

Josh Wrigley: This is an interview for the Maine Coast Oral History Initiative, to be shared jointly by the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association and the Island Institute. The date is June 26, 2013. This is Josh Wrigley. Today, I am here at the home of herring fisherman, author, and playwright Gladden Schrock in South Bristol, Maine. The subject of our interview today is your recollections of the herring stop-seine fishery and how coastal life in your region has changed since you began fishing.

Gladden Schrock: Well, there's a lot of stuff to tackle, of course, when you begin to think in terms of long arcs, change, what hasn't changed, what does change, and kind of the plural inputs in the coast of Maine. I first came on the scene here not knowing a damn thing about herring or mackerel or anything else – 1962, I think it was, or '63, I was in grad school at the time, came up for a couple of summers, and then we came year-round. There were two fishermen right across the little road that we lived on. They were brothers. One was six months older than I and one six months younger than I – the Ferrin brothers of thirteen kids. They were running a mackerel trap. They were also lobstermen. On the second day up here, they invited me out to pull a mackerel trap, which I did with them – got in the dory, hauled the trap, never knowing what a [inaudible] pollock, a harbor pollock was, or a mackerel or anything else. That night, they went searching for herring. I went along with them. I was hooked. I started fishing with them right then right through the summer and the following summers for fifteen, eighteen, twenty years, and in a couple years started fishing then with Henry Jones, who was one of the big-time stop-seine herring fishermen on the coast.

JW: Did you grow up in Maine?

GS: No. There's some question whether I still have not grown up in Maine. [laughter] I grew up in the Midwest. I was born in Idaho, didn't live there long. My dad was a minister. He went to Olympia, Washington. The Second World War came on. He was asked to run the first CPS camp – the main conscientious objectors' CPS [Civilian Public Service] camp during the war at Cascade Locks. There was a book written about him just a couple of years ago. It was a good book. Then they moved back to Indiana, where he and my mother grew up – farming people – and we were on a two-hundred-acre farm and farmed with seven horses and twenty milk cows and a hundred sheep and a hundred hogs. Hard work, good labor force. The translation of that to the coast of Maine, of course, is a fairly simple translation in terms of work ethic and alert and handling odds and all of that. Along with all that, of course, was the aspiring interest in writing. From a very young age, I was interested in looking at cultural traits, cultural changes, cultural shifts, arcs, the implications of things. Of course, the coast of Maine – peninsula-end living, traditions of Maine on the coast, and island living is a hotbed of phenomena that is very interesting to look at.

JW: What sort of phenomena?

GS: Well, just as the best fishing is right on the edge of contradictory bottoms – rock cod, for instance, cod on the edge of rock bottom and soft bottom – but even the Gulf of Maine shelf itself, that confluence of deep water and shallow water, is the best fisheries. It is that confluent flow of various different kinds of components within the natural world as well as in the, I think, anthropomorphic and sociological world to make it damn interesting. The coast of Maine, of

course, has an astounding history of the cross-pollination of many different kinds of people – summer people, winter people. There’s even a shifting now going on, or has been in the last fifteen, eighteen years of what that is and what the assumptions are about. For instance, when I first came here, there was just the tail end of the old tradition of third- and fourth-generation summer people family units that lived here and rooted down in such a way that they actually became kind of – and sometimes intermarried with locals. So, there was a cross-pollination of people who knew and respected each other in a fairly deep, and I think, sincere and very interesting way and good way. The intelligence back and forth was respected. The interplay was respected. Of course, Maine itself, with the interior land, the woods component part of it, and the farming component part of it, is multiple – Aroostook County as compared to the coastal counties. So there was an aggregate of multiples going on here and still are that are both promising and vexing if one isn’t astute enough with it. I think you saw a portion of a performing arts survey that the state arts council asked me to do back in the ’70s –

JW: I did.

GS: – in which I dealt with this confluence, which is an important thing to get a hold of. And I think, perhaps, in some ways, we’ve got less of a handle on that now than we did back then.

JW: What have been some of the main drivers of it?

GS: Of which?

JW: Of this confluence that you speak of – the change in the village between transient summer residents and actual coastal communities.

GS: Well, I think they parallel some of the change within the fishing itself, which is another topic which we can get into. One is the increased ability for families to scoot very quickly. They used to have to send up trunks of the family units up in May, and they would be here all summer. There was not a matter of getting on a plane and flying back to Washington, DC, or whatever. They landed here. They vested here. In fact, a tradition out of the eastern corridor for a long, long period of time – and to some degree, it’s still operative – is in the summertime, the families left New York, Boston, etc., and went up to the lakes, coast of Maine, etc. The father kept working to make money and would come up maybe for three weeks, four weeks at a time. Now, that pattern has shifted.

JW: Were these mostly wealthy, upper-class families?

GS: Yeah, mostly were. And you still get that striation, of course. For instance, right down on the end of my road here, the houses being built now are million-dollar, two-million-dollar houses because locals can’t afford them, unfortunately. That’s a whole other important topic of what the shift has been. There was a time when, at the peak of it, some of the big, huge inns were operative. Right here in South Bristol was the Holly Inn, which had – I don’t remember. I never knew exactly how many beds it had, but it was a tremendous number, maybe nine hundred beds. It burned twice, and they rebuilt it – no longer here. At the Holly Inn, for instance, they would employ Amish and Mennonite chamber girls from Pennsylvania and the Midwest. My maternal

grandmother was born Amish. So, that's an interesting connection. And the work ethic of them here among the Maine coast [laughter], dealing in a fishing community with the summer people coming in from a Mennonite and Amish heritage is a really interesting kind of mix of things to think about. In fact, there was some intermarrying. The (Cider?) lineage here in South Bristol – the great-grandmother was, I believe, Amish – if not that, a low Mennonite – from Pennsylvania. Wonderful family tradition.

JW: What drew these Mennonites up to Maine from the Midwest?

GS: Well, a chance of summer work. A couple of years ago, I was back visiting some of my extended family in Indiana. I was going from Goshen to Nappanee, and I saw on the side of the road, there was a yard sale on a farm, which is always tempting for me. So I stopped in, and it was bonneted – that is, a little old Amish lady was there.

JW: Proper headwear?

GS: Yeah. And the daughter, who was probably thirty-five, forty years of age, was also there, and she had evidence that she had jumped high, which is a term that they're moving up the religiosity ladder.

JW: Oh, so becoming more devout?

GS: No, becoming more liberalized, meaning you go from Amish – this is a whole other conversation [laughter] – where I grew up in Elkhart County, there were about four levels of Amish – the hook and eye, some level they could have tractors, but they couldn't have rubber wheels except on the front of the tractor, etc. So, you move up. And you get high enough, then you jump up into the low level of the Mennonites, [laughter] and you go on. It's interesting. But they're good people with a work ethic. The younger woman I knew was jumped high. The older woman looked at my license plate and said, "Maine?" I said, "Yeah." She got really interested and said, "Where in Maine?" She was probably sixty-five, I would guess if I remember. I told her where, and she started asking me about Monhegan. I said, "What do you know about Monhegan?" She said, "Oh, I spent three of the most wonderful summers in my life working on a hotel out in Monhegan." "Why did you go out there?" "Well, my family said it was okay and was a wonderful way to get away and meet other people, etc." This was a tradition throughout Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, which is an interesting confluence. Now, there's another thing about Maine, too, which goes into the mix of all this, which is – I've dealt with this phenomenon in some of my fiction. That is, we have a fascination as human beings – we have a fascination of – we tend to so cluster around the simulacrum of one another, the imitation of one another. It's the height of that now with the whole phenomenon of PC [politically correct], which is something I could go on for hours about just what that phenomenon is, what drives that phenomenon, and what to watch out for. But there is, within the body and type of human perception, our need to see what are the outlanders just beyond what's acceptable behavior to us. That sometimes works geographically as well as behaviorally as well. Maine, interestingly, historically, has been a geographic outlier as well as a behavioral outlier. It's not by chance that [Henry David] Thoreau came to the backwoods of Maine, as opposed to the copper mines of Montana, say. [laughter] I don't want to make too much of –

JW: Is that when Thoreau climbed Mount Katahdin?

GS: Yeah. I don't want to make too much of this phenomenon, and I certainly don't mean that Mainiacs – that we ought to get all cocky about it. But there is something to that. I remember in the mid-'70s, we took a five-week – I took my kids and went to the West Coast to visit a brother-in-law in Seattle and Olympia and stuff. I went into a big bank, like Citibank, to cash some traveler's checks, and the gal at the counter, probably with a college education, certainly, if not a master's degree, looked at it and – “Oh, from Maine?” And she looked at me square in the eye, and she said, “Oh, what kind of currency do you have in Maine?” [laughter] She had no concept that it was part of the United States, even.

