

Cameron Thompson: All right. Could you please state your name, birthdate, and place of birth?

Richard Whitman: Richard A. Whitman, 11/15/62, and born in Rockland, Maine.

CT: What is your current address?

RW: 29 State Street, Rockland.

CT: How long have you lived here?

RW: All my life, forty-eight years.

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

RW: I guess because I like it here. [laughter]

CT: All right. I am going to ask you some more questions about your experience as a fisherman in a minute. But right now, we want to get some more background information. Can you tell me about your family? Do you come from a large family?

RW: No, not a large family, mainly small family. My grandparents on my mother's side were Italian immigrants. My grandmother was actually born in North End of Boston, but she was pretty much from Italy. My grandfather was born in Sicily.

CT: So, both sides of the family from Italy and Sicily?

RW: Yes.

CT: What generation would that make you?

RW: Well, I would only be the second generation, I guess, from there.

CT: What about your parents? Did they come to Rockland?

RW: My mother was born here. My father was born in Portland. He came from a fairly small family. I don't even know much about his family.

CT: Okay. Do you know if your family was involved in the fisheries at all?

RW: My father was.

CT: What did he do?

RW: He did just about everything.

CT: All out of Maine, then?

RW: Yes. Mostly all out of here, yes I mean, Boston.

CT: Are you married?

RW: No, divorced.

CT: Do you have children?

RW: Yes, one child.

CT: How old is your child?

RW: I have one girl. She'll be five in January.

CT: So, would you want your kids to be involved in the fishing industry?

RW: Maybe to a certain degree, sure. Only because it helps. It instills a good work ethic in people. Other than that, no, I think she should do something else when she becomes an adult.

CT: What about possible future grandchildren? So, do you have any grandsons or anything like that?

RW: Maybe.

CT: Do you expect any of them to be involved in the fishing industry?

RW: I don't really know. No.

CT: All right. So, we are also interested in the broader community. Can you tell me about Rockland when you were growing up?

RW: Yes, I grew up in Rockland in the [19]60s, which is a lot different place than it is now. It's a pretty rough and tumble place. But it was an industrial-type city where, my point of view, is that everybody worked.

CT: So, how was the overall economy?

RW: I'd say I think it was probably good.

CT: Well, how important was fishing to the community?

RW: Fishing was a pretty, pretty big part of the community back then because it was a lot of boats and a lot of fishing families. People had more kids back then than they did now. I mean, it used to be everybody had four or five children back then. Nowadays people only have one or two children. So, the schools were full of kids. It's just not like that anymore.

CT: Were there many fishing industry jobs here?

RW: Oh, yes. Yes, there were lots of jobs. Lots of people worked menial jobs their entire life, just what they consider menial now, which would be just working on a line in a plant or something. But it was a livable wage. You made a living doing it.

CT: So, what kinds of jobs are we talking about here?

RW: Like designing plants or the fish processing plants, stuff like that, and even sporting, fishing vessels and that kind of stuff.

CT: What was the waterfront like then?

RW: It was all working boats, very rarely saw any other than a working boat, because things were a lot different back then that you really had to know what you were doing to get around the ocean. Well, nowadays, you've got GPS and makes everybody an instant boat captain. Back then, if you had a sailboat and you didn't really know what you were doing, you had to hire somebody to get you around here without LORAN or GPS or radars and all that kind of stuff. You actually had to know what you were doing.

CT: Maybe we can talk about that sort of changes in the gear later on. So, what other types of jobs were around here?

RW: Well, there's been a lot of welding and fabricating and a lot of industrial stuff like that. Some of them businesses are still here. There used to be a lot of textile jobs, places that made clothes and converted, did stuff with fabrics and stuff. There used to be a lot of stuff like that, I think.

CT: All right. So, getting into the fisheries, can you just list the different fisheries that you have participated in.

RW: That I've been in? I've been seining and herring carrying. I've been longlining. I went scalloping for about eighteen years and fish dragging and lobster and shrimping, that kind of stuff.

CT: Do you do any other work besides fishing?

RW: Yes. I do my own maintenance and fabricating and building stuff.

CT: Is that to support your fishing operations, or is that a separate business?

RW: Yes, mostly to keep my own stuff going, which I pretty much do everything. I don't really hire out anything that's done on my boats.

CT: When did you first start working in the industry? How old were you?

RW: Well, I've always worked in the industry since I got out of school. I started when I was seventeen, and pretty much that's all I've done. I've done a few other jobs. I've worked in boatyards and shipyards.

CT: So, how did you get into it? How did you start as a fisherman?

RW: I've been going on boats before I even had to have memories of it. I always worked. They always give me something to do. I can remember steering the boat, standing on milk crates and steering by time, watching lights. My father would tell me, "Steer this many degrees for a half hour." I'd have to watch the clock and steer towards this light. That's how we got around at night. There was no other way. I can remember docking the boats. My father would tell me when to slow down, which way to turn the wheel, and put it in gear. He would tie the boat up. I would dock the boat at six, seven, eight years old. These are 50, 70-foot boats. My first ten-day trip when I was eight years old, I went to the Gulf of Saint Lawrence when they used to fill the boats up with redfish. I was smuggled on board because the owners wouldn't allow it. But I worked too. I sharpened all the knives. I kept the pitchforks sharp. I pumped the boats out and worked right on the boat back then.

