hundred traps, you better have three or four hundred buoys because you put them in the water in three months. So, they soak up and start to settle, hard to see, get dirty. The nylon came out, and it didn't take long for us to find out what took some time. But the old heads might last, let's say the best of them a year. Excuse me, a year and a half. That nylon, if you take care of it, it would for ten, twelve years. I don't know. Maybe longer than that. So, that was one of the things. Then of course, they went into nylon ropes and synthetic ropes. They far outlasted the old ropes and came hydraulic hollows, wire traps. Then when they first built the wire traps or any of the traps, they had no escape vents in them. Well, I admit I, for one, when they first came out, I thought, well, that's just another expense. Put them in. Well, that was one of the greatest things we ever done.

CT: Putting those escape vents.

AW: Escape vents. One of the greatest things that ever happened.

CT: What was that?

AW: The escape vents.

CT: Oh, yes.

AW: Yes. We were forced to put one in, and it wasn't long before you were putting in two or maybe even three because the traps were holding so many sub-legal lobsters. You had to take time to pick them all out. So, it took you longer to haul those traps. Plus he was damaging those lobsters. They were biting each other. It was not unusual to have 10 or 12 percent cows in a hall when you come in. You come in today, I doubt they had much over 3 percent. So, there's another thing that added to the poundage over the years. All these little things are put together.

CT: Did your old traps have a kitchen kind of parlor?

AW: Yes, they did. Built basically on the same ideas except they weren't four headers. They didn't have the second one.

CT: All right. So, how would you respond to certain threats to your fishing operations? Say like the rising fuel prices. Did you have to change your behavior in any way?

AW: Probably a little. Probably don't step on the accelerator quite so hard. [laughter] Just like driving your car right now with the price of gas, you try to get as many miles out of it as you can.

Well, the boats, the guys are doing it. You don't see them pedal to the metal quite as much. You always watch while they might get throttled off for a minute or two, but you don't see in the corner, take off, and go all the time. They try to be a little more gentle about things. Start up slower, slow down a little sooner.

CT: What about things like do you have a problem with a bait shortage or just really high prices?

AW: What are you talking about now?

CT: Now, or when…

AW: Years have gone by. People probably laugh at this one. When I started back, there was rowing in that door. Bait was fifty cents a bushel. [laughter] You'd roll out a five, what we called a five-bushel barrel, and they deliver it into the barrel. They'd probably shovel a bushel on the ground beside you to run the dock. Got to have a good measure. They'd give you a good measure. That was fifty cents a bushel. I remember when it went to seventy-five. Oh, God, what a hollering there was then. [laughter]

CT: It is $120 a barrel now or better.

AW: Yes. I guess a tray is around – some of them trays are bait around $46, $47, or something like that. Now I can remember the cost they were ten years ago.

CT: What would you do when it went out, though?

AW: You'd take good care of the bait. Make sure you don't have spoilage and waste. But you can't catch lobsters without bait. So, what you do in that case sometimes is put out a few more traps to try to help offset the increased cost of bait and gas.

CT: So, you just up your effort and try to catch more.

AW: That's what started happening. When I first started, if somebody had out two hundred traps, that was a good, good, big strain. Now, they're being limited to eight hundred.

CT: So, more people started fishing?

AW: Yes. More people. Oh, yes. There's a lot more people fishing than there was. I think when I started fishing, there were somewhere around 330, two hundred licensed fishermen on the coast. Now there's, I think, it's right close to seven thousand. There are a lot more licenses out there, but they add all fishing. I think this is something close to nine thousand licenses that could be like mine. I have a license.

CT: You have a license?

AW: I maintain my license. Oh, yes. I maintain that. There's an economical reason for that.

CT: What is that?

AW: These are my neighbors. I let my license go. Pete buys it, and he starts up lobstering. We're just using your name. Okay. That's eight hundred more traps that could be set out here amongst my neighbors. Now, when I was going lobstering, there were other fishermen that had done the same thing. They held their license to help hold down the number of traps that could be put out here. We were our neighbors' keepers.

CT: What about people that want to get into young people?

AW: There was a time anybody could get in. Now it's, there are limited licenses. You've got to go through an apprentice program, and it takes – well, it can take years, and maybe might never get a license.

CT: Would you be willing to give up your license at any point? Or you are just trying to keep the numbers traps down?

AW: I'm trying. Not so much that I don't want somebody else to get into it. It's more I want to protect my neighbors. I was taking care of it one time. They helped me.

CT: What does it cost to have a commercial license without buying the tags for the traps?

AW: I think buy because I'm over seventy-eight. I think that's $67. That's kind of – as far as I'm concerned, the lobster licenses are too cheap.