JW: You should have said lobsters. [laughter]

GS: Right. There is that about it being an outlying definition within whose boundaries some people take comfort and take bearing. Marshall Dodge was a good friend of mine. I don't know if you know his humor. Marshall is dead now. He was killed in Hawaii. But a good humorist. Marshall grew up among the privileged class. He was a Yale grad. And he and a friend started doing – Marshall became excellent at the so-called classic Maine accent, which, of course, is not a singular accent at all, but a classic. He would tell these stories about Maine, and they're good and they're funny, but what they are is an outsider doing an encapsulation of what Maine is like. Tim Sample does an encapsulation of what Maine is like. It's kind of an agreed-upon caricature of Maine. Well, Maine ain't that caricature. You get down in under that. There's a lot of caricatures and cliché. For instance, you ain't never going to become a part of Maine, no matter how many years you live here. That's not been my experience at all. I think it has very much to do with what a person brings to the community and to the degree that they're not full of bullshit and that they can deal straight, and that they're alert – humbly alert and know how to work. The finest kind. I think that's still in place. Anyhow, that composite, given the basic mix of Maine also, the summer and the winter schizophrenia and the inland and the coastal schizophrenia – I mean, it's a salad. It's a tossed salad. And it has always been that. Every now and then, we try to make sense of it. When you talk about fishing, when people first started asking me about the long arc of fishing – me, an outlier who came in and fished for 25 years – I would say, “Well, do you know Walter Rich's 1929 study of the fishing grounds of Maine?” Nobody did. Darling Center didn't. Nobody knew. Nobody knew. I said, “For God's sake if you're really interested in that, you do know that because that was one of the best instances of an equal rapprochement between the wisdom of fishermen as the wisdom and respect of scientists working together to delineate what are the fishing grounds of the Gulf of Maine.” I think that's a model that everybody ought to have in their mind even today. I see it's improved a little bit in the last five years from what it was ten years ago, in which graduate environmentalists who thought all fishermen were thugs, and all fishermen thought environmentalists were posturing, empty-headed bullshit artists, etc. I think there's a respect starting to happen now, which I think is healthy.

JW: So you're saying that back then, you observed between people who've perceived the fishery and the historic roots of the fishery [inaudible] –?

GS: Yeah, I think that's always a tension. That's always a tension. We're talking about us as human beings, and that's what we tend to do. Here's a small indicator. We're far afield here, but what the hell? It's on a cloudy Wednesday morning. If anybody has been collecting postcards of the coast of Maine in the last twenty-five years, you can see what I'm talking about. Twenty-five years ago, the postcards were postcards made of interesting local shots taken by whomever. You had a sense that Aunt (Ninny?) had taken this one, and thank God somebody blew it up, and here it is. Here's New Harbor, South Bristol, whatever, Vinalhaven, Damariscove. Now, you go in, and you look at postcards, and it's corporatized. It has a big label on it – here's Pemaquid Point. It's arm-length. The human being has been taken out of it. It is now more emblematic. It has now moved into the realm of caricature. It is what the worst of collegiate education is. Here's fourteen weeks. We're going to deal with, say, European literature from 1800 to 1920, and here's seven books, and you're going to read these, and we're going to give a test on it. Good, we've mastered that. Put them away. Good, good. Well, bullshit. You haven't mastered it. You haven't perceived it. Probably would only perceive what that material is if one has discovered it on their own with an aggressive curiosity, without having to box it up and label it and get rid of it and go for the grade. We are now boxing up, labeling Maine, and going for the grade. That's dangerous to do, I think.

JW: So, are the postcards and how they changed, are they emblematic of the simulacrum that you spoke of earlier?

GS: Yeah, I think so. I don't want to be too pinched and dogmatic about it, but I see those things showing up all the time. I mean, that shows up as human beings. That's part of how we perceive – the mistakes – it's part of the blind spots we have operative as human beings. God knows the whole New Age blind spot vis-à-vis scientific methodology and all that is probably a second cousin to all this. But yeah, which to me means that the kind of questions asked about where are we, where did we come from, although very fine and good questions, the context out of which those questions come itself is shifting. And that shift is an arc tracer that needs to be made and is very, very seldom made. The last time you were here, I pressed you guys a bit about where are you coming from, etc.? I get this all the time when I go to the West Coast, which isn't very often, but I sometimes have to for a movie release or some goddamn thing. The last time I was there, Stacy Keach, who's a good friend of mine who has tracked all the way through – he's kept in touch with me all the way through my fishing years as well – had a bunch of writers that wanted to get to meet me, because they know I take a look at a lot of scripts. That's part of the hats that I wear is a critiquer of scripts. So they all gathered there, and I was astounded. Here were forty-five- and fifty-year-old people who seemed not to understand the arc they were upon – what the history of the theater and film was, where it is going, who they are within that, and what their bearings are within that. The point I made to them is a similar point that I made to whatever the hell that meeting was way back in the '70s when there was a group of people that met in Brunswick relative to fishing – is that the questions we ask today if they are absent the context of understanding where the roots of what we're dealing with come from, run the risk of being part of the problem and not part of the solution. The reason that is is because it will tend to inure people away from taking seriously what the problem is by thinking, oh, look, we're dealing with these questions. Therefore, we have something in hand. Well, we don't have it in hand if we don't see the broad context out of which they come. All right, in terms of fishing, what are

some of the broad contexts? Of course, technical advantage. Technical growth has had a tremendous shift.

JW: What sort of equipment did you start out with when you initially engaged in the mackerel fishery?

GS: That's primary – mackerel is more specific. But the stop-seine herring – it's a graceful, poetic, wonderful business that will drive you fucking nuts and has a Las Vegas air to it, and it is one of those things that an entire community will gather around the moment a set is made because, by God, they've hit the jackpot. It has that about it. It draws to it only those people that can take high risk – probably a bit nuts. I mean, I was talking to *Harper's* one time in the wake of the publication of *Alf* [*Letters from Alf*], and they were very fascinated about some of the differentials that I was talking about in terms of – that I could get on a marine radio and listen and tell you what kind of fisherman it was not by what they were talking about their fishing, but how they used imagination. The bottom of the line is the lobstermen. They're the orthodontics of the coast. [laughter] They're probably the wisest because they make the money, and it's the steadiest. But it's routinous. *Boom*, good. You set four hundred traps, you're going to get – *boom, boom*. Next up, maybe the small draggers. They're cautious, etc., but routinous. You go on up, you get into the larger draggers or the purse-seiners, perhaps – higher risk, they're running at night. They got to know more about how to scout things and look at signs, go for a longer time without making a goddamn piece of money. You can go right on up with the gill netters. No longer while I was fishing were any of the old trawlers – offshore trawlers with the tub and hooks and all that. They were all gone. But that's an interesting beginning point of all this. The herring fishermen are the crazies – the stop-seine herring fishermen. This is before they began purse-seining herring, which is one of the significant things that's happened in the last thirty years which has got to be talked about in terms of decline of stop-seine herring – and the fact, parenthetically, that two years ago, the last of the sardine factories in Maine shut down, which is an enormous thing to happen in terms of the fisheries of Maine and the economy of the Maine coast. There were, I don't know what the numbers were, but seventy or eighty or more sardine factories on the coast of Maine. Now, that parentheses came out of a question that I've forgotten what the hell it was.

JW: What cultural role and –?

GS: Oh, you were talking about the long arc of technological advance.

JW: Right.

GS: Let me follow up on that, and then hang on to your cultural role. When I started fishing herring, it was the tail end of a cotton twine, which itself is a delimiter, because it will decay if not taken care of. It'll rot, particularly if you're catching fish.

JW: How did you maintain equipment like that, as opposed to nylon, Dacron?

GS: Well, you had to salt it heavily and carefully. If you had sat around a fish and you had pumped out aboard a carrier, and there was excessive scaling, you had to twice lift that gear. If

it's eight-fathom gear or ten-fathom gear, hauling by hand – at the beginning, hauling it by hand – that was heavy damn work. But anyhow, you'd get it in the dory, and you'd pickle brine it with hundreds of pounds of rock salt and pickle brine to slow it down.

JW: Did the salt improve the durability of the fibers?

GS: It killed the bacteria and improved it. It kept them from rotting from the bacteria. That rot would happen very, very quickly. Well, that was when everybody had sisal and cotton. Now, most had already changed over to nylon and then polyprop [polypropylene] and stuff by 1970, and that made a considerable difference up and down the coast, along with – about the same time, the depth recorders started coming in. We had the early Bendix one-directional sounder. Then, the scanners came in.

JW: So that allowed you to see what was below the surface.

