

Sara Randall: Okay. All right. So, to start off, we would like to get a little background for the record. Could you please state your full name and your birth date?

Dan Miller: My name is Dan W Miller. My birth date is January 29, 1949.

SR: Your place of birth.

DM: Waterville, Maine.

SR: Current address?

DM: I live at 19 Mechanic Street in Tenants Harbor, Maine.

SR: In what year did you first start commercial fishing?

DM: Are we talking about lobster? Are you talking about fishing?

SR: Anything.

DM: I began lobstering when I had my own license and my own boat when I was around seven years old. That's when I began lobstering, and I began commercial fishing. It probably would have been [19]72 or [19]73. That'll be 1973.

SR: Okay. So, before I get into your specific history with your fishing experience, I want to ask about your family and if you came from a fishing family.

DM: I did not.

SR: You did not. So, you grew up in Waterville?

DM: No, I grew up in Cape Porpoise. I came up for it.

SR: Where is that?

DM: Southern Maine.

SR: Southern Maine. Okay.

DM: Porpoise was a fishing community, a small harbor fishing community. It is a village as part of the town of Kennebunkport.

SR: What generation are you in terms of either being a Mainer or an American?

DM: I am a first-generation Mainer.

SR: So, your parents were not from here?

DM: My father was from New Jersey. My mother was from Massachusetts. They went to Colby College, and that's where I started in Waterville.

SR: All right. Do you have a wife or partner?

DM: No.

SR: Okay. Or did you ever?

DM: Yes, two of them.

SR: Did they come from a fishing family?

DM: They did not. My first wife came from Massachusetts. My second wife was from Maine, but she was never a part of fishing.

SR: Okay. Do you have brothers and sisters involved in fishing?

DM: Yes, I do. I have three brothers that are all fishermen. I have a sister that's a fisherman and one sister that's been fishing but runs the fish market restaurant that we have on our wharf in Tenants Harbor. My other two sisters do not fish. They do other jobs.

SR: So, how many siblings do you have in total?

DM: There was nine of us. One was lost at sea. There's eight of us left. Four girls and four boys now.

SR: Okay. So, do you guys help each other out? Do your family members contribute at all to your fishing business? Working as stern men, crew members, bookkeepers, or dealers?

DM: Occasionally, we do that, but we own our own dock in Tenants Harbor. The four boys, the three of us, my three brothers and myself, all have a wharf that we own. We buy lobsters. So, yes, we work together all the time. One of the worst parts of it is as far as going on each other's boat. Occasionally, that happens, but not a lot. Not as much as it did when we were younger.

SR: Yes. Okay. What is the name of your dog?

DM: Miller Dwarf. Everybody in the area knows it. It is court end because that's the name of the fish market, and my mother started thirty-eight or thirty-nine years ago. It's a summer business that sells fish and lobsters and has a restaurant. My mother passed away, so my sister has taken it over. So, it's still most people know this court end, the court end dog.

SR: Okay. Do you have any children?

DM: I do.

SR: How old are they?

DM: I don't know. [laughter] My oldest daughter is around forty or forty-one. My next oldest son is probably around thirty-five, and then my next son after that is thirty-four, and my youngest daughter is twenty-seven.

SR: Okay. Was that four or five?

DM: Four.

SR: Four.

DM: Two boys and two girls.

SR: Okay. Did any of them help you with your fishing business?

DM: Not really. They maybe have been on the boat with me a few times, but not a lot. They pretty much went on their own when they went.

SR: Are there any of them fishermen now?

DM: Yes.

SR: Yes. How many?

DM: One out of four.

SR: Is that person lobstering?

DM: Yes.

SR: Do they do anything else in fisheries?

DM: He doesn't groundfish or anything, just lobsters. Maybe, I guess, he did do some shrimping. A little bit of shrimp trapping. That's it. I have several grandchildren that all lobster their own traps with their fathers or whatever.

SR: Oh, they do.

DM: Yes. Okay.

SR: Would you encourage your grandchildren or any other young person to go into fishing?

DM: That's a hard question right now. Given what's been happening with the lobster price and all groundfish businesses, basically a losing proposition. The lobster business is still okay, but

the price is horrible. The scallop business hasn't done very well. The shrimp business is all right, but the season is incredibly short. So, you have a lot to deal with there. So, I don't know that I would encourage him. I certainly wouldn't take the option away from him, but to encourage him to go fishing, I don't know. It's a pretty difficult lifestyle right now.

SR: Yes. Okay. Before you went fishing, did you ever hear any stories from old timers about what it was like to go fishing in this area?

DM: I heard stories from old timers all the time.

SR: About how much...

DM: Just take, for instance, where I live in Tenants Harbor, in the old times, and there's still plenty of people down there that talk about it. They used to go right there in the mouth of the harbor, right outside the harbor, and catch haddock. They could go right down on the dock and catch black bag flounders. There were plenty. They could catch all they wanted. That doesn't exist anymore. It hasn't existed since I lived there, really. I've been there since 1973. I think it was when I moved there. So, that whole fishery is pretty much gone, and at least the way they knew it before me. I mean, what I've seen over the years with the herring and all that, I mean, I've heard a lot of stories about herring. I've seen a lot of it. The whole fishery has changed. Everything is different now than it was back then. Gone from a small boat fleet to a big boat fleet. Gone through employing a lot of people to employing a handful of people. I think the direction they've gone has been all wrong. They keep on going that way because they think that's the way to go. So, I think the people down east got the right idea.

SR: Which is?

DM: Put the hands back in the small boat fishery and get out of the big boat fishery. Let the big boats go fish offshore someplace and get them away from here. That's pretty well-proven how it can take out the whole fishery. I don't even think it's all about the fishing to start with. I think there's other dynamics playing in here that are happening that they don't have an explanation for, nor do I. The fish haven't been bothered out here for a long time, and they still aren't making a recovery, measurable recovery. My lobster was in the same places where I used to groundfish at the same time of year when I caught thousands and thousands of pounds of fish and saw whales all around everywhere, and I see no whales. None. I don't see the amount of herring I saw then, and there's no groundfish there either. So, there's a lot going on here that's a lot deeper than, oh, the guys are just overfishing this place. It isn't just about overfishing. There's something else going on here. It hasn't been overfished. It hasn't even been a boat in sight where I lobster, and it's in the same place where I caught fish by the thousands. There isn't even a dragger in sight. The only time I see them is when they're going by me to go way off someplace. That's been for twelve, fourteen years now. Plenty of time for fish to come back. So, there's a lot of other things that are happening here. It's probably something to do with the genetic code in the fish. It's probably something to do with pollution in the water. I really don't know. All the answers are maybe acidification. Who knows? I don't know. I don't think they've done enough studies in the right direction, and all they've done is chopped down days at sea and go to allocations, and nothing that they have done has worked. So, they're obviously barking up the wrong tree.

SR: So, I am going to ask you now about your experience in the fishery. What year did you first start commercially fishing for groundfish?