CT: You learned the industry while you were doing all this?

RW: Yes, yes.

CT: So, was it then easy for you to get into it for yourself?

RW: Well, it was full of characters and excitement. [laughter]

CT: When did you start fishing on your own then? Was it when you were out of high school?

RW: No. I worked on other boats. I fished offshore for about, like I said, seventeen years, eighteen years, and went to limited entry and lobstering. I guess it was [19]90-something, [19]94 or something. I had bought a boat in [19]92. I started full time lobstering in [19]96, I guess, which full time up here where I fish is only four or five months a year, six months, figure, six months a year.

CT: So, maybe we can first talk about your experience when you first started out on other people's boats. So, what I would like to hear here is when we are talking about the fishery, sort of run through each fishery, if that is all right. So, what did you start off first with?

RW: Oh, herring, salmon and carrion. I did just summers when I was a little boy, and I just have memories of that and memories of picking the big fish out and letting the seals go and salted fish. Which is all quite exciting when you're just a young kid that's like super stuff to be doing.

CT: That was during the summer?

RW: Yes, mostly in the summers. Yes. Coming in and out and hanging around the fish factories and seeing how the fish get pumped and just recognizing and learning how things worked.

CT: When was your next serious fishing job after that?

RW: Well, I got out of high school. I started golf, and like I said, and I did that for about seventeen years, seventeen, eighteen years. I probably spent the majority of my career on four different outfits, probably eight or ten boats, basically. I started at the bottom and just worked my way up. I was either engineer, first mate or captain on every boat I've been on. I was engineer on every boat I was on at least. Yes.

CT: What was the season like for the scallop fishery?

RW: Well, it was back then, mostly it was year-round and it was eight to twelve, fourteen days on and four to six days off, and they would do that pretty much steady year-round.

CT: Where would you go?

RW: Most of my career was either Georges Banks or the Great South Channel, stuff like that. But I've scalloped as far south as Virginia, Virginia Beach and five knots is the Canadian line down east, and [inaudible] Sea Island and stuff.

CT: Did these boats come from out of Rockland?

RW: In the beginning they were. My uncle owned a bunch of boats out of Rockland in the [19]80s. We started fishing at Rockland, and then slowly everything moved to the west, and most of all the scallop boats were out of New Bedford. So, we're out at New Bedford, Massachusetts.

CT: What size are these boats now?

RW: From seventy-five to 110 feet. Yes, most of them.

CT: So, why did they move to the west then?

RW: Well, most of the processing and distribution and plus it's closer to the grounds. It'd be a nine hours steam to the Great South Channel from there, and it would be twenty-eight hours from here.

CT: What was your typical crew size? Can you tell me about the operation?

RW: We went from eight, eight to ten people back then.

CT: What kind of gear were you using?

RW: Thirteen-to-fifteen-foot scallop drags. Two of them, a pair of them, yes.

CT: So, is it fairly important fishery to Rockland?

RW: I think it was more so in the [19]60s and the [19]70s than it was in the eighties. Rockland has a pretty good history of having a lot of good scallop fishermen come from here. If he was from Rockland, you could pretty much get a job anywhere.

CT: Were there a lot of Rockland fishermen from here?

RW: Still kind of the same way. Yes. It's still the same way.

CT: How do you mean?

RW: It's still a lot of the boat captains in New Bedford are from here.

CT: Oh, really?

RW: Oh, yes, and the crews too.

CT: So, maybe you could tell me a bit about how the scallop stacks were and how they've changed over the years.

RW: Well, back then it was pretty much open. It was an open access fishery and there was a lot of boats. It was up to like 750 permits back then. Now, the scallops seem to be always there, but just not in large quantities, large amounts. But as the vessels get bigger and more horsepower, it would start to chew away at it a little bit more. But now today, they have closed. It's closed. It's limited entry or zero entry, I guess would be now, and they have open areas and closed areas. It's almost gone back to what I can see, it's almost gone back to the way it used to be in the [19]50s and [19]60s with the amounts of scallops that they have, probably even greater than that. This was back in the [19]50s and the [19]60s on twenty-five, 30,000 pounds of scallops was a trip. It's an average trip, and now it's like that now today. So, when I fished in the [19]80s and [19]90s, it was anywhere from five to 15,000 pounds, and was a huge trip. Anything over 10,000 was huge. You kind of shot for 10,000 pounds. If you could do that, you were doing real good but you would have a lot of trips at five to six or seven, 8,000. But today, they're doing twenty-five, 30,000 pounds trips. Nowadays, like nothing and with less crew.

CT: So, you think the stocks are better?

RW: Oh, the stocks are way better. The scallops are way bigger.

CT: How about the market?

RW: The market? Just about unlimited. I've heard some of the big buyers and owners say that they'll never be enough scallops. I mean, the market is just huge for them, and it's a worldwide market because they travel so well and they process easily. When they come in, they're pretty

much ready to go. Because you shuck them and clean them and bag them on the boats and they come in. It's like you don't have to have a crew of people cutting the fish and sorting it and all this and that, and so pretty much automatic from that point.