GS: Well, yeah. And when you extrapolate that across the entirety of fishing, absolutely. And then the GPS. Because the old-time fishermen had to know their sights, and if they're running thirty-five miles offshore, they had to know what they were running, how the tide was running, where the wind was, how long they were running, etc., in order to land on a fishing ground. When radar took over heavily – oh, mid- to late '60s, everybody started getting radar. Henry said to me – he said, “Gladden, this is going to kill a lot of fishermen.” I knew immediately what he was talking about because it meant that the next generation of fishermen would not learn how to run by compass, time, and tide. They wouldn't learn how to do it. And if they're offshore, trying to come home at night in a fog, in a blow, and you got water – a sea following you on the quarter, and the radar goes out, they had no goddamn way of getting home. They don't know how to do it. And he was right. But GPS, of course – we can land on the edge of the bottom thirty-three miles offshore, bingo, and go right back to it. We can do that. The increase of size of boats. This was an incremental thing that you and I talked about the last time here. And again, it's a catch-22, and it's within human nature to get more and more – the more success we have, the more we need to – welcome to the United States economy, for Christ's sake – get bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. When I first landed here, a forty-two-foot dragger could do a number of different things, so it had a kind of lability. If fishing A went down, it could jump to fishing B. But the young guys coming up who are my age – the Albert Thorpes, etc. – started moving ahead in size. And as they moved ahead in size, the daily cost of the nut to run the boat increased exponentially. Albert Thorpe, damn good fisherman, a good friend – he just died half a year ago – he got to the point he had to catch eight hundred dollars' worth of fish in order to start making profit during the day at the end of [inaudible]. When you extrapolate that across the coast, where everybody's moving towards bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger stuff, you're talking about a sizable margin of fish being caught, of bottom being destroyed, etc., simply to maintain point zero on the economy of fishermen. How do you turn that around? I don't know. Like most human things, we don't tend to turn around until we hit a damn wall. And maybe some of the *qué lástima* about the fisheries in the Gulf of Maine are a slow-mo hitting of the wall. I don't know.

JW: When you first started fishing, among the people whom you knew and with whom you worked, they would, if I'm understanding you correctly, move between species as fisheries waxed and waned throughout seasons.

GS: Yeah, as a matter of fact, a lot of the herring fishermen were actually lobster fishermen during the day, or some of them were. Some were even farmers. One guy here, (Burleigh Staples?), ran Staples Grocery Store. His name was Staples, and he ran a grocery store named Staples Grocery Store. He was Mr. Magoo. He could hardly see. He could hardly see at all. And his house on his boat – it was about a thirty-six-footer, thirty-seven-footer. The house had just tiny windows that were emblematic of (Burleigh?). He only fished a couple of the years that I was here. But he would go out with a couple of dories and go out. The way the stop-seine herring worked – well, first of all, herring at that time would come inshore at night. That was what they would do. They would sometimes be driven there by whiting, or on occasion, hake – when there were a lot of fish behind them. But I think there's also something – and I've never seen a study done on this, but there was something within the biological rhythm of the herring that caused it to come ashore at night that may have a second-generational or secondary relationship to also spawning habits. Take now of the big blueback herring spawning offshore, a lot of which is being used for lobster bait, etc. But this was back when canned herring – sizable, sizable. You look up the tonnage of that at the Lubec Museum figures and all that. The tonnage was tremendous. There was a tremendous amount of fish, of herring, and we would talk about them as the size that they would be canned. The largest herring would be fours in a can, then there'd be sixes, and the primes would be eights and tens. In the fall, sometimes we get tens, which are the Bret herring coming back out of the rivers that we would catch.

JW: Had they already spawned?

GS: Well, this would be year-old having come down.

JW: Oh, so they had matured in the river.

GS: Yeah, but they're tiny, tiny little things. This is the fine, fine herring. You wouldn't catch a lot of them. You might get a thousand bushels or something of them and sell them. But a lot of people of many different kinds – there weren't at that time a hell of a lot of only-herring fishermen. First of all, it was May 1 until end of October fisheries, so you needed to do something else. You didn't start looking for herring – showed up. You started prepping with the half-dozen or ten dories that you got and the two seine boats and the spotter airplane, which we had, and a couple of search boats, and then the big (*Alice M*), which is a lot of gear which you had to keep track of. We'd start working on that at the end of March, whenever you could. But about the time that the apples would blossom would be the earliest that you would see stop-seine herring actually land on shore. The latest of it would be – rarely would you catch any in October. You might get some in October. But it would be June, July, and August, and it would come in big, big, big bunches. You can go a month and not catch a goddamn thing, and then in five-day stretches or eleven-day stretches, as we did in Christmas Cove here, we caught in the neighborhood of sixteen hundred tons of them.

JW: What year was that?

GS: 1966, maybe. '67. You're talking to an old man now. That's a good question. I ought to nail that, but I think it's about that.

JW: How many days did the run last?

GS: It lasted eleven days. And we were going without sleep, and there are many stories that could be spun out of that because it was happening in Christmas Cove at the height of summer, with thirty or forty of these half-million-dollar yachts swinging all around. A high percentage of these yachts thought that we were somehow put on by the local chamber of commerce as a show of fishermen. [laughter] And here, you had a crew of guys who hadn't slept and didn't give a goddamn what anybody thought about it. I came on deck one time, and there was Frankie Lessner, sitting on deck, having a talk with a couple from Connecticut on the stern of their sailboat that was eighteen feet away. They were barbecuing their meal, and he was taking a dump in a bucket, talking to them. [laughter] I mean, talk about juxtapositions.

JW: What was their reaction?

GS: They probably thought he was hired by the local town. But there's a wonderful intermix – I talked about this before – wonderful intermix of the spirit of the crazy high-risk stuff – even my agents would sometimes come up and cower and quiver and just want to go fishing, etc. Of course, Henry and Gene Tunney for years were the closest of friends, and the Kennedys would come at Johns Island – by the way, Johns Island is for sale, I just learned last week, which the Tunneys have owned for years and years. So there was that cross-mix always happening. But most all of the communities had stop-seiners going, and that was the thing. Nobody cared about who was landing two hundred pounds of lobsters per day because those are the orthodontists. They extract seven teeth a day. We know that, okay. [laughter]

JW: How many stop-seine crews were able to take part in the run in 1966? What process led up to that?

GS: What process led up to that? Well, we're out scouting every night, and here's one of the ships overall in the long haul of technology, for instance. Originally, some of the most – if I use the word beautiful, and I mean that in its fundamental good sense of something just staggeringly beautiful, is that at the edge of night, you go out, and you're scouring the shore, and you're spotting, you need to have a couple of very attuned senses. For instance, Henry had the ability to see the slight red coloration in water at three hundred, four hundred yards off that the best artists of the Yale School of Architecture and Art who would come and visit could not see, and it would drive them fucking nuts because they couldn't see that. He could spot off there. I learned after a while to be able to do that. Also, one's ear to be able to hear a flip. At the edge of dark, herring if they're in a cove, if they're in any amount, once they stop running, they will then come up and rain out, what they call the flip, and it can sound very, very loud. But even a single flip – I had ears like a wolf. Henry had eyes like an eagle. So we were a good pair.

JW: You were well equipped.

GS: Yeah. And I could spot – whether it’s a flap of a pollock or a herring, which is much crisper, and Henry could spot and say, “Okay, there’s herring over there.” But once it got dark, all sounding equipment aside – we finally used a lot of sounding equipment, of course, to see what a cove actually is. But you want to spot them in the cove without actually running over them in the cove – running to drive them out. But if there was no herring around, we would spend maybe an hour scouring the bays and the river with a guy up on the bow looking at the water fire, and you could just see – as you look down, you can just see the water fire and see whether the mackerel go, and then suddenly you come on some herring, and you start gauging what that herring is like. If you come onto a big school of herring – say, three thousand, four thousand bushels of herring – and you slightly tunk the deck of the boat with your foot, the water will light up such that if it’s really dark, you have to squint, because there’s suddenly this light that happens. That’s the beauty I’m talking about. It’s being able to see by natural means the hunter instinct out there. None of the other fishermen is that equivalent with it. That’s part of the reason that the herring fishermen were the most interesting and probably used their language the best and were the craziest [laughter] and the stupidest about money of any. But of course, then with a spotter plane, you can spot and see them flying, usually at about five hundred, five hundred and twenty feet. You can see the herring worming up along, snaking up along the coast at the edge of dark or an hour and a half ahead of dark such that you can warn us on radio. We set out a leader to maybe help the fish get into a cove. Once they’re in a cove, you shut off behind them with nets up to ten fathom to twelve fathom deep. Twelve fathom is deep for a stop-seine. Shut them off, anchor them off, and then take another piece of twine, which is the pocket twine, tie it on, run it parallel to the stop-seine twine at maybe 120 feet, tie it off again, square it off then all the way around, and make a pocket. You actually sew top to bottom that pocket so it’s contained down. Where the two pieces of twine together, you take some heavy hundred, hundred and fifty-pound weights and lower that down into the pocket. Because the moment that the first light in the sky – this time of year, it’d be a quarter to three in the morning. First light, those fish want to get to deep water. The only way they can get out is they run the twine and the only way they can come up over and into the pocket. Now, hopefully, they all run into the pocket. If they don’t, then you pick up the ends of the twine and you tow them around and force them into it. Once you got them in the pocket, then you take up the running twine, you square it off with anchors, and you call the factory, let them know you got fish, and one of those wonderful crews – the twofer crews of the carriers, which itself is a grand Maine tradition that needs to be written about and acknowledged because these are wonderful, wonderful characters in the history of Maine, important in a lot of ways.

JW: You mentioned that they have a great sense of humor.

GS: Well, they tend to. They’re all part and parcel of the herring world – the nutty, creative, risk-taking. Here these guys are who knew probably more of the coast than any other living person in history, because wherever stop-seine herring was, they had to know how to get there and how to run home. They were running at night often, and they were making desperate long runs. A lot of them – like Lubec – they’d make a Lubec run to us here and through the night, *boom*, run, and they’re crazy. They’re wonderful.

JW: How large were their vessels?