CT: I think you are right there. I thought it was about two-hundred.

AW: I think it is 170.

CT: I've got a five-travel license, and I pay $50 roughly, and then I have to buy five taxes.

AW: Yes. Well, they've started out at ten cents. Now they're fifty cents.

CT: Yes.

AW: It's just another tax.

CT: Yes. But it is a way of trying to keep track of how many traps are going in the water because there is something in excess of two million a year out here. Did you ever fish more than eight hundred traps?

AW: No, I never. The most traps I ever fished was 650 in my life, and I raised four children.

CT: Well, when more people started coming in, was that a problem for you?

AW: Yes, there is a problem. Not a personal problem. Well, let's say you've got ten soda bottles sitting on this table. Let's put ten to it. It gets crowded, and therefore a lot of the traps are up with each other. You don't set them that way to do it on purpose, but it's part of the process. It can't be helped. That's where the most problem comes in.

CT: How did you deal with that?

AW: Cut your teeth. [laughter] You cut your teeth and try not – try to spread out enough, but it's when you're all raising families, you're buying homes, you're buying cars, you pay your boats, they're all working hard. They're damned hardworking people. 99.9 percent of them are as honest as the day is long. So, to a degree, you are your brother's keeper. I have a trap gets cut off by a boat, he comes along, sets a trap, and [inaudible] when he hauls up. So, he brings it into him. I get one of somebody else's, I take it into him. We are our brother's keepers.

CT: Help each other out as much as you can.

AW: Absolutely. Yes.

CT: Well, I was going to move on to questions on your community perceptions, unless you have anything to add on your experience lobstering specifically?

AW: No.

CT: Well, I think we got it pretty well covered, and we can always come back to it.

AW: Okay.

CT: So, how is the infrastructure for fishing here? Does it meet the needs of fishermen?

AW: Yes, I think it meets it very well. Not only have the things that the lobster have worked with improved over the years but so are the people who fishermen sell their products to. You go to a dock today. They got park lifts, hydraulic heist, freezers, coolers, mud things that come into it.

CT: How has that changed over the years? I mean, when you were started.

AW: Oh, when I first started, there wasn't such a thing as a cooler in this. I didn't know it was a cooler in the state of Maine when I started, but they started –

CT: For bait?

AW: For bait. When I first started, they used to have, well, something you'll probably never see one, because many of them around what they used to call a lobster car. It was a floating crane in the water into which they dumped the lobsters. Now, they just put them in crates day by day. They used to handle them more. That meant there was more shrinkage in them. Nowadays a bigger percentage of what's caught makes it to the market. That's an improvement. Bait used to

spoil very easily years ago. Nowadays they dump lots of bait off the wharf because if it's sour, it's no good for fishing. It can be what you might think is rot. Then it'll fish. But if it's sour, forget it. It will not fish. If lobster won't eat sour bait anymore, you'd eat rotten food.

CT: Do you think there are any more improvements that need to be done for infrastructure in the community?

AW: I don't see how they could improve it a heck of a lot more right now. I really don't. They've improved the labor at the docks so that it's not as intense as it used to be. They handle baits so much easier, so much less effort. Not that they don't work, but there isn't drudgery work, let's say. There isn't the work of reselling the bait, trying to make it last another four or five days going into things like that. Today, the coolers keep it either frozen or just maybe thirty-four degrees, thirty-five degrees in the tanks. So, the bait, in most cases, the boats that bring it in have refrigerated water to keep the fish while they are on the grounds because they're fishing further offshore than they used to. So, while they're bringing that in, they keep their fish cold enough and in better shape than they sometimes used to get here.

CT: Do you consider this place a fishing community today?

AW: Absolutely.

CT: Why is that?

AW: I see it loaded out there, all those boats. That's what maintains sufficient community. All the community maintains the boats. You can say it either way. It's definitely a fishing community. If any one of them boats is in trouble, anybody that hears about it will respond if they're physically able.

CT: Overall, do you think the fishermen in this port are doing better or worse than twenty years ago?

AW: Much better.

CT: They are all gentlemen now.

AW: Thank you, Pete. The standard of living is, I'm going to say, ten times better now than it was when I first started.

CT: Do you feel the fishing community here is resilient?

AW: Yes.

CT: Why is that?