DM: Probably around 1973.

SR: How old were you then?

DM: Probably my mid-twenties. Somewhere around twenty-two, twenty-three. Probably more like twenty-four, twenty-five, somewhere in there. When I started. Because I taught school for a year in Rockland when I got out of college, so I was probably about twenty-five when I started ground fishing.

SR: Did you first start on your own boat, or did you work for somebody?

DM: I started on my own boat.

SR: Okay. What made you decide at that point to get into ground fishing?

DM: I like fishing. I've always been a fisherman all the way up from the time I had my own lobster license at seven years old and all through college, and I fished lobsters in the summers. I didn't groundfish as such, but we always saw fish. There were always fishing around. We had people that trawl for fish and things like that down in Cape Porpoise. The old-timers would talk about the schooners and the fish I fished. I mean, I went out and caught mackerel all the time and went with my grandfather mackerel fishing. My father took fishing parties for years and years, went out there, and caught barrels and barrels and barrels of codfish and some haddock and occasional halibut or something. That was all the time I was growing up. My father was taking those fishing parties every day, seven days a week.

SR: But he was not a commercial fisherman, but he still had made his livelihood from the...

DM: Well, he was taking fishing parties, and they were landing codfish. Yes, he wasn't selling the codfish as such because the market was ridiculous.

SR: Yes, because it was so cheap.

DM: So, used them more for bait, or people took them home than selling them because there was scads amount of codfish available on the market already. That's the way it was when I was fishing in my twenties and thirties.

SR: So, when you started fishing for groundfish, you were down in Cape Porpoise?

DM: No, I was here.

SR: Oh, okay. You were up here.

DM: I started here actually commercial fishing with a dragger. Well, actually, I started with a gillnetter.

SR: How difficult was it to get into the ground fishing industry when you first started?

DM: Not very difficult at all. All it amounted to was paying. I think we had to have a license back then. Pay for your license, bring your boat up and go.

SR: When you first started ground fishing, you were fishing out of Tenants Harbor.

DM: Yes. Well, Tenants Harbor, Port Clyde, both, kind of sometimes here and sometimes there.

SR: Okay. So, this first boat that you bought in your mid-twenties in 1973. What type of boat was it?

DM: It was a forty-six-foot wooden boat and was built in Southwest Harbor. I believe. At the time I bought it, it was already deeper than I can't remember now, forty years old, maybe. It was an old boat that they built to carry Chad, I think they told me. It was rigged up as a dragger, and the guy down east owned it, and he used it to go shrimping with, I think. I bought it and brought it from Southwest Harbor back to Tenants Harbor. That's what I used to go fishing in. I think it was around forty years old when I got it.

SR: What was the length of the boat?

DM: Forty-six feet.

SR: What was the gross tons?

DM: I don't remember, it was very narrow. It was not big tonnage. I don't remember what it was though.

SR: Do you remember the horsepower?

DM: Yes, I think it was about 160 horse. An old GM, 671 diesel.

SR: Okay. So, when you first started using this book, you said you went gillnetting first?

DM: The very first thing that I did, we bought the wharf in Tenants Harbor and my uncle bought it. He actually bought the boat and I fished it in the beginning. The first thing we did was go gillnetting because that's what was doing really well in Southern Maine. I'd been out with a few gillnetters there and seeing what they did. So, I went gillnetting out here and did a lot of my fishing between Matinicus and Monhegan and over toward and around Matinicus Rock. I didn't fish a whole lot of nets.

SR: How many did you?

DM: Actually, when I very first started, I fished in my father's boat that he sent up here before the forty-six-footer. I forgot about this. Before the forty-six-footer, I started out in the twenty-eight-foot wooden boat. There was a bomb-built boat built and came on board. My father had built the lobster out of when he was at Fred Gillnetter and rigged that up and went gillnetting. That was what actually first went in, and I actually went shrimping in it and scalloping in it that very first year. I'd forgotten about that. Then we got the other boat next. So, I used to take that boat out and fish. But we had a capacity of maybe five or 6,000 pounds of fish, and that was pretty full on that boat.

SR: On the twenty-six-foot boat.

DM: The twenty-eight-foot boat?

SR: How much did you say? What was the capacity?

DM: Well, anywhere from four to 6,000 was a pretty big load on that boat. That's like you catch that out of six or seven nets. I can't remember if they were hundred-fathom nets or fifty-fathom nets or a mix of both. But generally, it wasn't more than 500-fathom. I can't remember if they measured them in fathoms. I think they measured them in fathoms. So, it would be like 300, 500 times would be what? Three thousand feet of net. I can't remember, I think they came in fifty fathoms and hundred fathoms, but that wasn't the depth of them. It was the length of them. Maybe they were in feet. I just don't remember. It was so many years ago. Forty years ago.

SR: Do you know the mesh size for the nets that you use?

DM: A lot smaller than now. We had five and a half. I think we had fives. I don't think we have smalls four and a half. We might have. I think we had some sixes or six and a half. But trying the smaller meshes for the haddock and the bigger mesh was for the – you get those big, huge codfish and stuff, pollock, big sea pollock, hake and pollock in the summer. More of the cod and haddock in the spring.

SR: Okay. So, when you were gill netting at the beginning, you were targeting all of the species?

DM: I was targeting whatever I could catch. But primarily what I ended up targeting was what I could catch in a gill net, because it wasn't rigged to catch flounders. You'd have to have something rigged differently to get down on the bottom to catch flounders. I was basically catching groundfish. I was catching cod, pollock, and hake. An occasional monkfish and occasionally a shark. There are some other occasional things, but mostly cod and hake and pollock.

SR: Okay. How many boats did you use total over your ground fishing career?

DM: Probably at least four.

SR: Four. That you owned?

DM: Yes.

SR: Did they get bigger through the years? Like longer?

DM: No, five. I guess, five. I forgot about the last one. That was the biggest one. Yes, it got bigger. Well, I started out at twenty-eight-footer that I hardly that was gillnetting. Then I got to forty-six-footer which I dragged with. Then I went and fished. I dragged with my father's boat some. That was a thirty-six-footer. I'm trying to remember if I get anything. Then I took his boat just a little. I basically went from the forty-six-footer to the fifty-four-footer. Somewhere in that, the thirty-six- or thirty-seven-footer was thrown in there, and I don't really remember. I didn't fish it much, but I did fish it. So, my last dragger that I own was back in the early [19]80s was 54 feet. I have been dragging since then, but not in my boat.

SR: Okay. Like you were the captain of the skipper of other people's boats or you were hoping...

DM: I went on a boat. Now, I actually forgot about that too. I went on like a seventy-eight or eighty-footer there for a very, very short time. We went ground fishing in that offshore, but that was while I still had the forty-six-foot boat. I was crew on that boat, I wasn't captain. I took my brother's boat shrimping there last year three times. That's all the dragging I've done since way back in the [19]80s. That's it.