CT: How has this changed? I mean, what were the markets like when you were doing it?

RW: The market, I don't believe was as good as it is today because it's scallops. It has to be just by what I can see, it has to be more worldwide than it ever was back then. It's definitely a worldwide market.

CT: So, why did you get out of it and why did you move on to – what was the next one? Was it dragging?

RW: I got out of it just because of it was a change in my lifestyle.

CT: How do you mean?

RW: Well, I had what I consider a life changing experience. I just felt like that wasn't conducive to the way that I wanted to live my life. So, I stopped doing it.

CT: Do you mind telling me what that was or you do not have to?

RW: Well, it was kind of an epiphany, I guess they call it. Something happened, and this wasn't anything that I asked for or anything I thought that I even needed. But something just happened, and through a series of events that led me into a whole different mindset on how I live my life today. It's just totally different. I'm just a different person. Other than that, I don't think I probably would have lived as long as I have. [laughter]

CT: So, what did you end up doing then after you stopped scalloping?

RW: Well, I started doing lobstering and welding and fabricating and did a bunch of other stuff. I worked as a captain for a couple of outfits around here, and I sold bait. I worked in a fish factory and sold bait for a few years, and that was a pretty good job. I worked for a plant that processed dog fish. I used to dump fish waste at sea. Even though that was probably the foulest job I ever had, I think it was probably the best job I ever had. Because you didn't have anybody wanting your job one day. I got a salary and bonus and regular bonuses. I pretty much worked as my own boss, pretty much did whatever I wanted and did it when I wanted, maintained the boat and scheduled all the maintenance and did everything. I just got a check every week. I could work and do whatever else I wanted. I had regular forty-hour a week jobs while I was on salary for this other job because I could just do it at night.

CT: So, what is this that you are talking about?

RW: It was dumping fish waste at sea.

CT: From where?

RW: From different plants around. The primary plant was the dogfish plant that processed dogfish. Then I would do the clean outs for the sardine factories on the weekends and stuff.

CT: Was this in the [19]80s then?

RW: No, this was in the [19]90s.

CT: What prompted you to take this job and then later...

RW: Oh, they actually approached me for the job and I did it, and it was a good job. I don't know how long I did that, five, six years, I guess. I was sorry to see it end.

CT: Oh, so it was just ended due to factors out of your control?

RW: Yes.

CT: Why?

RW: It just went out of business? Basically, the dogfish plant went out of business because they just couldn't buy enough dogfish to stay in business. I love outfits would kind of slid in and started doing what they were doing and kind of squeezed them out, I would say. But I did the fish factories for a couple of years, and then that kind of went away too.

CT: So, I imagine during this time you were doing some other fishing activities?

RW: Yes, that's when I started lobstering on my own.

CT: Could you sort of describe an annual or seasonal round? What would you do throughout the year? Did you have particular seasons and when did you do these different types of jobs?

RW: I was doing the bait. The bait was probably my primary income when I was doing bait. When I got my own boat, I was just doing half-day fishing because I didn't have the gear and the lobsters, it wasn't that plentiful then.

CT: So, this is a late [19]80s, early [19]90s?

RW: Pretty mid-[19]90s. Well, I seem to get – I always got what I needed. So, I didn't maintain my house and everything and I never went behind. I've never been behind on anything my life. I always seem to think that there's plenty of stuff to do and there's plenty money to be made if you just want to get out there and do it. I mean, you just got to kind of set your ego aside and get in there and make it do whatever it takes. Today, my thing is, I do everything that nobody else wants to do, [laughter] and my phone rings all the time.

CT: So, I do want to ask you some more about lobstering and shrimping, but I was wondering about some of these other things you mentioned. If there were ever a really important part of

what you did, the dragging and the longlining. I was curious about. When did you do those?

RW: Well, that would just be periodically I would do that. I never did it for any length of time. Just fill in and help out when I could.

CT: Was that out of Rockland?

RW: Yes.

RW: Rockland and Portland.

CT: When was this?

RW: Well, it would be periodically through the eighties and the [19]90s. Yes.

CT: So, this one you are still doing scalloping, and then on when you worked here.

RW: Yes.

CT: So, I would like to move on to lobstering then. So, you said you got started in the mid-[19]90s but you did not fish all the time because – why?

RW: Well, I just didn't really have the income to invest in what it takes to do it full time. I kind of built it up over the years. I had a small boat that I built myself and got going, and I used that for a few years. Then I bought a thirty-four-foot boat that I fixed up, and I used that for a bunch of years. I guess it was five years ago I bought a forty-foot fiberglass boat, and then by then I had seven hundred tryouts, and I've been using that boat.

CT: Seven hundred is the most you have ever used?

RW: 760, I guess, is the most I've ever used.

CT: So, you never had any trouble with the trap limits?

RW: No. I use about a half now and I service more and I do more and work and sell and maintain and service more things.

CT: Who is that for?

RW: Myself.

CT: I mean, who are your customers?

RW: I have about forty customers here in town, and a wide range of people, I think from neighbors to out-of-staters to other fishermen.

CT: So, you started off just doing part time. What was the season like then?

RW: Oh, basically just August, September and October.

CT: Did you expand that?

RW: Yes. Now I started in May. I go from like May to November.