GS: Well, the *Nereid* was sixty, sixty-five feet, maybe. I think she was about a thousand – I think she held about a thousand hogshead. She was an interesting boat. Don and Dick were the two guys aboard her, and Don had no teeth – wonderfully crazy guy, great, fast mind. He'd get so excited when we'd squad the *Nereid* down so she's at water level and going – she was built as a minesweeper for the Second World War and was converted over. Wonderful, wonderful crew and wonderful boat, the *Nereid*, like the *Jacob Pike* was also. But Don would get so excited, he'd take in herring in his gum teeth and put it right in his mouth with both ends flapping and just grin at you like that. [laughter] Frank Ferrin was a very interesting old guy who ran the store here in South Bristol – brilliant mind, a really facile mind. You'd come into the store – well, he kept a collection of malaprops, for instance. He had all the malaprops. And you'd come into the store – summer people would come into the store, and he'd just watch them. They'd pick up this, pick up that, pick up that, pick up that, pick up that, and he'd have it all added up in his head by the time they landed. He knew it all. He was really, really smart. He would periodically go on benders for a week at a time, maybe twice in the summer. Frank is on the mountain. As a matter of fact, Frank took off one time when he went on a bender and got all the way down to New York City because he wanted to see a play of mine that was at New Haven. So, he hired a taxi to go from New York City to New Haven, and the taxi driver, God love him, knew something wasn't right. So, he stopped about halfway from New York to New Haven and got Frank to call Dennis, his son, and they worked it out. Frank never did arrive at my show in New Haven [laughter] that was going on. They got him. Anyhow, Frank had this craziness about him, and he and I would clown around sometimes. I would do – this is not politically correct – this kind of a talk thing. Frank would [inaudible] – and the tipoff was, "Have you found your dog yet, which was the cue for me to go into that." "No, I haven't, Frank, but we're hoping to get ..." – part of the stage stuff. Well, Don and Dick were there one time when this was going on. Frank turned around to me and said, "Have you found your dog yet?" And I said, "No, no, I haven't." And Don picked it up. For three years, for three years on the marine radio with him running, you could hear just out of the click, click on – "I have lost my dog. Have you found your dog?" This went on and on and on and on. It became part of the goofball generative life of the coast. It had this kind of whacko stuff to it. There was something determined about that nature of the blood. I tried to capture some of that in *Letters from Alf* – not directly, but indirectly it's there. And it's one of the reasons that Gene Tunney liked to be around, and it's one of the reasons why one has to be really careful, I think, trying to encapsulate and solve and find what are the issues of the nature of what Maine is, because if they don't allow that also to be at the table, then what you're doing is putting the lid on the coffin.

JW: So you can't essentialize Maine.

GS: You can't successfully essentialize Maine. You sure as hell can try. I see a lot of people trying. And there's a lot of reasons for that. A lot it's well intended. A lot of the money that's put behind – oh, let's study this, and let's study that, and let's do that. My hat's off. Good. But open it up. The same thing is true of the arts. Ruth (Mielies?), who for years was head of the theater department – the theater wing of the National Endowment for the Arts, she and I were on the stump some together, and I got to like her a hell of a lot – really, really bright woman. She was interviewing me one time when I was doing – this is non-fisheries related, but phenomenologically it is. I was helping to set up some of the field stuff for the National Endowment for the Arts and also the New England Foundation for the Arts. This is back in the

heyday of when they set up and were starting to really help with field grants. So, there was a period of time when I was covering virtually all the performing arts from New York to Canada. They sent me on them, and then I'd go take a look, etc. And they had a budget to give out to these, and the application – people applying. I would write an extended critique and write up a yea or nay to whatever. Ruth and I got talking about it, and I just – off the record, I said to her, Ruth, I think you ought to take fifteen percent of this budget or twenty percent of this budget and buy baskets of tomatoes and give them to the audience, and if they don't like something, have them throw them the hell at the stage. I'd say quality correction would happen very, very quickly to have that immediacy of it. Of course, no, we can't do that, although she thought it was a damn good idea, and she personally would like to have done it. There is some truth in that. There is some truth in that. Some of the same truth applies to fisheries. I think it's important that we don't get too anal about trying to encapsulate what this broil of multiple energies is that meets roughly within the topic of what Maine fishing, Maine culture is all about. That's one of the dismays I have today when I hear about political dialogue. It is so crimped and so puckered – hats off to our governor – that there's no possibility of seeing a wise embrace of multiples and saying, oh, yeah, twenty percent of [inaudible], twenty percent of caution, twenty percent of this, twenty percent – look at what that fluidity is all about.

JW: So it's a failure, you're saying, of people who are attempting to create some – not holistic, but all-encompassing conception.

GS: Yeah, it's part of the reductive instinct that we all have – you know, reduce something down. You got a problem? How do we perceive the problem? Well, we perceive the problem because it's iterated in the news. It becomes a fashionable problem. Now that's iterated. What are we going to do about it? Well, let's find a solution. How are we going to find a solution? Well, let's find it with consensus. How do we find it with consensus? We find it through iteration and iteration. Every one of those steps is a closing down. It's a reductive process of closing down, rather than having the kind of loner wisdom that allows multiples – the striations of multiples to work their way and say, ah, maybe there's some wisdom in this and this and this and this. Let's try it. Meanwhile, let's be humble about our own dogmatism – about being humble about our own dogmatism.

JW: So perhaps the only kernels of narrative truth that we can find are in small examples of living and experience.

GS: You sound like you took a postmodern course somewhere along – “kernels of narrative truth.” Well, I think both of those are important. I think the overall sense of what narrative truths are, but the accuracy of an overall sense of narrative truth, as historians have for a long, long time known – it is how we tell about history that ultimately determines what the narrative of history is, and it's not necessarily what history is. Now, one can get too far going the other way, also saying, well, to hell with it. None of it makes any sense, so to hell with it. But to be reasonably alert, and particularly in a rich, rich, rich terrain like the coast of Maine – I mean, literally the three thousand miles of tidal wash within the three hundred miles of actually crow flies, let alone the multiple highlands which have their own rich separatist traditions and valuable sense, into which mix come a lot of people, me included in the beginning, that are fascinated, that come in and watch and look, find, etc., then bring their own possible nourishment, but their

own drawdown of these. It's a remarkable mix, and the mix is not over yet. The mix may be changing in time, but it's not over. How to parse through that mix and suss it out in a way that's not constraining but helpful of the mix without overwhelming the mix, I think, is the key thing for any of us to think about. And I don't have the formula. I think the dialogue, first of all, needs to be alert to what I'm talking about – just to be alert to it. You can look all this up online – a couple of years at Bennington, a recurrent and contemporary hysteria. This is another hat that I wore nationally – having to do with false allegations and all of that. I said to the class – and each class had one-tenth of the entire campus in it. Kids just flooded in because I was dealing with subjects that nobody else would deal with. I said to them right off the bat, “Look, these are pre-loaded topics. It's a confluence of multiple topics. It's complex. The one thing I want you most of all to think about is to think about how you think about these topics as we're approaching them because each of us has within us the vested root contamination of the reflex of reducing something down to the point where we miss the essence of it.” It's something my dad said to me – well, he was under a lot of national isolation and stress because he stood up for some moral stuff back during the Second World War with some of the Japanese internment things and moving a Japanese family with us to Indiana to get them out of Tulelake. This was the stuff I grew up with. I remember him saying something that I'm going to build a monograph around for *Rolling Stone* or somewhere – “Never try to correct a public evil without first understanding that the roots of that evil reside also within yourself.” That's all the difference in the world. And I think we're there now. I think there's less a sense now than there was in the '40s, '50s, and '60s in the communities of the coast of Maine of people residing together, summer people and winter people and fishermen, etc. than now. It tends to be separatists out. The second and third generation – the young kids now can't afford to be in a small place. The young fishermen can't buy shoreline stuff. Places like Belfast are doing some good things of buying shoreline property and having it available for the evolution of fisheries. It's that kind of thinking that's an important thinking now. Here's the leap also. Something needs to be done, and I don't know if it'd be done rationally or it'll simply be done in a de facto way, like most things that we do as human beings. We hit a wall, and we stop going in that direction after a while. Then we turn, go some other direction, and say, “See how wise we were?” When it's actually, we just hit a goddamn wall. And we're hitting a wall – have been hitting a wall with the enormity of technology and the ability to just clean everything. Midwater trawling – I mean, *boom*. The absurdity of dragging the bottom. Old fishermen – when I came aboard here, the druggers knew it – thousand-pound doors beating the hell out of everything.

JW: So, there was a recognition among fishermen of the ecological effects?