SR: Okay. So, when you were gillnetting, you said you weren't really trying to target a particular species.

DM: You just set the nets out there and they caught what came up in them. Obviously, we were trying to catch something that made us the most money. Because hake and pollock were only anywhere from one to two cents up to five or six a pound, and cod were the high-priced stuff. They were probably fifteen to twenty cents. The monkfish that we got were the highest price of all. I don't even remember what they were, but they weren't very much.

SR: When you were dragging, were you trying to target specific fish?

DM: Dragging was a different matter because when I was dragging, I was catching a lot of flatfish, a lot of flounders, and they were more money. We still caught cod, but we caught haddock too in the spring, and haddock were worth more than the cod, so we made more money on the haddock. Then once the haddock and the cod and the dabs and the black backs went by in the spring, then we moved. It was a little lull there, and then the hake and the pollock and the gray sole would move in, and the grey sole over the monkfish and the monkfish and hake and the pollock weren't worth anything. But we caught a lot of them. But we really were trying to target the flatfish. That was where the money was.

SR: So, you mentioned sort of a seasonal progression of fish that you would see.



DM: It definitely was a seasonal progression. You could put it on a calendar.

SR: Really. So, what time? You said in the spring, you were doing haddock.

DM: Starting in late March, the groundfish were moving into the area where I fished, which wasn't very far offshore because we didn't go very far offshore then. It was like a major trip to go to the winter bottom. Nobody went there, except maybe some a handful of big boats.

SR: How far? Sorry. How far offshore was this, do you think?

DM: Winter bottom?

SR: Well, the place you were finding...

DM: The majority of my fishing was done within ten or fifteen miles from Martinique or Matinicus or the mainland or whatever. Most of that, you could see land almost everywhere I fished, most everywhere. You could see it somewhere. You could see the Camden Hills. You could see some land someplace. You might have been outside a little further, but you could still see an island or some land somewhere. I wasn't going out of sight of land very often at that point in time. Later on, I did, but not early on. But a lot of my fishing was done, probably within seven or eight miles of the islands. When I went down east, it was the same. We're looking out here right now, I could see the land that close to where I was fishing four, five, six, seven, or eight miles.

SR: Okay. When was this? You mentioned there was a lull after the haddock. When was the lull?

DM: The dabs, the black backs, the cod, and the haddock all came in in late March, and they came off where we are here through April, and by May, they started to tail off. There was a kind of slack time there. Then by late May and June, and July was the hake, pollock, and the grey sole and the monkfish. The more things that came then, along with other whiting and other assorted things. But not in target whiting very much, they just happened to be a bycatch. A lot of times, I fished a net twine size too big for whiting. Some guys caught a lot of it because they were trying to catch – so they haul a big net full of bait back and whiting and mixed small fish and all that, and sell all those small flounders and stuff for bait. I always thought that was probably not really smart. It probably wasn't. Looking in hindsight now, selling small dabs and gristle for bait.

SR: So, how important was ground fishing to your overall income?

DM: It was my overall income in the spring, in the early summer, and then in the fall, and I usually get done with the groundfish about late July or early August at the latest because the fish are moving offshore, and they were too far out. I didn't want to chase them any further. So, then I would convert over to lobstering, and I'd lobster until late November. Then if there was a shrimp season or a scallops, I'd go after shrimp and scallops during the winter. If there was anything to catch and scallops, you could go with them. The shrimp are always cyclical and you

never really know. Some years good and some years not so good.

SR: So, you employed a diversified fisheries portfolio.

DM: That was very diversified because that's what you had to do to make a living and support your family. There was good money in it. There was good money in ground fishing in the spring and the summer, and there was good money in lobstering in the fall. But there wasn't good money in those things in the wintertime. There wasn't good money. The groundfish, once they left, went back offshore and there wasn't good money in lobstering in the winter and the spring for me, so, I found those other things to do. It was very lucrative for me at the time.

SR: Okay. So, you explained what times of year you went ground fishing. Did that change at all when you were dragging?

DM: What do you mean? Full-time dragging?

SR: Yes. When I got the fifty-four-foot boat, I became a dragoman as such, I didn't lobster. Then I had to go deal with fishing offshore. I had to go outside to get fish. I caught fish in the normal places in the spring, in the summer. But once they moved offshore, I had to follow them off shore and I had to be off shore in the winter. The fish weren't in here anymore. They were out where you couldn't see land anymore. You were many miles offshore. During that period of time, there happened to be a lot of scallops, and a lot of guys were dragging scallops mixed with their fish and making money on the scallops. Just happened to be that particular time when I had that boat that was going on. So, there was kind of a diverse fishery going on there at that time. I remember the big celebration when we came in the 200-mile limit. This was going to save us. The advent of the 200-mile limit, it got the Russians and those people away. You got them out of here. But at the same time, the 200-mile limit came in, all the banks were looking at this in a positive light, and money was going all over the place to buy new boats. So, where there was very little pressure on the fish out there in what we call the winter bottom, in those places, once the fish left here in the small boat fleet stopped working on them, they went back to their winter habitat. They weren't getting bothered very much there. When the 200-mile limit came in, I don't remember when that was. In the late [19]70s, maybe [19]77, [19]78, the banks were throwing money at that like crazy. So, everybody was building a new boat and a big boat. When I got my boat, we went out offshore there. It literally looked like a city out there. There were so many boats and so many lights everywhere working on those fish that we didn't ever bother in the winter before when a big boat might have got into them. But generally speaking, they weren't bothered out there. So, the whole dynamic of the fishery changed with the 200-mile limit and all the money that got put in it. At the same time, electronics made a quantum leap forward. We use a tow by landmarks. We tow until this island lined up on that mountain or something like that. Everything you could see. You could see your landmarks. You could see all that stuff. When you got further offshore, there was a lot of big bottom. You just tried to stay in the areas where the big bottom was. I didn't fish there enough because we didn't have to. We didn't want to. When I got that fifty-four-foot boat in around 1980, all of a sudden, they developed the plotters. I mean, I went through the whole progression from the time they started toying with landmarks till we got LORAN-A. LORAN-A, they send a signal from the shore, and you have this machine with a sine wave on it. So, you'd go walk in that channel, and you'd get

the sine wave and all that on one channel, and you'd have to switch it over to the other channel and get a sine wave for that so you could cross the two lines to find out what your position was. So, by the time you got done finding one and then you went over and found the other, you've already changed position. So, you spent all day long running back and forth to your LORAN-A to get a position. Well, then they upgraded that, too, so you could get two lines at the same time so you could read your position more accurately, even though it wasn't a really accurate line. Over time, they developed LORAN-C, which was more accurate. It was more pinpoint, and the instrumentation became so that you could read both lines at the same time. From that, they finally got to a place where you could plot. You could plot your track where you've been around in a tow. So, now you've changed the whole fishery pattern there because now it's not – well, I'm towing up to this mark gets on this mark over here, and I go over there until they go, and then I go down there. Now, every time you're told you're taking those landmarks, and you're expanding your knowledge because you're going somewhere and you've got a mark that's left a plot mark there on a chart and your depth sounders and all that got – you went from a black and white paper that you had to change all the time and to a color machine that was LCD. So, everything is all in different colors, and it marks the hardness and all those things. It's an incredible quantum leap in your electronics over a ten, fifteen, twenty-year period, especially that ten-year period around 1980 to 1990, somewhere in there. At the same time, by having all those boats in the fishery, I could see the decline. When I jumped in my fifty-four-footer, I could see the decline already.