CT: You said you do about four days a week?

RW: Yes. Since I got divorced, I've only been working about four or five days a week.

CT: Did you work any more or less?

RW: I would work around the clock if I could. But I have my daughter now, so I take every Thursday off. I have her Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and every Sunday. So, I don't work any Thursdays and I don't work Sundays, and she goes to daycare on Fridays. So, I get a late start. I start late on Mondays and I start late on Fridays. I usually don't leave the wharf till 8:00 on Mondays and Fridays because I take care of the daycare and stuff.

CT: You lobster locally then?

RW: Yes.

CT: That has always been the case with grounds pretty much always been around the Rockland?

RW: Yes. This first round wants to consider Rockland Bottom, which is basically just out here in the bay, east west Penobscot Bay.

CT: Can you maybe describe how important the fishery was when you started and how important it has become?

RW: It's the larger part of my income today, for sure, and I have a huge investment in it to what I consider a huge investment in it too, and I didn't before. Today, I have insurances and business insurance and health insurance and boat insurance and all that kind of stuff. When I started, when I had my little boats, I didn't need insurance and all that kind of stuff.

CT: Was that because of the size of the boat?

RW: That just wasn't worth insuring.

CT: Oh, I see what you mean. You did not have the capital.

RW: You lost it. It was no loss. Now I have a mortgage on my boat.

CT: Does that impact the sort of decisions that you make then having all that?

RW: Well, yes, because you've got to make the figures work and you've got to make all the figures add up and work or it's not feasible.

CT: Well, I mean, does it impact how you fish? Like, do you take less risks now?

RW: No, no, you don't take any less risks. You actually take more risk.

CT: How so? Or why?

RW: Because you have to put more effort into it to. Keep your business going.

CT: Now, what about to the broader community of Rockland? How has the lobstering industry changed here? The local fishermen?

RW: I don't really know that it probably has changed to the community that much, except it probably as the incomes of lobstermen have generally gone up from what it was. But probably not by much. I think we still have pretty much the same amount of lots than we've always had. We had a lot common, a lot go. It's pretty much the same, I would say.

CT: Do you think their activity levels are the same? Are they going out as much the same amount?

RW: I think there's probably a little bit more effort, but not too much more. No.

CT: How are the markets around Rockland? So, can you sort of describe that side of the lobster market? Yes. Just describe that part of your operations.

RW: I guess we're more fortunate here because we always have quite a few different places in town where you can sell your lobsters, and it kind of drives the price up. Rockland price has always been higher than most everywhere else, but it's kind of leveled off more now.

CT: But that is just because there are more places to buy or to sell.

RW: Yes. People are more apt to move around for twenty cents than they never used to be. People would stay in a lot of harbors. You don't have any choice anyway. You got one or two places and you take what they give you. But here I'll go from one end of the town to the other, depending on who's paying more money. I don't really care if they like it or not.

CT: Let us see. Can you sort of describe the stocks, how they were when you first started?

RW: I think they pretty much operate on a cycle, like almost it seems like a seven-to-ten-year cycle. They kind of drop off and stay steady for a while, and then they seem to come on and grow really without any real warning, I would say. I mean, they just seem to be one year, that's just a mediocre year, and then the next year it's just phenomenal. It seems like starting last year, that seems to be more and more lobsters. So, I think we're on an upward cycle here now. But

for a long time, it was just an average, normal, slow, steady thing.

CT: Maybe you can describe your shrimping operation. You said you go shrimping as well?

RW: Trap shrimping, yes.

CT: You use your lobster boats to do that?

RW: Lobster boat for that.

CT: How long have you been doing this?

RW: Well, just on and off for just a couple of years.

CT: I am guessing you go in the winter, then?

RW: Yes, mostly late January and February just to fill in on bays.

CT: Where do you go?

RW: Just in the bay.

CT: Just out here they come?

RW: Yes.

CT: Would this be pretty similar to your lobstering operation? How often you go out?

RW: Wow. Well, it's weather permitting in January and February.

CT: Well, how often do you go out, then?

RW: Oh, maybe once or twice a week.

CT: I forgot to ask this before, but with either lobstering or shrimping, do you take a [inaudible] like a crew?

RW: Yes.

CT: That is fairly typical around here?

RW: Yes.

CT: Just one guy?

RW: Yes, one or two.

CT: So, what are the markets like shrimping? Do you sell here?

RW: Yes. You sell to a processor up in the industrial park or pedal myself.

CT: Where would you do that if you wanted to?

RW: I just sell to people that I know personally or pedals or something.

CT: So, how has the stock's been in your ability to get...

RW: When the shrimp come up here that late in the year, there seems to be a fair amount of shrimp and they're really big in size and they're clean, which gives you a high yield and a really good shrimp. At the last few years, they've cut us off because of the quota. He bought me catch up all the garbage, trashy shrimp November in December, away to the southern, and then when the good ones show up, they shut it off.

CT: So, what do you do?

RW: Oh, I don't do something with scallop, and I also go scallop and do it. So, I do that.

CT: Oh, yes. Do you go scalloping with your boat?

RW: Yes.

CT: What's your setup for that.

RW: I go off the stern. I have a four-and-a-half feet dragon. I go off the stern.