AW: They love fishing, and they want to make a decent living. So, they'll put their thinking caps on, and they'll figure a way to survive. That is what I call evolving. It's like when I first

remember as a kid, if you went down here on the beach, the garbage just happened to be a foot and a half deep because everybody took their garbage to the shore. Started back when there was only one or two or three houses from this town. That was all right. It's kind of like that oil I talked about. Okay. The community grows, the trash grows, dumping it in the ocean, and all of a sudden, you begin to think, hey, now this has got to stop. Destroying this. It's almost impossible. Find some garbage on the shore now, isn't it? Be, yes. Now landfills came into being transfer stations, and so forth.

CT: What do you see as the major strengths of this fishing community?

AW: Major strength?

CT: Yes.

AW: Individualism.

CT: How do you mean?

AW: Each fisherman in himself wants to be as good or better than the next one. Not from a bragging point of view but from a production point of view. He must be able to compete with his neighbors. So, he'll work hard and maintain his boat, maintain his equipment. That's what maintains your production because If you have to lay alongside the dock or on the mowing because you broke down, you'll lose him.

CT: Do you consider the community here to be vulnerable?

AW: Yes. We're vulnerable in a way.

CT: In what way?

AW: Wealth. The wealth that comes into the state. I got to admit, I've been a part of it. I owned that piece of property right over there, and I sold it. People came into town. I owned this because the land goes to that wall right there. The other side of that goes with that property over there. I sold to non-residents at that time.

CT: How is this…

AW: Well, I was shore frontage, which used to be probably 80 percent owned by fishermen. Now it is maybe 10 percent, 15 percent of the town is now owned by the fishermen waterfront or the co-op down there. But it's the same thing has happened the whole length of the coast. It used to be every fisherman who lived on the water had his own dock. Even if it was a tide dock, you had a dock. I used to live down in the village. I had a house down there across from a store. My first home, I have the short privilege. A place I could go in. It's my dock. I built it with a pair of hands, as many fishermen did and still do, and have waterfront property. But there's what, only about twenty-five miles of shore frontage owned by fishermen, I think, in this state right now, we've got about a 3,500-mile coast.

CT: So, is fishermen's access to the waterfront? Is that an issue now?

AW: Yes. Well, a lot of it is being accessed. Like the co-op down there. A lot of fishermen go through there. A lot of fishermen go through this dock up above there, then the dock. This road right here goes down to a dock. The majority of the fishermen are going over what we call the buyer's dock. The one who buys the lobsters from the fishermen. So, those docks become very, very apart. They bought them for the fishing community because you have to rely on somebody else's property.

CT: But when you started, everyone was relying on their own properties.

AW: Basically, yes. Just about everybody had their own access to the shore. But that's slowly changing.

CT: What do you see as the major threats facing this community?

AW: I don't know if there's really a threat to us in the community. At times, there will be problems come out from time to time that need to be addressed, and they'll get together. But I don't really see a big threat with the rules and regulations we have right now. That's where the limited number of licenses helps protect the business. Excuse me, I'll pause this. That phone is right there in my nose. [laughter] I walked in to grab it. Now, actually, I don't pick up the phone generally until I know who's calling. I have caller ID. If I don't know the name of the number, I don't answer the phone. If I don't want to [laughter], just call independence. I know.

CT: So, do you have any opinions on what is needed to strengthen the viability of the commercial fishing here? Or have other communities made changes or done things new that you think this community should try?

AW: Right at the present moment, I don't see much need for change. Something that might evolve over time might be a reduction in the number of traps that are allowed to be fished, which I think less traps could still catch just about the same number of lobsters which would cut down the use of bait, gas, pollution from your engines, exhaust, that type of thing.

CT: So, in this community, who represents the interests of commercial fishermen?

AW: Who does?

CT: Yes. Are there fish…

AW: Well, there is one lobsterman here that's on the – that represents our district, that meets with other representatives, most of them being fishermen anyway, or being buyers or marine handlers, that they're all involved in customer [inaudible]. They hash over questions and problems or somebody brings up an idea, we'll do this, do that. Many heads make wiser decisions. We have one lobsterman in town that does represent our district here. When we have questions, when we have thoughts, we go to him. He takes them to those meetings. He's elected

by us.

CT: Are fishermen well organized then would you say?

AW: Not as well as they could be. There would be more strength in resisting governmental interventions. That's where the strengthening, I think, could come if we could keep some of the governmental – they come up with ideas and regulations. Sometimes it's the same people are trying to cover that rest. You know CYA?

CT: Yes.

AW: They got a job now. That's just…

CT: So, moving on, how would you characterize the relationship between fishermen within this community?

AW: I think it's a very good relationship. There's always somebody that don't particularly like that individual, but not to the point that they would damage that individual. If something happened to him, he was in a mess. They'd probably still be right there to help.

CT: What about between fishermen in this community and other nearby communities?