GS: Yeah, some of the best conservationists I knew were fishermen themselves. The same with some of the best gun control voices that I know are local hunters. They think it's absurd what the NRA [National Rifle Association] – the hands-on. But nobody was asking them, talking about it. Meanwhile, that inexorable sense of got to earn money and got to grow and grow, the great American dream – well, nonsense. Everybody was just stepping up the ladder – bigger and better boats and going with better technicians. If you've got side-scanners and you can see stuff, and if you've got the global positioning and you can land on it, go for it. Gangbusters – go for it. You reach the end of that cycle – and Henry and I used to even talk about that. He saw that cycle. He tell you, “Gladden, it's come to the point that a guy with a seventeen-foot dory and a mast and a sail and two jigs and a hand line and going off on the edge of hard bottom and get a

couple hundred pounds of rock cod a day and come back in – no overhead, no fuel, no nothing, a dollar a pound for rock cod, you made 170 bucks a day.” Go home, rest in peace. There’s no overage whatsoever. That’s the recycle back. That sounds romantic, and it can be called romantic if somebody is out just lofting that as a kind of romantic nonsense, but there’s a humiliation index in what we as human beings do in terms of our cycles. I think we’ve been confronting in a slow-motion kind of way a humiliation index in terms of water usage and environment and fisheries and all that.

JW: When did something like midwater trawling come into greater play?

GS: The desperate play? Well, this is a guesstimate, and you can pick better brains than mine on it. I would say the – I mean, the real outrageous stories of the enormous, mile-and-a-half sweeps going first got on my radar about the late ’80s and the early ’90s. But that’s just my guesstimate. You can pick better brains than mine on that.

JW: That’s the practice of pair trawling, right?

GS: Yeah, pair trawling.

JW: What was the effect of pair trawling on the herring resource, in your opinion?

GS: Well, the herring resource already was – the stop-seining herring resources were dropping off by then. That was pretty much done. As a matter of fact, the herring stop-seiners were most concerned about the purse-seiners, who were the ones nabbing the schools of herring coming onshore before they got allowed to come to shore. Now, the sardine factories would hold off the purse-seiners, hoping they would come to shore because it’s a better grade of fish to land. In fact, there was one summer – I think I mentioned this last time you guys were here – there was one summer down here outside – well, just inside of the Inner Heron Island – between Inner Heron Island and Christmas Cove and Thorpe’s Point down in there – there was night after night a body of herring moving into this area that we were picking up, airplanes were picking up, everybody was picking up, probably 250,000 to 300,000 bushels of herring. Whoa, this big body. Now, this is in late July, I think, or early August, which means a lot of the lobstermen have already set out into eight, nine, ten fathom feet of water. Of course, a purse-seiner at night, where he sits around, he gathers all those buoys, and he has to cut them out – just lop them off. So instantly, there’s that tension between purse-seiners inshore and lobstermen. But the purse-seiners were being held off by the factories, and we were patrolling, saying to those fish, get inshore so we can get you. We didn’t – couldn’t – and they never did come inshore. Finally, the purse-seiners just landed. One night, I was out there, and it was like a city. There must have been fifteen, eighteen of the purse-seiners just landing them – gone. That was when the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] was brought in, too. [laughter] I was on shore at [inaudible], and I was listening to one of the skippers talking to another one of the skippers. These are the purse-seine skippers. Everybody was having a good time setting off – “You got some?” “Yeah, looks like a pretty good roll. Yeah, yeah.” And then – ka-blowy! A gunshot up over the top of my head went off, and the marine [inaudible] fell silent. And then the skipper said, “Well, by golly, I think someone just fired at me.” That became a big to-do. The Feds were around and stuff.

JW: Was that a result of the gear interactions between the purse-seiners and the lobstermen?

GS: That's right. That's right. And I know who it was, and I ain't talking. No, I mean, I don't know for sure who it was. But yeah, the kind of territorial tension. The stop-seiners would say – at least that I know – and I would say that the notable, palpable decline of sardines was because of the purse-seiners. That was before the pair trawling and the midwater trawling and all that. We got offshore. Of course, the purse-seiners, once they geared up, would like to go to the bluebacks – the spawning bluebacks offshore and gather them because, meanwhile, the redfish were dying off. So, the demand for lobster bait was increasing. And the pogies were dying off. Pogies are so greasy to use for lobster bait that the lobsters will just shit themselves sometimes to death, so you got to be a little careful with that.

JW: Do the lobsters actually suffer gastrointestinal effects from eating pogies, or are you speaking metaphorically?

GS: No, they actually –

JW: Really?

GS: Yeah. You'd have to talk to dealers who carve them. And even those who use mackerel, for instance – mackerel will fish lobster, but they're so oily that some dealers won't take them because they'll die – shit themselves to death, and it becomes a problem.

JW: That's interesting.

GS: Yeah, mackerel are very oily. Probably bluefish, too, although I never heard of anybody baiting a lobster. I think the best use of most of our politicians would be to whack them up and use them for lobster bait. Some of them – I've looked at it. You could probably bait up twenty or thirty traps out of one person. That'd be pretty good.

JW: There's good economy there, I suppose.

GS: That's right.

JW: So with the pogies, when they arrived, would they school with the herring?

GS: No, they wouldn't, but they would drive the herring. There's a whole hierarchy. When the pogies come – well, first of all, pogies will attract mackerel. Blues will attract pogies. Of course, stripers are on the tail end. These – going. A pogy – I heard the figures once. I don't know how they arrived at it. But both mackerel and pogeys predominantly will leave an oil slick in the water that a blue can pick up on at a remarkable distance, like a half-mile or a quarter of a mile and go. So if you've got these multiples chasing, and the poor little goddamn sardine herring at the head end of it can drive them up into the woods, but the pogeys are very skittish, too. If you've got blues chasing the pogeys, you can just see them. They just explode out of the water. In fact, there's wonderful stories of an old goofball guy I want to write about, a notable

guy, a local here. He's dead now. A loner who ran a double-rigged dragger all by himself – double-rigged with two steering control units. The one most often used is on the stern on corrugated metal with no rail and these two big goddamn rigs. Here's this guy, about a 280-pounder. He was out wanting to fetch some lobster bait, and he knew the pogeys were up in the north branch of Johns Bay. The north branch goes up into a long, long, long, narrow reach. So he set both of his rigs with his big boat, and he just went right up, and they went fucking up into the woods – just tons of them up into the woods. Of course, they rotted for weeks in the summer – just rotted. But that was often the case with pogeys. Pogeys would chase herring, but mostly, they would come after the herring runs had happened, and it would be bluefish after the pogeys.

JW: They would arrive later.

GS: Stripers after the bluefish together. That was their pecking order. The mackerel fishing itself was an interesting one, and another pretty contained fishery with a stationary net. You think of a hairnet the size of, say, a Little League infield, roughly that. It could be bigger than that or smaller than that.

JW: How large is the mesh on a hairnet?

GS: Well, it's not the hairnet mesh size. It's the hairnet that's contained like this.

JW: Right. I guess I should have said to what does the term technically apply.

GS: It applies that if you look at it from the surface of the water, on each side, that net goes down and connects at the bottom. It's a full contained net. The mesh on the net is probably a half-inch spread or a three-quarter-inch spread mesh – fairly small mesh, which periodically will gum up with algae and stuff, and you have to haul it out and salt it down. But this big square net. Normally, in this area, on the southwest point of land, and you know where the fish come and how they work, so you know the best place to trap, these become stationary traps with a big backbone run from shore off maybe four hundred yards with a three hundred, four hundred-pound anchor off there and with big barrel floats, etc. The trap was then put down inside this, where you set the frame where the mouth of the trap is going to be, and barrels spoke out to other anchors all the way out here. So you've got this frame. The trap is set down, then inside that. It's tied off at all the corners. It's got a mouth in the trap that folds into the interior. It's the only way the fish can get into it. There's an opening there. But if the fish – which fish always do – when they get in enclosed there, they start circulating. And if they circle around and they hit that flap of the mouth of the trap, it means they're always moving away from the open part of the mouth, which means they'll stay inside. From the mouth to shore, then you run a leader, and the leader is stationary there. And from the other side of the mouth, off a little way, you run what they call a heart, which is five fathoms deep, and it runs off maybe ten fathoms or so. So when the fish – on an ebb tide, and you've got a flow of ebb tide water that's happening, the mackerel will come along the shore – like the Thumbcap Shore, the Thread of Life Shore down here, or the Pemaquid Point Shore, Fishermen's Island, the west side, or Damariscove used to be one. We never fished Damariscotta. But the fish come down along, and they go into that trap, and there they all. And you haul that trap twice a day. The most we ever got out of the trap at a single time was 88,000 pounds. Charlie (Ork?) said they got 122,000 out of one one time, which

is a hell of a lot. When we had 88,000, we had a five-man crew, and we had to get more people even to draw them up and finally got a carrier to come pump them out because we couldn't bail the damn things.

JW: That was mackerel?

GS: That was mackerel. Mackerel seem to exist without environmental threat. Nobody was overfishing them, and they're not destroying their habitat. They're an upper-water fish, etc. And a great volume of fish – we sold them at that time. Peddlers would come down, and we'd sell – we were getting thirty thousand, twenty thousand pounds a day and barrel them up in ice at 150 pounds per barrel with ice water and stuff. Peddlers would come down from Bangor and Lewiston and all over the state of Maine, plus we'd ship them on into Boston. But some of those peddlers would sell ten, twelve barrels a week of them. People ate mackerel.

JW: As bait?

GS: No, as human food.

JW: Oh, really? As human fare?