SR: What year was that?

DM: Around 1980. I mean, just the pressure from that three years or so of going from the small boat fleet to mobilizing that big boat fleet had already diminished the fish stock.

SR: Okay. You changed over in 1982 to dragging with the fifty-four-footer.

DM: Yes.

SR: Okay. What was the mesh size you would use on that net?

DM: I think five and a half.

SR: Did that change over time?

DM: It grew, but it didn't grow in the time. I don't think it grew while I had the boat because I didn't have it very long. I was only on it for a year, a year and a half, something like that and then my brother took it. I don't think overall we actually fished that boat for more than two to three years. I don't remember exactly, but the mesh size went up. I think it's, what, six and a half or something now. But I think I was fishing five and a half and I'm not even sure that that was required at that time.

SR: Oh, it could have been smaller.

DM: It could have been. I always believed in the conservation side. So, I tried to fish more

bigger mesh size. Because the guys have fished like three-inch cod ends and bring in all that bait, which is just absurd, in my opinion.

SR: Okay. So, when you were gillnetting at the beginning of your career in ground fishing, you were just taking day trips.

DM: Yes. I was day-tripping in all my boats, except that fifty-four footer was the only one I actually took physical trips in.

SR: Okay. How many day trips would you go a year?

DM: I can't remember, maybe three or four times a week from – probably averages out to three or four times. Maybe more than that. I just don't remember. When I was gillnetting, we were trying to go every day and back in the beginning. Dragging and dependent on the weather and all, I'm going to say probably in the spring, we probably got three to five or six days a week. I highly doubt if I ever fished any seven-day weeks very often just because of the weather more than anything. I'm guessing it averaged out probably about four days a week or something.

SR: Okay. How long was your longest trip on a big boat?

DM: In the big boat? I don't know if I ever was out five days or not. I might have been. I'm guessing that most of them ran around three to four days. I could have been out five. I just don't remember. Because when I went down off Jonesport there, that was a better part of it. That was an eight or ten-hour trip just getting there and eight or ten hours coming back. We fished down there for, I think either two or three days. So, it might have been four or five days. I can't remember really.

SR: Were you going up there in search of fish?

DM: Yes, we were there for fish.

SR: Well, because there was not any around here.

DM: Fish were progressive down the coast or up the coast, whichever way you want to look at it. You caught your fish earlier to the west, and they caught them later to the east. Water temperature probably has a lot to do with that. So, the codfish would come in out here in April. But I remember Sanford Doughty sitting out here Memorial Day weekend and time like that fishing out here off Seal Island, loading his boat with codfish because that was a place where the codfish really collected and he just fished right in there around late May, and early June like that. So, they went to the east there, and we went down. We were fishing off Jonesport. I remember when it was because I came in, I landed on Memorial Day weekend in Tenants Harbor. So, we were fishing down there in late May, and there was enough fish there to make it worthwhile to go down there, even though I can remember coming back and the average price for that trip, we had about 30,000 pounds, and I think we got about an average of about 20 cents a pound. They had great sole about what's that, two and a half, three feet long dab the same way, half grey sole and dabs and half on the flatfish side and half groundfish cod and pollock on the groundfish side

just mixed. It was all mixed dabs, grey sole, cod, and pollock mostly, and some hake, some monkfish. But they were all mixed together. But we were getting about probably 10,000 pounds a day and not fishing at night because we put the door down at night and go to sleep and wake up in the morning and fished during the daylight. Just my brother and I, just the two of us, almost killed the poor guy. I think we were down there three days, I can't remember.

SR: So, typically, you would only have one other crew member or one one other—

DM: One, sometimes two. Sometimes it was one, sometimes two, probably more often two than one.

SR: Okay. So, you said that your fishing range went from Monhegan all the way up to Cutler?

DM: Well, no. I fished into the west, too. I fished down off Portland and Cape Porpoise, and so pretty much the only area of the coast I didn't fish at all, really, was out of the Kennebec, the mouth of the Kennebec River, and out around that area. I fished down around Portland and from there toward Cape Porpoise, in that area off Saco Bay, and down there and up toward the edge of the bottom of Portland. Portland with the old Portland Lightship. I tested areas down the coast when I fished to the east. I fished around between Vinalhaven and Seal Island. I fished off Isle Ho. I went all the way as far as Jonesport. Like I said, or off Jonesport and Cutler down in there. Looking right into the Cutler Towers. So, it was spotty fishing here and there. We fished outside all across outside there in different places, some to the east and some to the west, some straight out.

SR: What was the furthest out that you went?

DM: I don't know if I ever collect any out around Cashes Ledge and out in there, which I don't know what that is. 5060 miles.

SR: I do not know what it is.

DM: Outside Jeffrey's bank, which is down into the west. I fished out there and inside and outside Jefferies Bank and out here around Jefferies. It was Jefferies Ledge down there. This is Jefferies Bank out here. So, inside and outside Jefferies Ledge. I fished around Jefferies Bank out here to the east and over toward Mount Desert Rock and around there because he had the Canadian line you had to deal with.

SR: Okay. So, you mentioned that you saw a decline even from when you first started fishing to, like, when the technology really—

DM: There was a definite decline in the fish right from the time I started with a fifty-four-footer.

SR: Around [19]76, you said. Right?

DM: That would have been around [19]79, [19]80, [19]81. Whatever it was, I can't remember exactly what year I got that boat. From the time I got that boat until the time I got done with it,

there was a decline just in that one or two-year period. But it was already declining as far as I could see inshore at that point.

SR: I am sorry, what?

DM: Inshore was already declining, but there was a big change. Like I said, in the dynamics of the fleet, because of the 200-mile limit and all investment. That's how I got my fifty-four-footer. A group of investors wanted to be involved. So, there were just investors all over trying to put money into the fishing business. So, they thought it was a great thing.

SR: Lawyers and stuff like that where—

DM: People [inaudible], and they had made a lot of money in the computer business, and they wanted to be involved with the fishing business probably more for a write-off than anything. Because at that time, that boat was a \$300,000 boat would seem like a massive amount of money, which is ridiculous because a lobster boat I got now costs almost \$300,000.

SR: Oh, did you get like a federal loan or whatever for that big boat?

DM: It wasn't federally. It was a National Marine Fisheries guaranteed loan. At the time, because there was money to do that because they were trying to encourage the development of the fish fleet. We've chased the Russians away. So, now everything is going to be good.