AW: There's a so-called unwritten law that happened many years ago, was set up many years ago. Each community, to a point, has an area that they fish, that community fishes. That was all set up to make life smoother for everybody. You went out of village number one, you fish area number one. You went out of village number two, you fish number two. Okay. There's a little bit of that over what they call the line. That gives a little both ways a little bit. If it starts doing this, then there are waves of telling that fisherman he's getting out of bounds. There's a gentleman's way to do it first. Probably 98 percent of the time, that works. If it gets rough after that, it's only one person usually gates from that, and that's the guy that's selling stuff to go lobster street with. I'm talking about traps, ropes, blah, blah, blah. Then I'm being destroyed. He's the only one that's winning. Because if you and I get in an argument and I start to cut your traps, what'll stop you from getting the knife and cutting him up? If you figure I'm the one that's done, do it. In most cases, one fisherman won't attack another until he knows from Shoa who has made that move. They don't want to bother somebody that's innocent. So, you're pretty careful about doing something. So, there really isn't all this. When you hear about it and a lot of it gets blown up out of perspective, especially by the press, the media, they love something like that. I'm sure you've heard of two or three horror stories that have happened.

CT: Yes.

AW: That's sad. That's very sad. But most of the fishermen want no part of that.

CT: How would you characterize the relationship between fishermen and non-fishermen in this community?

AW: I don't see any reason for there to be any dissatisfaction with each other. The non-fishermen don't go fishing basically because they don't want to. The fishermen don't go out carpentry because they don't want to. They want to be individualists, be independent. That's why the old expression, every boat has its own captain. They're not all governed by one man. In other words, if I want to go to hall today, I go to hall. If you don't, you don't go. That's fine. What's wrong with that? Okay. You are exerting your privileges.

CT: Okay. So, just have some other sorts of questions near you in the end. Besides fishermen, who else is using the waterfront in the dock space?

AW: Well, the recreational fishermen. Recreational fishermen are a big part of this coast. They need a place to fuel up their boat, get water, get groceries, go in boat yards, and work done. They're a very part of this coast. That part of that thing has grown tremendously in the last thirty years. Take just in Rockland alone, and see the pleasure boats in Sydney over that harbor that are stored there in winter. It's a big business. They have a right to the water, too.

CT: So, how important has tourism been in this?

AW: Say that again?

CT: How important has tourism been in this community?

AW: Oh, tourism is a big business. You take this town we're in right here. Non-residents pay about 52 percent of our taxes. So, they're very important, and they're very supportive. Those who come and have homes and pay the taxes and insurance have property keepers. All those things bring a lot of money into this state. Tourism is our number one business.

CT: So, how do you feel about those tourists and people from outside the community who want to move here?

AW: We couldn't survive without them. Most of them are wonderful, wonderful people. Every barrel has a rock apple in it sooner or later. But that's life. But don't tie them all with one brush.

CT: How important has aquaculture been to this community or has it been?

AW: There is no aquaculture in this community. I can only talk about this. It's big business in the state in growing in parts of the state. I can't really comment on that except for, I know it does bring in a lot of business. We have no aquaculture in this area right here, so it doesn't affect this community.

CT: What about the…

AW: I think there is one fellow that does grow muscles. So, it really doesn't have any big effect on the community, but I don't see – he does anything detrimental though, but he's trying something different. That's what he wants. Let him go do it. Gets his permits, his licenses. Fine, let him go.

CT: What about party or charter boats, those sort of pleasure boats?

AW: We have a lot of pleasure, but we have quite a few pleasure boats coming and going all the time. I can look right down there right now. I'd say one, two, three, four boats down there that are probably in for the night. They'll rent them more in, they'll go to the store, then they go to the restaurants. Probably tourism. I have an expression. Help keep Maine green. Bring your money and spend it. In other words, if you want to look a little bit beyond that, a lot of these people are paying for those of us that might like to go to Florida in the winter. So, we log it back down south, and they bring it back the next spring. It's tourism in every state.

CT: Are there opportunities for fishermen to be involved in tourism?

AW: Yes. There are some small opportunities. Probably talking with Pete. He's told you about, he goes on the boat down there. Yes. Okay. That's, he's in the tourism part of it. I took people out with me for a lot of years. I never charged people. I charged people when I had a license to carry passengers. I had my captain's license. In fact, I had a license. I could take the ferry boats down there. I did many times in the past. I would take people to Monhegan, onto some of the islands when they wanted to go and hire a special boat. I'd done that. That was [inaudible], which I had the license so I could do it. I left my license lap when I was seventy-nine and a half at the time. My license would had to be renewed. At that age, they're going to give you a hard time. I really didn't care to have it renewed. I figured it was time. I went, like I say, fifty-seven years. I never had an accident. I never lost a bone, never won a show-up. I thought I'd hang my boots up while I was on top. I don't have a broken bone in my body. I've never been injured.