GS: Human fare. That's right. The historic tradition of salt mackerel from the Gulf of Maine – and the East Coast, but the Gulf of Maine – covered the entirety of the United States. My Amish grandmother remembers as a kid that they would have a keg of salt mackerel in the basement or two or three, and it would last all winter. They'd have to soak the damn stuff out, [laughter] because you couldn't eat it otherwise.

JW: That was Maine mackerel.

GS: That was Maine mackerel. And the volume of really good food was within the mackerel and available. Now, there was one summer that we caught probably three-quarters of a million pounds and only got three-quarters a cent a pound for mackerel, and most of them were going to cat food. And it drove me nuts because offshore was a Russian fish processing factory boat. A couple years later, they had that to-do, the wonderful rapprochement with the people of Round Pond, in which the wives started baking pies back and forth, and they would play weekend volleyball sessions and stuff. It was really nifty. It was nifty. It was the way to break the cold barriers, and it was valuable. My point at that time was nobody in this country wants mackerel. They're out there processing. Why not make the connections and just run them offshore and let them offload the damn things? Of course, it went nowhere. I talked to Hathaway a little bit about it, but nobody wanted to touch that one. But three-quarters of a million pounds of mackerel being sold for cat food, and they're still there. There's nobody trapping mackerel here, but they're still trapping a few down off – oh, the little harp's bow there. What the hell's the point of land there? Shit. Small Point. I'm told they still – they used to run a lot of traps there, and we'd watch them come up along. Now, in the heyday of mackerel trapping, on the south side of – God, my brain's going. I got to take a break here in a bit.

JW: I was just going to say, if you're comfortable, you might want to –

GS: On the south side of Cape Cod, the classic, big mackerel trapping were long runs of them, and there was an old-timer here that I got to know. He retired because he was – he was the brother the father’s wife of Frank Ferrin, who came to Indiana – came to see my play down in New Haven. This (Alva Gamage?) – he was like a Jenny Wren. He was like this. But a wonderful, wonderful sense of retaining of history and stories and old pictures and stuff. When he was a kid, he was a cook aboard the multiple crews that ran fifteen or twenty of these traps simultaneously on long, multi-mile down below Cape Cod. They would just run those long leaders, then there’d be a trap. And then another long leader and trap. Huge industry of it. Now, I’m not aware that there’s been a substantial decline in the tonnage of mackerel available, but it’s been a toss-off. That’s one of the things that I go – as a citizen, I think, you know, everybody’s talking about they can’t make money. Well, get you a little trap and run down off Damariscove and set that up. That spike is probably still there where you set the –

JW: The mackerel trap?

GS: For the anchor line and run it off there and just see what you get.

JW: Let’s take a break and resume. [RECORDING PAUSED] This is an interview for the Maine Coast Oral History Initiative, to be shared jointly by the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association and the Island Institute. The date is June 26th, 2013. This is Josh Wrigley. Today, I am here at the home of herring fisherman, author, and playwright Gladden Schrock in South Bristol, Maine. The subject of our interview today is your recollections of the herring stop-seine fishery and how coastal life in your region has changed since you began fishing. This is part two.

GS: Well, what is it you want to know? And then I’ll see if I can find somebody who can talk to you about it. [laughter]

JW: Tell us about Henry Jones and how he met Gene Tunney.

GS: Yeah. Henry Jones – one of the big old-timers, a stop-seiner primarily, although he would drag sometimes. We would rig up – I shrimped a winter with him, etc. But he was one of the old dogs of stop-seining. If you know the book *Charlie York*, Henry figures in there. Henry grew up under Charlie York. It’s a good book. You ought to read it. As a matter of fact, that book – I’m going on record here saying somebody ought to reissue the goddamn book. It’s a good one. Anyhow, Henry grew up as a kid on Damariscove. His dad was a fishermen. Henry had three years of public education, and that was it. One of the wisest people I know, who followed MacNeil/Lehrer on TV, so he had that scansion. He used a hell of a lot of malaprops, which were funny as hell. Like he would talk about the fish’s testicles instead of tentacles. [laughter] But he was like a grandfather to my kids. Around his wharf, he raised a couple of generations of really good fishermen and raised them in, I think, one of the healthiest ways that I’ve ever seen – that is, he gave guidance, gave support, didn’t play the macho games at all with them. As a fisherman, he was a canny, canny, canny fisherman and a good one to work with. Of course, herring fishing – there’s a lot of waiting time, and we would – for years and years and years, before we’d go out in the evening fishing, the crew would gather on the wharf, and we’d

sit there and just gather up. Kind of a Buddhist moment of meditation, although you'd get kicked the hell off the wharf if anybody suggested that was going on at all. But just people at the end of the day, watching the day wind down and taking a look at the sky, whether it's clear or not, how soon the sun's going to go out, whether it's southwest, which means that the feed is drifting in a way that the herring might be moving, and where the tide is, and all that. Roy, who'd fly the airplane, he'd be with us until it was time for him to paddle out to get to the airplane and get up in the air. But we never said, "Okay, it's time to go." It just always happened. That would drive people nuts who were visiting because they would sit there, and we'd be there sometimes as much as an hour, catching up and talking about this and talking about that and talking about that. Henry would be talking about how the politicians in goddamn Washington, DC if they just were forced to shut their mouth two hours a day and grow a garden, they might know something. We'd be sitting there, and then all of a sudden, we all knew it was time to go, and we would stand up and go. Nobody could ever figure out that moment when it happened. The fact that Henry, who owned the – if you know South Bristol at all, with the swing bridge, he owned the place right on the mainland side on the west side of the bridge. There, I got it. He owned the little two-story building across the road from him, too. And the Tunneys – Gene Tunney that owned Johns Island, was out in Johns Bay – rented the top as an apartment from Henry, and they knew each other for decades and decades and decades. Gene and Henry were the best of friends. Gene Tunney, who was this hulk of a guy – when you saw his hands – enormous, even bigger than my hands. Gnarled, too, at the end of it. And they would sit there just like a couple of old dogs talking with good friendship. It was wonderful to see. Gene Tunney, the pride of Yale and the great heavyweight champion of the world, married into wealth and owned 35,000 acres in Alaska that he had to run off and take care of, and Henry would laugh like hell at him and say, "Gene, all you want is to sit by a stream and fish, you goddamn fool. Why are you going up there for?" [laughter] [Gene] would say, "I don't know, Henry. If I had a life like you, I'd just love to sit there and sit there." And Henry would say, "Well, just sit here. Just sit here."

JW: Did Gene Tunney ever talk about his days boxing?

GS: Not much, no. No. He'd look at his hands and suggest that. But no, that was so far in the past when I came on board. I don't know, he may have with Henry. But Henry was never – what I liked about it down at the wharf, and the reason that I stayed and brought my family along, and I raised my kids here in South Bristol, is there was an apparent to me palpable inversion of what is the normal pathology of American communities, which is to say the normal pathology these days tends to be that you garner accolades, you go after people's opinions of yourself. That's the climbing of the ladder. And that got inverted, and I think to some degree is still inverted healthily in the small Maine communities and the coastal communities and on some of the island communities that I know. I haven't been on all the islands, obviously. They don't give a goddamn about who you know and what name you can throw. As a matter of fact, yes, they do care. They care in a negative way. You'll get pitched off the damn wharf if you're playing that game. And it's caught up a lot of people – a lot of people who come down, and they try to become friends with the fishermen, and the fishermen pick up the condescension very, very quickly. There's a castoff for it. There are also games. Frank Ferrin used to play the funnel in the belt game.

JW: What was that?