CT: What is this?

RW: Oh, the days are considered days. It's been different the last few years. But you can only go so many days a week. The days are all planned out now, so it makes it difficult, because the days that are planned may not be a day that you can go. Rather than just saying you can only go three or four days a week, you pick the days out that you can go, and you set with a certain date. If it's blowing fifty on that date and you aren't going. But it still counted as one of your days, so it makes it difficult that way.

CT: Where do you go with the scalloping?

RW: Mostly down through the Muscle Ridge Channel and around the islands and stuff.

CT: Is that around Penobscot Bay, then?

RW: Yes.

CT: Are there many other fishermen involved in shrimping or scalping in Rockland?

RW: No, no. Not many at all. No, I don't think you can do it to make a living pretty much. Just do it to fill in. Yes. The scallop price is so high that it's attractive because you're getting ten to \$12 a pound. So, I think the price of fuel really kind of negates a lot.

CT: So, how do you deal with the high price of fuel?

RW: Well, you just got to kind of go easy on it and see.

CT: How do you mean go easy on it?

RW: Just you got to kind of look around really easy. You can't just go steaming all over the place. You got to kind of pick your way around.

CT: So, more planning, is that what you are saying?

RW: Well, more looking. Yes.

CT: So, trying to think about how you respond to certain threats in the industry such as the high fuel prices. We were talking before about how bait is so expensive and hard to get to. What do you do when the baits...

RW: Well, you got to you got to manage your business. I got in a program where I got a more fuel-efficient engine for my boat.

CT: Oh. You did?

RW: Yes. You learned to maintain your boat. You learn to run it at an RPM that you can afford, not one that your ego tells you want to run at. The other thing that I found out is really good maintenance to your crop really saves you a lot of money on fuel. Which I didn't think it was until I got this newer engine, which is fuel injected and computer controlled. Having the right wheel and optimum condition can save you a hell of a lot of money. While with the old engine, you really didn't notice any difference. But with the computer-controlled engine, you can notice a huge difference. The engine I have now is about sixty more horsepower than the one I had before, and I burn considerable amount, less fuel, and I go about 15 percent faster.

CT: Really?

RW: Yes.

CT: So, what was this program? How did you...

RW: It's called a Diesel Emissions Reduction Act.

CT: How did you get involved in it or how did you find out about it?

RW: I just did it all online, actually. I was the first one to have all my paperwork in, and it was right. I had the oldest engine in the best condition.

CT: Is that because you maintained it?

RW: I used a lot of fuel. So, it put me to the top of the list.

CT: With a lot of other people tried.

RW: The engine was the 1972, but it hadn't been rebuilt and been maintained. I had oil samples on oil sampling done on the engine and stuff, and it was in excellent condition. I mean, if I kept using that engine, I could use it for another twenty or thirty years. So, they consider that they want to get if you had an engine that can use a lot of fuel, but it was ready to crap out on you anyway. You went to the bottom of list because you were going to have to do something anyway. But yes, it was a pretty good program, and it saved me about \$17,000 on the price of the engine, which is a \$34,000 engine, and they paid for half of it, and I put it in myself.

CT: So, doing all this work yourself?

RW: Yes.

CT: That saves you a lot of money.

RW: Yes, that saved me another probably \$40,000.

CT: You do that with most everything else as well?

RW: Yes.

CT: So, that program, a lot of other fishermen try to do that?

RW: Yes, it was quite a few people that got into it. Yes.

CT: Do a lot of fishermen do what you do as in take care of their own maintenance or try to?

RW: I don't think too many people really do all the stuff that I do, but they would like to. It's not a necessity to them where it is to me. I mean, where we fish up here, we don't catch a hundred, 200,000 pounds of lobsters like a lot of lobstermen do. We have to make it work.

CT: So, thinking about the overall fishing community here, how's the infrastructure here in Rockland?

RW: For lobstering, it's good. A lot of lobsters go through Rockland. It's definitely a lobster capital of the world because there's probably – there's like almost ten different boats that go to the outlying islands and even some down east to buy lots and bring back to Rockland.

CT: So, it meets your needs then?

RW: Oh, yes.

CT: Can you think of anything that could be done to improve the infrastructure?

RW: Well, the fish pier needs dredging, which is probably the biggest thing is dredging. We need more dredging. Dredging just seems to be so expensive. There's not much dredging being done anymore like they used to and even just maintenance dredging.

CT: I am wondering, do you consider this place a fishing community today?

RW: Yes. Well, fishing is definitely part of the community, but it's not all of it.

CT: Yes. So, what do you mean? Can you elaborate on that?

RW: I think the community would really be kind of shocked to really figure out how much income and how many people are supported by the industry. But it seems as to me that they're more interested in other types of growth than that, I would say. The thing about fishing is you're pulling your income from a natural resource, whereas all these other types of income stem just my perspective is that you just kind of swapping money around. Well, you're creating income rather than just taking from Peter to pay Paul. Then when a large percentage of your product is shipped overseas to European and Asian markets, and that's even another major added benefit because you're bringing money in from away seems to have more value to me.