SR: So, when you first started fishing, you talked a little bit about your smaller twenty-six-foot boat. But when you had that forty, I think, forty-two-foot boat or forty-five.

DM: Forty-six.

SR: How much would you catch a year typically in groundfish in terms of pounds?

DM: I couldn't tell you. I really don't know. I never added it up to say.

SR: Well, what was the typical trip?

DM: We probably averaged out about maybe 2,500 pounds a day. I remember one day I had 7,500 pounds of codfish one day. But I also remember the days when I only had 1,000 pounds altogether for the day. I remember one day, I caught a haul of about 200 and some odd pounds. I got as much money for that one haul but as I got for the entire rest of the fish that I had, which was probably another twelve to 1,500 pounds in late March.

SR: How big was it again?

DM: 220 or thirty pounds. The guy we just saw down the hall, I told you worked here. His wife told me the other day, she has a picture of that fish on the deck because I never [inaudible].

SR: How long was it like?

DM: Like six feet long. It was huge. I'd like to have the picture. Oh, she said she was going to make a copy and give it to me.

SR: Yes. She should. Okay. So, when you first started ground fishing, what was the price per pound?

DM: When I was gillnetting, it was ridiculous. By the time we paid trucking to truck from here to Boston, I was lucky if I got two, three, four cents a pound for hake and pollock. Sometimes, five cents on a good day. I'm lucky if I got twenty cents after I paid trucking. We took most of our fish to the fish auction in Boston, and that was very big in those days. They were cutting houses everywhere. Literally, when I went out and caught fish, when that gillnetting, we went out, caught fish and then put them in a truck, loaded them over our dock, put them in a truck, and carried them to Boston ourselves.

SR: To save money?

DM: Well, I don't know, I guess, but there wasn't really anybody doing it.

SR: Oh, okay.

DM: So, we lug our fish to Boston and drive in there and take them to the cutting houses there and then drive back home. Some days, I went every day, and my father or somebody would drive the fish down. Some days, I took the fish down, which meant I didn't go the next day because I was in Boston at 5:00 a.m. I had to get up at 2:30 to go to Boston, which I hardly had time to get to bed before it was time to get up and drive to Boston and then drive back. By the time he got back from Boston in a big truck, it was noontime or something. I wasn't going to go out fishing at that point. But the family was all involved. My mother and my father, in the summer, because they were both teachers. So, they had the summer off. So, when you had wooden boxes, and we didn't have plastic, you'd put fish in wooden boxes and pack them in ice, and the stupid boxes would break, and the sides would fall off. They were really heavy and miserable to handle and deal with. You get to Boston and open the door, and the boxes were broken, and the fish would roll out. No, it was a hard business. Then where you took them to a fish broker down there, you always hope to get the best price. But usually, the best price wasn't really good. So, it really depended on what was available. There were so many fish available back then. We actually physically got shut down. Sometimes we couldn't go fishing. Not so much when I was gillnetting, but when I was dragging.

SR: Because no one would buy it.

DM: They had so many. They had a glut. They had so many fish on the market. There was no demand.

SR: How did you know when that would happen?

DM: The buyer that was buying this when I was dragging with my forty-six-footer, the buyer

would call up and say there was no market.

SR: So, you would get a warning before you went out?

DM: No. Not always. Sometimes, we'd be out there, and they'd call up and say, "That's it, you got to come in, guys. There's no market." We get a radio call and say we have a cell phone. So, you get a call on the radio saying, "Sorry, there's no market." We go out. I remember they did that, and we got, like, a week and fish for a week or more. We went out, made one set. I remember we made one set, and we weren't by far the biggest. There were guys catching more than me. We had 2,500 pounds in one tow. I got a call in radio. "There's no market. Come in." Had another week off. So, we had right there in the prime fishing. We had to stop fishing because they didn't have the demand.

SR: Okay. Did you use ice?

DM: I didn't. I used ice when I trip-fished. I did not use ice on the day boats.

SR: Did you get ice? Where did you get ice?

DM: There was ice available in Port Clyde when we fished out of there, and there was ice – you had to go to Rockland if you wanted to load ice on your boat, or you had to bring it down by truck to put it in your boat if you wanted to do that. We didn't use ice on the dayboats. We just cleaned the fish, put them in trays, and they went to market at night. Every night, they went to the market. They went to either Boston or New York. So, I sent fish to both places depending on what they were.

SR: I mean, sometimes you took it down yourself, but were there people that had a business too?

DM: This is later on. Initially, in the beginning, the very first part, we lugged our own. But when I started to drag for my fish, I fished out of Port Clyde, and there were companies that were lugging fish.

SR: What were the names of them?

DM: Maracana was a big one. It was a big trucking outfit that lugged our fish into mostly New York. There was a better price. They were really interested in the grey sole, and that was our big-money fish. So, we sent our grey sole to New York and our dabs, the flounders, and got more money for them. Of course, we got ripped off, too, because they stole our fish all the time.

SR: Oh, the drivers?

DM: Well, the drivers, when they got there, you had a front office that was this group of people and a bunch of people they call lumpers that unloaded the trucks that were of a different nationality. Those guys were skimming. They'd open a box and skim some fish off. Then we were making 125 pounds boxes. By the time they got to New York, they were paying us for 110 like that, 105. So, we kept adding more weight, more weight to our boxes. So, we were selling



125 pounds boxes weighing 130 off the scale. Got to New York and got a thing back. Well, you only sent 110, you only sent 108. It was only the grey sole that they were taking, not the other stuff. So, they opened the box up, and they had two covers nailed on. They'd have to pull the cover up and skim a few fish off and then nail it back down and tell the high brass up top there, it was a different group of people, "Well, this is all we got for weight." So, we get paid for whatever they said. So, the guys were stealing. We lost a whole truckload like that one time. They just never got them.

SR: Oh my gosh.

DM: I never got paid for them.

SR: So, what did you do?

DM: I got mad, but it didn't do any good. I called, and I did this and jumped through ten hoops and never got a cent for it and lost two days' worth of fishing.

SR: Oh, wow. In New York, that was you lost it?

DM: I lost it to New York. Compensated for it?

SR: Yes.

DM: That was Americana, and I don't know what happened to him. I know what happened to him, but I don't know what happened to him.

SR: Yes, right.

DM: They just got lost.

SR: Okay. Your fish never went to the Portland Fish Exchange?

DM: No. Well, I say no. Yes, they may have gone there when I had the fifty-four-footer some. Yes, I did sell Portland Fish Exchange with that because I remember having a trip. I had 5,000 redfish. They are one set. He came in, and we sold. I know we sold those in Portland.

SR: Okay. Did you ever sell some of your fish locally?

DM: We had our own fish market for years and years in the summer business. When I was gillnetting, we took fish up to winterport. There was a guy there that was salting off my thing. So, we used to take him to Winterport and the gillnet stuff and drop them off there, and then we drove those up to Winterport quite a few times. I sold other places. I remember selling some fish to Snicker Damon down in Bar Harbor. So, yes, I did sell locally some fish. I mean locally by being inside the state of Maine.