CT: How affordable is the current housing situation here?

AW: That is very expensive.

CT: How was that changed?

AW: Terribly. Tremendously, I should say. Anyway, first house I used to own down street. It had three bedrooms, bath, living room, dining room, kitchen. I paid $4,200 for 1951. The last time I knew a piece of property sold in excess of 200,000. It's a house right on the other side of the cove here. I knew the fellow that bought it, his father. I knew the son. His father bought the house for $430. He sold not too long ago for just over 600,000. The same house

CT: The very same house.

AW: Same house, same piece of property.

CT: What do you…

AW: All these places around here are just like that.

CT: Yes. What do you feel have been the most critical changes in the community since you lived here?

AW: Critical. Now, do you mean that officially or detrimentally?

CT: Significantly.

AW: Significantly level. That goes both ways. There again, I suppose it's the money that's coming in. It's had its effect on improving just about every phase of life.

CT: So, you see that as being beneficial to the community?

AW: I think so. Yes.

CT: Why do you think this money is coming in? Why do you think people are buying up houses?

AW: People are more affluent than they used to be. So, a lot of retired people are coming into this town and buying properties. They've had good paying jobs where they were much higher than what we have around here. Those of us that have stayed here all these years were contended with the level of life we have and have worked to bring it up over the years, and we are willing to stay here. Others moved away, had big-paying jobs. In most cases, they were college graduates who went on to better jobs. A lot of them want to drift back. When they come back, they bring that money with them. I find the majority of these people are very supportive of our community affairs, our ambulances of the fire departments, our social organizations, the churches. They contribute to all these things far more than a lot of people realize. I know some, there's a few that don't like some of people as they call them that. But I'll never talk about it.

CT: What do you think the community will look like in ten years?

AW: Well, if I only had a crystal ball [laughter]. It will still be a thriving community.

CT: What would you like this community to look like?

AW: I'd like to see it not change very fast. Maybe that's not a way to look at it, but the standard of living here, and I guess I'm talking about mostly among the fishermen. There are those on the lower end, those on the higher end. There always was, and there always will be. That's a fact of life. But there are opportunities. One of the big opportunities I see in this is that there are so many more kids going off to college. There are so many more scholarships available than used to be available that people have set up, our companies have set up, and our companies contribute to. That's why we really don't have that many young people going into the business. That may be one of the big changes in the future, but I don't know. Somehow, I feel there'll always be somebody to step in.

CT: Would you still go fishing if you had your life to live over?

AW: Yes, I would.

CT: Would you advise other young men to enter the fishery?

AW: Some yes and some no. Now, that may sound like a funny answer. Fishermen are a rare breed. Line a hundred men up out here at random and start them out here fishing if that could be done, and just this is it. There might be three out of that hundred that will survive. Most of them cannot do it. Just like if you line that same hundred up and started farming, there might be three that make good farmers. The rest, it's just not their cup of tea.

CT: What do you like most about living here?

AW: Fresh air, freedom. That's what I wanted. I had that choice when I came out of school. I could have gone in any direction because my grandfather used to tell me, "Son, you could be anything you want to be. If you want to be bad enough and you want to work for it, but somebody's not going to give it to you." Going to work for it. That's what I see when I see that fleet out there. They're all – almost every one of them is willing to work to achieve their best potential. They're not at all going to be at the top, and they're not all going to be at the bottom, but they're all going to be at their potential. But that's the freedom they have, and that's what I like. I know my neighbors – I got neighbors right over there. All I have to do is snap my fingers in the sense of speaking. If I needed help, they'd be here, just like I'd be there for them.

CT: Are there any other issues that we have not talked about that you feel important to understand the past, present and the future of this fishing community?

AW: Not right at this moment. I don't think of anything that would be significant. No, I don't think so. I wouldn't want to see the privilege to do. Even though if you don't go fishing, there are many things that are done. We have mechanics. We have boat builders and boat repairs. They're all part of the industry. I mean, the marinas, they don't really just take care of fishing. They take care of the pleasure boats, and we're not a part of it. We all use the water. Keep the water safe. Keep our coast guard valuable. Redneck and helicopters nowadays, if somebody's in a mess, they can get a motel. Save men that they never used to save. They have good boats, good crews on them, usually well-trained.

CT: Well, that is the end. Thank you very much.

AW: Okay.

[end of transcript]