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

RW: Well, I think probably the majority of them are doing worse. I would say the majority of them are probably out of business. Most of the big fishing has moved to New Bedford and to the West coast. Some of the fishing corporations are probably doing well, really well.

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

RW: Probably not as resilient as it could be without different social and economic difficulties. For me, I'm pretty resilient. I know, and I have really had no fear of that.

CT: So, what are those socioeconomic difficulties that you are talking about that are preventing...

RW: Drug abuse and alcoholism and those kinds of things.

CT: Is that a problem in the fleet here?

RW: Well, I think it's a problem everywhere. Really when you dip into the lower income levels,

you tend to lose your hope and your faith in the process and the future and stuff. You dip into that. I just see it as a human problem, not as a specific. Because my belief is no matter where you go, people are people. I mean, it's really to me, there's no difference, no matter what you do, and a lot of it is just plain, just plain lack of hope, really.

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

RW: What will be the major strengths? Well, just the people.

CT: What do you see as vulnerabilities or do you consider the community here to be vulnerable?

RW: I mean, it's definitely vulnerable mostly to, I don't know. I guess pollution would be one of the vulnerabilities. That's something – some kind of bad problem. Pollution could decimate the industry, whatever it could be. So, that would be one. The other one would be intervention from the federal government, which has a capacity to really destroy fishing industries for no apparent reason with flawed science and a lot of other things that really make no sense.

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

RW: The biggest threat, I would say, would be the high cost of doing business. The high cost of bait and fuel and maintenance and access to the water.

CT: Can you elaborate on that? Access to the water?

RW: Well, no, it's not like – in the state of Maine, there are laws that protect fishermen and their right to access the water, but that is slowly being chipped away. In Maine, fishermen have the first right for moorings are in a protected way. Because generally, their boats are always in the water and they're always working. Whereas, people from away really are only here when it's nice. So, they don't really need to afford the protections that we need, and a lot of people just don't understand that.

CT: So, how can you adapt to these threats and this encroachment of loss of access?

RW: You just have to stay involved in your community. I believe in the process of being involved in your local harbor communities and management commissions and all that kind of stuff. Just kind of stay informed and get involved and you got to kind of learn to pick your battles because you can't really come out swinging against everything. You got to kind of pick your battles.

CT: So, do you have any opinions on what is needed to strengthen the viability of commercial fishing here?

RW: I don't know. What was that again?

CT: What do you think could strengthen the fishing industry here?

RW: The biggest thing we need strengthening is just to get the price needs to be much higher and comparable to other lobster fisheries around the world, and other markets like the scallop market is...

CT: So, how could they do that?

RW: Price is way high. Well, I don't know really.

CT: Are there any other communities?

RW: They're trying to do what they can, but it still seems to be a – I think one of the biggest things is as we catch such a huge amount of lobsters in a short period of time, and it kind of floods the market. But a majority of our market is frozen anyway, and the live market doesn't really dictate. So, why does it matter? I think it's more of a just kind of taking advantage of the situation. I always thought you should limit the time that you fish more.

CT: Who represents the interests of commercial fishermen in the port?

RW: Well, I'm on the harbor committee. I'm on the fishery management advisory committee, and then we have a representative that's on the Zone D Council, Lobster Council, which position I held a few times, but I just don't have the time. I have so many time constraints now. I can't do it with my having my daughter and stuff. I've been voted into that position a couple of times. It seems to be kind of helped and edged on a few younger guys to get involved with it.

CT: Do you think fishermen are well organized?

RW: No, no.

CT: What about compared to other communities?

RW: No, I don't think fisherman organized much at all, really. The MLA is a good organization, but as far as that goes, other than that, fishermen are pretty much free for all owners.

CT: Now we are going to talk about a few of the different types of relationships in the community here in the harbor here. How would you characterize the relationship between fishermen within this community?

RW: Generally good.

CT: What about between fishermen in this community and other nearby communities, such as some of the islands?

RW: Some of the communities of Faye and other ones are good. So, it's kind of a...

CT: How do you mean?

RW: Well, too, if you go south, it's bad. If you go too far east, it's bad. But if you go north, it's all right. [laughter]

CT: Is that just from retaliation?

RW: No, I think more it's just we seem to work together better.

CT: What about the relationship between fishermen and non-fishermen in this community?

RW: I think that would be fine. I don't see any problems with that.

CT: Has fishermen's access to the waterfront changed?

RW: Oh, yes.

CT: How so?

RW: Oh, it's just diminishing. It's diminishing, and the costs are rising. Makes it more difficult.

CT: Such as the fish pier meeting you were talking about, the rising cost of dock rates and things like that?

RW: Yes. Using the piers and there's access to the pier. Like I said, the dredging and stuff is definitely becoming an issue. I mean, you almost can't use the pier at low tide on one side and the other side. They've dumped so much snow and sand on one side that they've pretty much deemed that useless. They dumped so much sand over there.

CT: So, it needs to be done?

RW: Dumping operation. Well, they need to stop the snow dumping operations and they need to dredge the sand back out. But they seem to be in pretty much denial over the whole situation and have been for a long time. It's just a battle I've been waging for a number of years. It just doesn't seem to change.

CT: What do you see is the cause to the rising costs, of all your rising costs with the dock and everything here?