SR: Yes, just to communities or these smaller restaurants.

DM: Restaurants around here. But restaurants, not very often, mostly to people that were either fish markets or fish processors of some type. But the majority of my fish went to Boston and New York.

SR: Okay. You would choose between Boston and New York based on, like, if you had a lot of grey souls, you would want to send them to New York.

DM: We usually did better on price going to New York than we did to Boston. So, more often, when I was fishing out of Port Clyde, New York, when I was fishing out of Tenants Harbor off our dock, we sent quite a few of those fish to Boston and the gillnet stuff and some of the drag stuff. Then when I got the big boat, the fifty-four-footer, I think we took them out of our dock. But most of that stuff I can't remember. I think that went to Boston, too. I think a lot of that went to Boston.

SR: Okay. You would land in Port Clyde or Tenants Harbor?

DM: Yes. It depends.

SR: Or Portland. You landed in Portland?

DM: Some in Portland, but not a lot. Some in Cape Porpoise and took out Cape Porpoise quite a bit. Of course, that's to the westward. I don't think I ever took out any fish at all to the east of here. The east of Tenants Harbor, Rockland. I don't think I ever took out any in Rockland, actually. Tenants Harbor, Port Clyde, or Portland, or Cape Porpoise. We took out all those places.

SR: Then would landing in those other places influence how you were selling your fish?

DM: It always involves trucking the fish. In Portland, it didn't because you had the auction. I didn't land there very much. Cape porpoise, we had to truck him somewhere. So, he usually went to Boston, so we had to still pay a trucking fee. We still had to pay an agent's fee, and that was deducted if you got fifty cents, then the agent took 5 percent, and then the truck took five cents a pound. That was deducted before you got your money. Up here, the trucking was more expensive because it was further from the market. So, the trucking was usually like eight cents or seven cents or ten cents or whatever off the top. You still had your agent fee if you were going to Boston or New York. They took their whack out of the top two cents a pound or whatever. I don't even remember what it was now.

SR: Yes. Do you know where the final markets were for the places for your fish?

DM: I have no idea. Because when you're sending stuff into Boston and New York, it could go anywhere. I'm sure it was going all over the United States and quite probably in some cases around the world because I landed a shark when I was gillnetting, we caught sharks, and they cut those up. Take sharks down there, and they cut them up and throw them in the same pile of swordfish. So, who knows where that all ended up?

SR: What kind of shark?

DM: Well, we call them mackerel sharks, but they were probably makos.

SR: What form were the fish in when you were trucking them?

DM: Well, they were just ice boxes. But as far as the form goes, some of the fish were cut and gutted. We ripped the gills out or took the guts out. Like cod, we left the gills in, I think. But we kept the guts out. Hake, we cut the heads off. Pollock. I think we took the gills and the guts out. Monkfish, we only cut the heads off and only send the tails. Flounders, we didn't do anything to. The halibut. If you ever get a halibut, usually take the guts out of that. I think we cut the head off that, too. But the tail.

SR: So, you did that all yourself. You did not have other people do it.

DM: Yes. Dogfish, when we sent them, we got those are horrible to deal with. You had to have about a hundred knives to keep cutting because they dull a knife in about two fish. Cut the heads off those. I can't remember if we cut the tails, but I know we cut the heads and got them, and they're like cutting sandpaper.

SR: Interesting. Were there any fish processors in Eastern Maine?

DM: Yes, I think there were. I'm not sure. Eastern Maine was more about herring and not so much about fish processing. I know there had to be there, but I never dealt with them. I remember the Vinyl Haven guy's top trawling back then. They were top trawling for hake and pollock and cod, and I used to pass them when gillnetting. They'd be coming in from outside and going into Vinyl Haven and stuff, and I think they processed some fish right there in Vinyl Haven. But you had people like I was talking about in Winterport that he was salting fish, I think. I'm sure there were others. I didn't know about them, but the price was so ridiculously low that it was more worth it to go to Boston to try to get the extra, as stupid as it sounds, the extra penny or two. Because when you're talking about two cents a pound or three cents a pound, a penny is a big deal.

SR: So, did you think the prices were fair?

DM: No, I don't think three cents a pound is fair. No, I don't think an average of twenty cents a pound for grapes all that are like this. You don't even see grass like that anymore. Dabs that were like that big, beautiful fish that are long gone. Even in the drag stuff I see now, you just don't get fish like that anymore. Twenty cents a pound, twenty-five cents?

SR: Yes. So, would you know the price you would get when you put the fish on the truck?

DM: No. It always depended on the auction on that given day. If you happen to land fish the same day is ten big draggers came into Boston, and all flooded the market with the same kind of fish. Down went the price. If you happen to hit on a day when nobody was in there, and they

were screaming for fish, the price went up. It was all day to day, and we all got the auction price over the phone. They had what they called the green sheets from New York and the blue sheets from Boston. So, you call and get the blue sheet price or the green sheet price to find out what that day, what the price was. That doesn't always mean you got it, but that's what it was for the boats that were taken out at the auction there. That basically was the base for our price, but it wasn't always the case. Sometimes, we just couldn't get that. Every once in a while, we got more, but more often than not, less.

SR: Okay. So, when you were first starting fishing, how many boats would you say were ground fishing out of eastern Maine? Or you could even go small.

DM: The biggest fleet of boats ground fishing back then were right around this area. The further east I went, there were less and less boats. What I saw was there were a few draggers, not very many. There were a few gillnetters, mostly Vinyl Haven, and there were some tough trawlers out of Vinyl Haven and probably further to the east, but I never saw them. Generally, the biggest fleet of fish boats was right here in Penobscot Bay and going to the west. To the east, it was definitely diminished. You just didn't see the boats there like you did from here to the west.

SR: How big were the boats that were being used around here?

DM: Lobster-sized boats up to fifty-foot draggers. There was only a few of them, like Victor Leveque and some of them. There were very few. Occasionally, at certain times of the year, they might rig a herring carrier or something to go shrimping or something. But very rarely do you see those boats aground fishing because they were too busy catching sardines and herring at that time of the year. That was really their their strong suit. They were more interested in that than they were in catching groundfish. Because groundfish weren't worth anything by the time they trucked them to market. From there, they cost them even more than for us. I know they were doing it, and I know there were some, but it wasn't a big fleet.

SR: Did you ever see boats that were not from the mid-coast or Eastern Maine region fishing here, like boats from Portland?

DM: Oh yes.

SR: Boats from Gloucester or Massachusetts.

DM: When I was down east there, Gloucester Man was right there with us. Yes, they found out about it, and eventually, they went down there and cleaned them up.

SR: Oh, that is what you are talking about with those larger boats offshore, you would say?

DM: Well, Gloucester Man was the first one down there. Jimmy Parisi and—

SR: Oh, is that the name of a boat? The Gloucester Man.