GS: Some cocky summer person coming in and wanting to be like everybody – [inaudible] – and Frank would say, “Oh, hi, Joe. You ever do this trick?” You put a funnel in your pants right here, and you put a dime on your nose, and you try to crook your neck so that the dime falls down there. So he’s up there, and meanwhile, Frank pours a quart of gasoline on the guy’s crotch. [laughter] Well, they get the point. Nobody cared about impressing people. They cared about who you were, who you are, and what’s inside. There’s a cleanliness in that that is healthy as hell. Even with a lot of high-profile people coming in from outside – there was [Harold Meade] Mott-Smith, who was here who was part of the Atomic Energy Commission. Mott-Smith was this scraggly old guy. We had a lot of them sorts of people around – John Wheeler that I had mentioned. John became the most humble farmer you’d ever know, and he was the world’s top theoretical physicist with [Albert] Einstein. It’s that absence which formed at that time the community here – the center of gravity of the community, which I loved. Somebody with as many hats as I wear – that was the best place for me to be, because academia couldn’t understand all the hats that I wear and speeches that I do, but they could. The fishermen would even come down and see plays of mine in New Haven. Come down, they’d see a [Anton] Chekhov – they’d never seen a live stage play before, and they came down and saw *Uncle Vanya* when I was in that. There were two carloads of them. And they got it – bingo. Understood fully. Well, of course, if you know Chekhov and the peasant serf background that he came from, of course, there’s an understanding there. So yeah, there was that basis, and Henry and Tunney moved right into that. Now, when the Kennedys came, [laughter] there were a lot of stories about that. One of the guys – Junior Ferrin was a guy I fished mackerel with, and Junior went through the Normandy landing, had a college degree, smoked Parodis, the most sardonic sense of ironic humor of anybody you would meet. About five-foot-eight, tough little guy, and his fingers were gnarled from hauling mackerel traps. It was the summer that Ted Kennedy had an airplane accident and broke his back. Remember that summer? I don’t know what the hell summer it was. But it also happened to be a summer of drought, and the Kennedys were coming to visit the Tunneys because Ted and Varick Tunney, Gene’s son Varick, roomed together in boarding school, I guess. Anyhow, those families mixed up. Ted had arrived late, flew into Wiscasset Airport, I think it was, and taxied over here, and he was late with the boat going out to Johns Island. When we haul mackerel traps, we go out around, pass by Johns Island. So we said, “We’ll drop you off when it’s time for us to go.” So we were sitting on the wharf – Ferrin’s wharf. Hadn’t rained in six weeks. Everything was bone dry. Scalding, bone dry. And there was Ted Ferrin [sic], who’s 6’4”, and there was Junior with his damn Parodi, 5’6”, whatever it was. Ted was just looking out over the eastern gut. Junior comes up to him and pulls a Parodi out and looks up in his face, and he says, “Rains all the time, don’t it, Ted?” [laughter] There was that exchange – that kind of whooping exchange. Where were we? Henry. Henry had a breakdown. The herring were getting slim. Nobody had made much money. We hadn’t made any stop-seine money all summer long. And I don’t remember what year it was – maybe ’68. ’67, perhaps. Nobody canned herring on the whole coast, and all the sardine factories were hungry as hell. Late in the fall, we got onto a bunch of herring out of Heron Island, which is quite well off in open water. We made a shutoff – don’t know exactly how many fish were there, but Roy assessed them to be thirty to thirty-five thousand bushels, which would have made a season for us. Well, that was the year that back-to-back storms went through and hit Sable Island. Of course, the fact that we’d shut off a bunch of fish – all the coast got alerted, all the

factory boats of the sardine carriers, and they started coming. And that sea started making up and coming in over the rocks, etc. For a whole week, every morning we went down there and just watched the devastation. We lost everything – lost all the fish, lost all the gear – seventy thousand dollars’ worth of gear – damn near lost the main boat, seine boat, etc. I was in the smaller boat, would nose into the shore and try to see what we got. Henry kept aboard the big boat, and we’d make that long, long hour trip back and forth, and the sea just unrelenting. The Coast Guard was flying, watching it, afraid of going down, and there were carriers just laying off, watching this whole devastation happen. This was at the tail end – to Henry, it seemed like the tail end of his career, and it depressed the hell out of him. Meanwhile, his dog – a German Shepherd named King – died, [laughter] which seemed an appropriate Grecian tonistic moment.

JW: Did he die of old age?

GS: Yeah. And Henry got to worrying about never being able to make money for his kids and grandkids again, and he went into a spiral, and he ended up going to Augusta in the mental hospital. I had a long talk with him when he came out of the hospital, and he wanted to talk about it. He rationally thought his way through it. He thought where his thinking was wrong and what was wrong about it, and he came out rationally and got another boat. Meanwhile, he had sold the boat. He’d sold the boat that he’d had Harvey (Gamage?) built, and he named it after his daughter. He sold it. That boat, by the way, two years ago went down with the crew. And he got back on his feet – a kind of heroic process by a humble man who was alert. That was Henry. My kids loved him to death. He helped my son a lot. My son had some real skill. He was one of the best lobstermen around, and he also designed boats. In fact, there was an H. Schrock boat design that is one of the best lobstering skiffs ever made. Good one. That was Henry.

JW: When did Henry die?

GS: You would ask that. You know, it’s interesting because I was going up to town on Saturday, and I passed his gravestone. I asked myself, what year was that? And I thought a mental note for me to stop to check just when that was. I can’t tell you because I was in the middle of a divorce and in and out of state, and I don’t know when that moment happened. I was not here when it happened. But it might have been early ’80s – ’81, ’82.

JW: Does he now lie in the Bristol cemetery that’s on 129?

GS: Well, it’s South Bristol. It’s not the Bristol. South Bristol. Yeah, we have several of them here. One down below that’s got a fence around it, and the reason we had to put a fence around it is because people are just dying to get in. [laughter] That’s an old joke. Old Tommy Alley would say, “Well, they’re just dying to get in. Got to put a fence around it.” South Bristol itself early on – and this was a bit before my time – had the confluence that I’m talking about statewide. It was the confluence. That’s the ridge runners – that’s the farmers uptown because we’re a long peninsula, an eleven-mile-long peninsula. You had farmers up on the ridge, and you had fishermen down here. Before my time here, there was a lot of contesting during town meetings up at Clarks Cove Meeting House, the old meeting house – which is an interesting place, by the way. The upstairs is still there – the old meeting house and the old kitchen and

stuff. It would be a day long. People would come, and they'd fight like hell. First of all, there was a fight between Bristol and South Bristol for South Bristol to secede and become our own person – South Bristol. That was long before my time. But that contesting was going on. And then there was a contesting between the fishermen and the goddamn ridgerunners up there. So they'd fight.

JW: Who were the ridgerunners?

GS: Well, they were the farmers and the non-fishermen and the landowners – the people that lived on the ridge, for Christ's sake, not down here. [laughter]

Scott Sell: What were they mostly fighting about?

GS: Taxes, schools. I don't know. I wasn't here. But it was that kind of contention. You know, who has the power – all that sort of stuff. Those lines got fused over the years, of course. A lot of the young lobstermen who can't afford to own land here own up on the ridge now and fish down here. But they worked it out because people had to come a long distance. They would bring lunch, and they'd fight like hell in the morning. Then they'd all get together, and they had the big kitchen, then they'd all eat lunch, and then they'd come back in the afternoon, and they'd work things through. Now, the town meetings are just an evening, and everybody's so cynical about it, they don't even go. "What the hell? That's right wing. That's left wing. To hell with it." It's that cynicism nationwide and the roots of it that bother me, about which I'm working on some notes on a monograph for. But that's besides fishing. The conversation between fishermen and scientists historically is interesting, and probably if one would go back – I mean, the grand historical scan of humankind, what the evolution of the concept of science itself was – I mean, there was a time where poesy and philosophy were the same thing – *Poetics*, Aristotle, was philosophy, out of which then science came, etc. And magic and science at one time were all together and spiritualism, all that stuff. So you're looking at a dynamic, protean arc all the time through history, and it's still going on. The interface between the practical people and so-called scientific fact, and particularly since the '60s, in which science has taken such a beating – the scientific methodology with the whole postmodern belief system that subjectivity is the most important thing and that skew happening. In the middle of that, of course, is the question of attending to the environment, and with coastal Maine, of course, attending to the environment of the sea. How do you take a look at that? What is that? And whose view do you honor, and who's looking at it that has integrity, and what is the dialogue about? That bothered me when I began looking at the interface. I landed here just about the time the Darling Center was begun up here in Walpole.

JW: Is that the Darling Marine Center?

GS: That would be the Darling Marine Center. The darling Darling Center. Yes, it would be that. It would be that. Kudos to them. A lot of fine friends there – the ichthyologists and the geologists and stuff became really good friends, close friends. The interface between them as friends and the fishing was a telltale thing, but it also launched me into the bigger picture of who honors whom and who's listening to what. There was a period of time I felt we were just then at a period of time in which the fishermen had no credibility and that the cockiness among

academicians was at the high apex. I think that's improved a bit. So, I began looking back in history, saying, "What is the historic fact? What has gone on [inaudible]?" And I'd poke around. I think it was 1929 when Walter Rich's book about the fishing grounds of Maine was done. Not so much the fact that they came upon the definitive fishing grounds of Maine and got them down in some order, but how they did it and the respect in which they did it. It was a conjoined – by my judgment and my view of it, what I could perceive of it, there was a mutual respect among fishermen and the scientists that they both joined in, and it was very positive because of that. Now, from 1929 to when I came aboard the scene here in the 1960s, there had been some erosion in some of the quarters [laughter] of the mentality between the two. If you back that up even into some of the writing about the sea – I mean, [James] Connolly's wonderful stuff at the turn at the century – *The Trawler* and some of those stories that are luminous – not only wonderful writing, but it has to do with a great, detailed verisimilitude capturing of what the sea is like and what that living is like, even more than [Herman] Melville did. Melville was a greater writer, but he didn't capture the sea like Connolly did. That was the turn of the century. So, I think there's some humble alert that needs to happen – always needs to happen – to take a look back and see was there a time in which there were better dialogue? What's the better dialogue about? There was a time in the '60s in which academia became cocky as hell and blinkered as hell. Everything was cause-laden. There was no sense of history. It is me. I took a course. I know this. Away we're going to go, etc. I'm on the constant alert about that. Some people hear me squall, and they say, "Oh, God, you're a right-winger." And I say, "Wrong. I'm farther left than you'll ever be." [laughter] My piss-off is that the progressives have not kept alert. The right-wingers will take care of themselves. Anyhow, with the dialogue between the science and the fishermen, my sense is that it's improving these days a bit, but it's taken some hair-scrabbling and people going at each other. It's going to be seen – for instance, the grand whatever – the grand lobstering cooperative ventures that are happening with the shut-down sardine places are something to think about.