RW: I don't know what it would be. Just normal everyday inflation, I would say, just as things go up and I know insurance has gone up in the past three-fold.

CT: So, I am wondering if I have sort of heard some stories before. I am wondering if some of the recreational boats that are here in the summer get in your way when you are lobstering.

RW: Yes. Well, that's a huge thing up here. That's probably the number one threat that we face is really is boat traffic where we fish up here. It's just as bad in a lot of other places. But I think

it's probably worse here than it is anywhere. We lose a hundred traps a year just to boat traffic. If you set out eight-hundred, you'd be lucky to bring home seven-hundred, and that's just boat traffic. If you have any skirmishes or there's any kind of projects going on outside in the islands or something, then you can lose twice as many of that. A lot of people lose two-hundred traps a year. We had a drill ship down here a couple of years ago that just decimated us, and then they had that wind power project over on the island. That was a nightmare. I mean, we just lost a ton of traps. Then you have the ferry boats, which you put in a figure that's like sixteen or eighteen trips a day. The ferry boats with twin screws with the propellers on the outboard of the vessel, and those things are horrible. Then you got thousands of boats and people that really don't really even know what they're doing, and they really consider buoys floating in the water a nuisance. Well, we really have, in this state, we have a right to fish and there's laws that protect all traps and ropes and movies and everything from anything. But it seems to be non-existent.

CT: What do you think needs to be done then to sort of solve this problem?

RW: Well, people need to be more conscientious, I would say.

CT: Has this been getting worse?

RW: Oh, it's definitely getting worse. Yes, it's getting worse. Even last year the Navy sent us confirmation of when their ship was going to be here and where it was going to be, which we fought for years to get them to bring it inside the harbor, because when they by the time they get here in August, it's most of the lobsters have moved out. So, everybody moves all their traps out. So, then they bring the Navy ship in and they put it outside the harbor right in the middle, a place where it would catch in six pounds of a trap. They put it right in the middle of all these traps that we just moved there. Now we have to move all these traps to move them far away, because you get so many vessels coming around looking around that they just create a mess. So, you have to move them and then you lose all that time and all that fish and all that fishing. If you try to move back within a week or so, they're there. The lobsters are pretty much moved. They don't wait for you. You got to kind of follow them in and follow them out. So, there's really no consensus about what really shouldn't be going on. We try.

CT: Well, sort of on the subject, who else is using the water or the dock space? You mentioned a lot of these different groups, but if you could maybe list them out.

RW: Mostly there's a few industrial dragon cement plants have a facility and that. Their operation is pretty devastating to lobstermen for sure.

CT: How do you mean?

RW: Well, just the way they insist on operating their barge and their tug is not good, and they drag traps all over New England. We've had people call us from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, saying, "You want to come down here? We got like a hundred of your traps on the dock." They just have no respect for anything. They'll just get out there with an ax and just cut massive amounts of traps off, and then they'll say, "Oh, we never catch any traps." It's horrifying what damage they do. It's all because they really insist on dragging this huge chain through the water

that they just refuse to move for some unknown reason, where I've seen vessels, tug and barge units twice the size of that that don't operate in that fashion. So, I don't know why they do it, and just being arrogant, I guess.

CT: So, switching gears here a bit. Could you tell me how important tourism or aquaculture has been to the community?

RW: Aquaculture. We don't really do much aquaculture around here. In the islands, they do some.

CT: What about tourism? How important is tourism?

RW: Tourism is definitely important to the community, and it's important to the live market a lot, which is somewhat limited. The local market, I think it's a lot, but probably really not. I mean, there's just not that many people up here. I don't understand, 1971, we got a million people in the state of Maine. Here it is, 2012, and we only have a million, three-hundred thousand. So, it's taken since 1971 to add three-hundred thousand people to the state, and it seems like the population is starting to decline again now. So, you got to figure it was only so many people up here. It's a huge state and there's a lot to maintain.

CT: How important have charter boats been or recreational fishing been to Rockland?

RW: There's probably not – it's not very much recreational fishing out of here. Mostly just would be private. We have one, what do you call it? Excursion, lobster excursion boat. Other than, that would be about it, because it's really kind of too far of a steam from here to get to any place where you could consider sport fishing other than just mackerel, striped or something. We don't have any whale excursion boats because it's too far to go.

CT: You mentioned the lobster excursion boat. So, that is one opportunity for fishermen to be involved in tourism. Are there any other or do many fishermen get involved in tourism?

RW: Not really. No. You could certainly make a living doing it. So, how many boats could do it? It's different. I think if you kind of developed a, what do you call it? Like an extreme sort of – like they're doing up in Alaska now with the crab boats. They have extreme excursions where they take people out in rough weather and that kind of stuff, and charge them a lot of money. I think you could probably come up with something like that, which would work. Because in the fall and the winter, there's definitely a lot of rough weather that you could fight around in if you wanted to.

CT: So, people would pay money to feel uncomfortable?

RW: They pay money to go up there and puke their guts out, and I think they're really fishermen.

CT: So, how do you feel?

RW: I've seen people just selling used fisherman sweatshirts on the internet and people just scoffing them up like, oh, they use some dirty old fisherman and Baird Sea catching crab.

CT: So, how do you feel about all this sort of tourist activity and recreational boating happening at Rockland?