DM: It's the name of the boat. The Gloucester Man.

SR: I thought it was the name of the...

DM: He came down there with us. He found out what was down there and [inaudible].

SR: What, did he follow you?

DM: Somebody told him, and he might have been related to somebody. I don't know. So, the word gets around, and after a while, more than one Gloucester boat went down there, and things changed. But it was after my time that I just heard that the fish got cleaned up down there.

SR: So, these were draggers that came up here.

DM: Yes. I mean, you just, once again, you went from the small day boats to the large trip boats, and the catch power of those boats and the electronics had advanced so much. Nothing was the same anymore. Then when the rockhopper gear came in, that made a huge difference in the catch ability, the amount of ability to catch fish. I knew about the rockhopper gear probably six, seven, or eight years before anybody used it out here. I didn't stupidly, didn't even use it myself, and I knew about it. Because it was something that I saw the film on it, I actually saw the film right here at the Fisherman's Forum. A friend of mine sat here and watched it over and over. He ran it back and forth. He died in [19]76 or [19]77, and I got that dragger in eighty, and even then, I did not use it. Even though I knew about it, I didn't use it, and people didn't even use it until well after that before they started to use it. But once they developed the rockhopper gear, it changed everything.

SR: Because you could go anywhere?

DM: They could tow over so much more bottom than they used to be able to tow over the other way because they wouldn't hang up and wouldn't collect rocks. They could go over the bottom. They couldn't go over before it was coupled with the electronic technology advancement of the electronics and the rock operas. It just was a quantum leap for the whole business. The 200-mile limit and all those new big boats that are all gone now, or they're rusting somewhere because they just can't make any money very easily with them anymore. A lot of them have gone to scrap already.

SR: Did the boats from Massachusetts or Portland ever land in...

DM: They landed here in Rockland. I know they landed in Rockland. He took out in Rockland. They used to come up here and fish Seal Island and those places and come in and sell in Rockland. Sanford Doughty would come in, I think, and sell in here. He might have run back to Portland. I can't remember. I know they came in and sold in here in Rockland. Took out in Rockland. They may attract them somewhere. I don't know, but I know they took out because you had back then you had all the O'hara fleet, and you had the O'hara fleet was still fishing out here. Not out here, but the redfish boats were fishing out of Rockland. When I first came here, you had National Sea O'hara. So, you had very big boats here, 120 footers like that, running up

into Canada to catch redfish and stuff. I remember them coming in from a trip and boats being covered with ice, all white on top, coming back from Canada. That would have been not much different than right now, probably in February or January. But they were big boats, and they were traveling a long, long way. So, yes, there was big fishing in O'hara National Sea, two big processors right here in Rockland. There was a lot of fish that landed here for a number of years when I was young.

SR: Did these boats, the *Massachusetts* and *Portland*, did they ever land in Tenants Harbor?

DM: No, we never did. We had our own dock there, but none of those boats ever came in there.

SR: Okay. So, do you know if your groundfish landings were ever recorded?

DM: Oh, yes.

SR: Where were they recorded?

DM: Well, we had to turn in sheets all the time. That's what we thought. We didn't have to do the trip reports like we do now. Daily trip reports to the extent that we do now, and of course, a lot of it's – because they have those trackers. But we had to do a daily. We had to report our landings when we came in, when we caught.

SR: What year was your last year of ground fishing again?

DM: I don't remember, probably 1982 or something like that. I don't remember to be honest with you.

SR: Okay. So, NIMS has your data.

DM: They got whatever data I turned in at the time, and I saw the guy. He was down here in the fish farm. He used to be the National Marine Fisheries agent. They used to come down and do scale checks on our fish and take our data.

SR: Oh, really? Okay. What was his name?

DM: Pete Markun. He's retired. Been retired from National Marine Fisheries for quite a few years. But I was talking to him here two or three hours ago.

SR: Oh, really?

DM: Yes. He used to take our data. He used to take our landing stuff, too. But we had to turn in sheets, and I can't remember where we turned them into, but we had to turn them in. But that was later on, I think. I don't think we had to early on, but we did by 1980, or so we did, I think.

SR: Okay. Did you have a limited access multi-species groundfish permit?

DM: No.

SR: Okay. Because that was from...

DM: I say no, but I'm not sure because I don't remember. I might have.

SR: Oh, wait, I see that it said it is from 1994.

DM: I'm going to say I don't remember it being like that exactly. I might have had something from [inaudible].

SR: Like an open access permit. Maybe that was the precursor.

DM: I don't think we had that. I think that all came in after my time.

SR: Okay. So, what happened to your license to fish groundfish?

DM: Nothing.

SR: You still have it? Do you still have a license?

DM: No.

SR: Or a permit?

DM: No. Because it didn't exist when I got done. It wasn't an issue. The only issue was for me, when they came in with those permits, was my offshore lobster permit that I kept all through the years when I was teaching school. I kept it. I kept it on a boat. I kept it registered, and I did lobster every year, even when I was teaching. But it was free back then. All you had to do was say, "I want on your state license, just check off. I want to have my offshore lobster license," and there was no closed fishery then. Anybody could get it. All they had to do was check the box. So, I kept it all through those years, and during the time I was teaching vocational school was when all the stuff came down on the ground fishermen and all this new licensing and all this regulation and the fishing were diminishing. So, that whole time, while I was doing that, everything was changing as far as how to go about catching the groundfish and not so much catching them, but how to go about being allowed to catch them. They started with this whole process, and it's just gotten more and more ridiculous as time goes on, I think.

SR: So, you did not have a permit to sell?

DM: I have no groundfish permit. My brother Tad, you just met. He does. My brother Peter does. They have multi-species permits that they've kept all through the years with no landings. Well, they basically have zero days. They have to fill out all those national marine fisheries papers, even though they lobster. They have to fill out daily reports for the lobster. It says that we didn't do this or we didn't do that. I don't have that because I never had multi-species. Once they evolved there, all I had was American lobster. I never went into multi-species. But they do. My two brothers have to fill it out all the time.

SR: What a pain.

DM: Yes, it is. Even shrimping. My brother's having the shrimp. Guy is National Marine Fisheries reports this winter because he has to, because he was in ground fishing and he still has to turn in a report every day. Yes, it's a lot of paperwork, and it seems like it could be done electronically and be a lot easier for a lot of us than all this dumb paperwork. I could put it in my computer at the end of the day or something like that instead of sitting there going through all this paperwork and then sending it off somewhere or faxing it or whatever. It'd be so much easier if I just went like this and data entered my computer, and I'm done. But I can't seem to get there yet.

SR: Okay. So, I am going to ask you about the future now. Assuming that groundfish stocks returned, in your opinion, what would be needed to revive a groundfish fleet in Eastern Maine?