RW: The recreational boating is, like I say, it just doesn't seem to be – years ago, it was a lot different. When I grew up here, every single boat that you passed, you came out and waved to them. That's just the way it was. Whenever two sterns pass one going one way, one the other, it was only common courtesy. You always came out and wave. I still do it. But today, people from Hawaii don't even look twice. Just a pain in the butt to them. It's true for a lot of lobstermen in the same way. They just look at everybody as a pain in the butt to them. It's definitely has changed. Like I said, back then, you had to know what you were doing to go somewhere around here. Nowadays, it's like as long as you got your GPS, you can even do it with your phone nowadays. You only need a phone.

CT: How do you feel about tourists and people from outside the community who want to move here?

RW: I don't have any problems with any of that. Well, I mean. We need all the people we can to help pave the roads in the state. People don't understand how bad it is when you move up here and what it's like.

CT: How affordable is the housing situation in Rockland?

RW: Oh, the housing seems to be somewhat affordable, but taxes are astronomically high. It's just incredible. You pay for taxes, I mean, just like, register your car or something. It's unbelievable. I know there's a couple that have retired, quite wealthy, couple up. Then this big notion that they're going to retire to Maine and live in this beautiful life and everything. It's such great up here. They come up here and bought a home and everything. Then you went out and bought his and her Cadillacs, his wife. So, he went to the local Cadillac deal, and they gave him a hell of a deal on a pair of cars which is probably a good deal, a good sale for them. So, when he went to the local town office to register his cars, they didn't charge him tax on how much he paid for the cars. They charged him tax on what the least price of the car was.

CT: Of course.

RW: Of course, right? He felt that that was highway robbery, which I can understand his point of view is why are you paying a sales tax on something that you didn't buy? If you only paid \$40,000 for these two cars, why are you paying tax on \$60,000 worth of car? See? It just floored the guy. He's like, "I don't believe it." But it's the same too whether you just bought a car for \$800. But in the book, it says it's worth two-thousand, you pay tax on \$2,000. Same idea.

CT: So, how has the housing situation, the cost-of-living situation changed over the last twenty years?

RW: Oh, definitely, it's gone up.

CT: What do you feel have been the most critical changes in the community since you've lived here? What caused those changes?

RW: For me, I think the most critical change is the school system and the amount of money it takes to operate the schools around here. Considering that you have a steadily declining enrollment and steadily declining population of students, that the school budgets just keep going astronomically up and up. I mean, we're talking \$17 million a year to educate less than a thousand students. I mean, that to me is insane.

CT: Send them all to college.

RW: Yes.

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

RW: I don't know. I think you're definitely going to see some more waterside development, but what it's going to be, I don't know. Because you still have a pretty good industrial base on the waterfront. I don't think you have any real commitment to any substantial investment in shoreside facilities. We have the water depth where we could have a huge cruise ship port here if we wanted it. But I don't think anybody has the appetite for the investment, which would take probably, to do it right, \$20 million investment.

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

RW: I think it's going on pretty well the way it way it's going. Like I say, I'd like to see the school system streamlined considerably. But the secondary education seems to be in really good shape and offering an affordable level everywhere. But primary education is just out of control. That's how I see it, anyway.

CT: So, wrapping up here, the last few questions. Would you still go fishing if you had your life career to live over?

RW: Yes. I would yes. I really don't have any regrets. So, I'm fortunate. I probably got one of the best educations a man could have because I've lived two separate lives, almost. I have no regrets, and I've been able to do what I've wanted to do. I've become quite educated in the process.

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

RW: Yes, I still help people get into it. As a matter of fact, I have one young boy that went on his own this year. I got another one that's been coming around, and I've been kind of helping him. I think there is room and I think you need younger people. I kind of encourage them to get involved in the political side of everything so they can stay involved and everything too, because I probably only got twenty more years of fishing. These kids got fifty if they want to. You can

make a living at it for sure if you keep your nose clean.

CT: Were you advising these young men through the apprenticeship program?

RW: Yes. My philosophy, I don't believe in limited entry. I think it should be open. I think it should be wide open. I just don't believe in it. I think it ruins – it kind of destroys your market for the traps and boats and all kinds of things, and I never was much on limited entry. I think when it's opened up, it takes care of itself, and it always did. It always took care of itself. It was never a large, huge influx of fishermen. It's always been pretty steady, and a lot of fishermen are going down now. They're diminishing now. But I don't think – that type of effort I don't think is a problem anyway. I think the studies are beginning to prove to show that 70 percent of the lobsters are caught by 30 percent of the fishermen. So, you know what, 70 percent of 100 million pounds, what's 30 percent of six-thousand fishermen? That's who's catching all the lobsters. That's the effort right there.

CT: What do you like most about living here?

RW: I just love the climate. One thing I love, the people. I love the ability to be able to be my own boss and my proximity to the ocean.

CT: Are there any other issues that we have not talked about that you feel are important to understand in Rockland, and the fisheries you participated in?

RW: I don't know what else it would be.

CT: Well, you can think of anything else. You have my number and you have our contact info. So, that is the end of the interview.

RW: Yes.

CT: I'm just going to shut this off.

[end of transcript]