DM: Keep the big boats out. Be a starter for me. Owner, operator, stop fleet fishing. One guy owning five boats, four boats, or three boats, or two boats even. One man, one boat on board of it. Unless there's some health reason. Otherwise, when you go back to that, maybe even a limit on the size of the boats, I don't know. When you go back to the formula that we had before, we employed a lot of people. Now, you employ very few, and it worked. Every year the fish came in, every year, the fish went out, and the next year they came back in. Obviously, we have had no success with this formula that we've come up with since 1977 when the 200-mile limit came in and we built a fleet of big boats. Everything has gone in a tailspin, and before that, it was pretty predictable. It provided an economic boost. Everybody along the coast, because you had people that were catching the fish, people that were handling the fish, people were processing the fish, people are trucking the fish and so forth and so on. That's gone. The infrastructure is gone. I mentioned that several years ago. We want to do something to rebuild our infrastructure.

SR: Specifically, like what? Would you have it like in Tenants Harbor or in Rockland? What would you see built?

DM: Well, we don't have any fish now, so it's a moot point.

SR: What would we need?

DM: Well, if we were able to start catching fish again, it would be nice to have the capability of processing and things like that right here in our own state instead of sending stuff to New York or Boston, and take away some of the rules and regulations that strangle you so you can't do anything in this state. I don't care what the governor says. We're still close to business here.



We're definitely not open. I'm on the side where all I've seen is rules and regulations thrown at us from every angle. I don't care what it is, whether it's your fuel that you're buying at your own dock or the harbor master's or whatever it is. The Coast Guard just sat down there and reeled off a whole list of brand-new regulations they're going to throw at us. Who's going to pay for all this stuff when we can barely keep our head above water now? After a while, it just gets ridiculous. I was thinking when he was saying it. Look around this room. Ten years from now, you're going to be looking at nobody because nobody will be able to afford to be in this business anymore. You don't want to pay us anything for our product and laying regulations on us that are ridiculous. They just said any boat over fifty feet is going to cost so much to be built. How are you ever going to afford to buy one when you can't catch enough fish to feed a cat out here? For whatever reason it is, I can't say, but it definitely is not just overfishing because it doesn't exist in a lot of places here anymore. Some other dynamics are going on. Until they figure out what those are, they're going to have trouble with the fish business. Yes, there are some positives out there. I know there are some positive and maybe knock on wood, something will happen in a positive way. But until they completely and totally overhaul their thinking down there in Washington about how they handle this, they're going to keep on having trouble, in my opinion. The Downeast Fishing Initiative is the only one I think of that really potentially has any chance of working because it goes back to where we were before. Small boats fishing in a basically with some kind of thought process about how we're going to make this a manageable fishery over time instead of, well, we'll just hand all these permits to ten big boats, and they'll go out there and fish like crazy and catch up whatever they can catch. Their catching power is incredible compared to the small boat fleet. One big boat can catch as much as five little boats or ten little boats. I don't even know. It's a huge difference. Send the big boats out there offshore. I know they don't like hearing that, those guys that own them, but that's the way I feel.

SR: Okay. If you could, would you like to go back ground fishing again?

DM: No.

SR: Why not?

DM: I loved ground fishing and day fishing, but I have no desire to go trip fishing.

SR: Okay. So, yes. But if you could do it day fishing, you would.

DM: If I was to do it, I would do it the way I used to do it. I liked it. But I have no desire to go out and beat my brains out for several days at a time and catch less per day than I used to catch per tow when I was young.

SR: But do you think that the revived fishery would be important to your community?

DM: Certainly. Right now, we're living on the back of the lobster industry, and if something happens to that, they're going to be a big sucking sound for the coast of Maine, from here to the east, from Rockland East. This is it. Lobster business, is it?

SR: Yes.

DM: If the lobster business goes down, we're talking big trouble for a lot of people. So, the Western, they got other businesses to absorb it, but they don't have it from here to the East, other than tourism. That isn't very much for two months out of the year. So, lobstering right now, is it? So, yes. Any revival of the groundfish business would certainly boost the economy, especially from here to the East. All you've seen everything do is close down more and more herring plants closed. So, we finally closed the last one a couple of years ago. There's nothing there anymore. What else do they have other than the lobster business? What else is there? The wood harvesting business is small compared to what it used to be. I don't know what else you can do when you go down there other than, like I said, tourist business. Or maybe cut some vowels on an evergreen tree or go clam digging. The herring business is not what it once was. It would be lovely to see a revival, but you're going to have to see a revival in more than the groundfish business. You're going to have to see a revival in the herring business, too, because it was an integral part of the reason why there was a lot of fish out here. There was a lot of herring, too.

SR: They were eating it.

DM: You don't see them. I used to see whales everywhere, and whales weren't there because it was a nice place to hang out. They were there feeding on the herring. Whales aren't there now because the herring aren't there and the groundfish aren't there either. Fish don't have a huge brain, but they aren't stupid. They go where the feed is. That's where it's obvious where the feed isn't. So, I don't know what dynamic has caused all this stuff, but it certainly is there. That was a lobsterman. Obviously, I'm interested in herring, but by the same token, I recognize that if the herring stocks aren't strong, then a lot of other things aren't going to be strong either. I think that really reflects on what's happened in the groundfish business to a point, but I still think it's deeper than just herring.

SR: So, is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think is important to be known about the ground fishing fleet here?

DM: I don't know, unless you ask the right questions. I just think that there's a lot of dynamics that's happening out here that they have not got a handle on yet. Like I said before, in places where I used to catch a lot, a lot of fish, they aren't there anymore. Did all the draggers catch them up? I don't believe it. The draggers haven't been there. I've fished in the same places now. They haven't been there for fourteen years. The fish haven't come back any amount? I think there might have been a genetic class of fish that got caught up out there on the bottom, in those places that used to come into shore. The genetic code of fish is a great deal of them are gone. It's going to take a long time to get that back again. But I think pollution is a big one. They don't have much of a handle on. Some people have said the road salt is going off the roads to keep our roads nice and clean, going somewhere and maybe going in the ocean. Maybe that's affecting some of this problem we got going on out here. I mean, you keep hearing about acidification. I don't know if there's any reality to it or not. Somebody obviously feels there is. Lobsters have been doing funny things over the last few years, not so much where I am. But in other places, they caught a lot of lobsters right out here last year. But most of the lobsters they caught were below twenty-five fathoms, deeper than twenty-five fathoms.

SR: Well, that is different because usually they are shallower.

DM: Yes. I mean, usually, you catch lobsters right here around the shore. But their biggest catch has been right out there in the deeper part of the channel out here. Not so much where I am. I don't see a big difference, although, but in other places, they've complained the lot aren't in shallow water anymore, so I don't know. But there's got to be a lot more study done, I think, around some of the other dynamics other than, let's just shut the fishermen down because that's the easy answer. If you're going to shut the fishermen down, then shut them all the way down, get it over with, and find out if the fish are going to come back. They haven't made much of a comeback yet, and when they have made a little bit of a comeback, usually somebody finds out about it, and they go clean them up.

SR: Yes. Okay, I am going to shut it off.

[end of transcript]