SS: Have you, in your experience, seen that to be a positive thing with any people that you know who have joined co-ops together?

GS: Well, I saw the evolution of the lobster co-op here, which is something other than what I'm talking about now. Yeah, the evolution of the lobstering co-ops – that's been a valuable thing. I think it's been a smart thing. But that's been contained because they're lobstering, and that's a fairly simple thing to do. When you talk about a grand fishermen's co-op in which you have mobile grounds and mobile fishing territories, etc., that becomes a little bit different and a little harder to do. I remember when I was a kid in the early '50s, in which the Farm Bureau co-ops – in other words, we're talking about Indiana – we had a two-hundred-acre farm, and my uncle, my mother's sister's husband, ran one of the huge John Deere implement [stores] in Goshen, Indiana. We were having a reunion at our house, and the Farm Bureau co-op was just coming in. And Uncle (Harv?) was against it. He thought this was Red Communism coming – by golly, going to come. There was a lot of squabbling early on with it because that concept – "Well, you raise wheat, and I raise corn. How's that going to work?" And the fishermen overall, I think, for a long time had trouble with this, if for no other reason than fisherman at the basis is such an independent process. It's independent. Okay, there's the ocean. Here's my little goddamn boat. There's plural animal life in the ocean. What's the market? What are my capabilities? What do I see? What hunting instinct do I have within me? What risk can I take, do I not take? In what

framework do I place my life? Start the fucking engine, and away we go. There's something wonderful about that, but there's also something that makes it very, very hard to start harnessing these bastards up together [laughter] without them tearing each other up. But the more the problem has become generalized, I think, more people have begun to see themselves in the same tub, and that's maybe where we are now. I don't know.

JW: How has that context changed since you began fishing?

GS: The context of what option a young fisherman has, you mean?

JW: Yes.

GS: You have to be a little careful about what I see because I may not be on the cutting edge of the young flivvers coming up altogether, although I still see them a lot. I think most of them are modeled now – come up as deckhands on heavy-laden draggers or heavy-laden in which the daily nut is an unsustainable daily nut, but that's where they want to go. I don't see many here anyhow – I haven't been down east much to Jonesport or Beals Island or any of that. To see them start off where the kids started off when I first landed here, and the fishermen started off for years, and that is in a modest-sized boat with the ability to do plural fishing and with low overhead and to learn the trade and not have the gump to move ahead and do the big, big goddamn stuff – going to land the big stuff, you know? There may be a movement – I would be happy to know that there's a movement among young kids now that knows how to wind that back into maybe smaller and more moderate fisheries, but I haven't seen it yet. I would certainly vote in favor of it if that were the case. I think a de facto movement may have to happen because the reality is that they hit a wall – that you simply can't get up to that point. Meanwhile, of course, even though the price of lobster isn't all that – and I would probably get a lot of lobstermen on my neck here – I have a lot of friends as lobstermen, but I wouldn't want my sister to marry one. [laughter] Good friends of mine – in fact, Arnie (Gamage?) and I talk all the time, and he's been active in the fishermen's unions and stuff. The lobstermen – although the price of lobster and the marketing of lobstering is, of course, in kind of a crisis now, but even so, they still get new \$35,000 trucks every year. It's different than having to go periwinkling or clamming or something. But even clammers are making eighty bucks a bushel, ninety bucks a bushel.

JW: What was the periwinkle fishery like?

GS: Oh, well, periwinkle – there wasn't any. [laughter] You're talking about the story. There was a summer – there was the West Coast trip coming up, and we hadn't caught fish in a long time, and we were poor, and we needed to get a different car. I knew to at least get 1,500 bucks or 2,000 bucks to get a car enough to survive with the two kids and us – four of us traveling to the West Coast for five weeks. So, I said, "Screw it, what about periwinkles?" Periwinkling had been – with recent context had been what rummies do. You get ten pounds of periwinkles and get enough for a quart of rum, and then to hell with it for the weekend. That was the concept of periwinkling. Although Henry said when he was a kid, he remembered vessels coming up from Provincetown and going ashore in Little Harbor, which is right down the Damariscotta River, and they'd land there for a week, and there'd be crews of them out periwinkling. They'd fill

barrels of periwinkles, and off they'd go. Buddy (House?) was running Junior Ferrin's wharf at the time, running a fish market and stuff. I talked to Buddy. I said, "Well, can you get rid of periwinkle?" And he said, "Well, yeah, you can. You can ship them in on the [inaudible] truck, go down – yeah, ship them down to Fulton Market. Yeah, Gladden, we'll get them. Get you some crocus bags." So I set to, and I said, "Okay, okay." Kate was nine then, maybe. And I had a twelve-and-a-half-foot skiff, Charlie's skiff – kind of straight, not much shear to it, nine-horse engine on it – and started poking around. I was curious about periwinkles as I was interested in landing them. What is their cycle? How do they feed? Where do they feed? Henry kind of got interested in it, too. He said, "Well, I remember as a kid" – when he was a kid – "that they would use a crocus bag, kind of like a [inaudible] net, and drop it down, and the periwinkles would come on it." I was trying to figure out why that made sense. Well, of course, what made sense was that there's algae that would form on the crocus bag, and then they would crawl into the thing. I set out trying to make some periwinkle traps, like a modified thing of a small – [inaudible] those goddamn things out. But it finally dawned on me that you just had to go get them – just go get them. So I started looking around, and I devised some equipment – some still up on the barn wall there, ready to go. Twenty cents a pound could land them. I started looking, and I went up to Darling Center, and they didn't have much on periwinkles except the fact that periwinkles ain't indigenous here. They came on the bottom of vessels that came here. Good, thanks a lot. But I began to notice that they were predominantly on the southwest shores of points of land and Irish moss heavy. Watch for. Of course, the stain of rocks – if they had they kind of reddish-stained rocks. Be alert. If you see a lot of them up above the high-water mark – from low- to high-water mark there, begin to look offshore, because in maybe five feet, six feet, ten feet below low-water mark, there are now and then some graveyards of periwinkles, and that's where the big bastards go, down there. Okay, well, I had the equipment for that, and that's what I was going to go after. That's when I went down, and I created some screening things. I've got them out behind my writing shed – some screening things so I could screen out the bad shells and the little ones and all that with a long extension and then bring up about fifteen pounds at a time with that net and pour through it. The first time I landed on them was downriver on the west side of Inner Heron Island. Kate and I came up – she was with me, she went with me – Kate and I came up, and we had 505 pounds of periwinkles, which blew the socks off the entire peninsula. [laughter] Everybody gathered – got very, very quiet, just like I had farted in front of the pope or something. It was very interesting. That's kind of interesting to do because it became another form of hunting – going for it and finding them and what to do and how they do things.

SS: How much time did it take you to get that 500-plus pounds?

GS: Well, one tide. You have to do it on a tide to get the hell out of there.

JW: Had they not seen five hundred pounds of periwinkles before?

GS: No, probably not even in the aggregate. Periwinkles were what silly summer people did when they wanted to do a little pot of something. They really stunk when they cooked it. But anyhow, we started shipping them off. I started shipping them off, and I would store them, and we would ship them out. I did, what, twelve thousand pounds in six weeks? Bought a car, went

to the West Coast. It's that kind of possibility on the coast, of course, that's part of the heritage of what I'm talking about. I probably mentioned to you before *Dead River Rough Cut*.

SS: Oh, yeah. Great movie.

GS: Yeah. Well, that gets towards what I'm talking about – some of what I'm talking about. It's worth seeing. Anybody who wants to archive stuff, they better know that sort of thing. What else have we got here?

JW: Could you talk about the women whom you mentioned before who would bake pies with the Russian trawlers offshore?

GS: Well, yeah. There was a period – and I can't tell you offhand what years these were, either, but I think they were in the late '70s, maybe – when a Russian processing – this is about the time that I tried to talk people into maybe making connections with the Russian factory boat that was off to processing fish because if America didn't want mackerel, I'm sure the Russians do something with it. Anyway, this big six-hundred-foot processor was off Round Pond. You could see it right across – from Johns Bay, you could see down off the point, and there the damn thing was down there. I think it was the second year that they were there that there became to be a connection between some of the families on board and some of the families in Round Pond, and the families got to know each other. They would bake pies and send them off, or they would go and play volleyball together. It was a kind of rapprochement that was an important thing happening that was just an end run around all the Khrushchev crap and everything else. It was wonderful. I always thought that something big should have been made of it, a documentary should have been made of that or something. I never did it. I never went over to Round Pond and interviewed people that were involved with that. But it hit the news a number of times – the local paper. Sunday, Amos and Alfred went over there, and they got aboard there – you know? And I thought, hey, that's pretty nifty going on, and *Time* magazine or *The Nation* or something – *Harper's* or something, or *The New Yorker* to do – I mean, if I were free like I am now, I would probably try to sell an article for *The New Yorker* on it.

JW: Who had reached out first?

GS: Interesting question. I don't know. I think probably it would have to be the Round Pond because I don't know how you would reach out from an offshore – I don't know how you would do that. I would bet that it was the Round Pond that made the connection. Of course, when you talk about history, where we come from, the early Viking – the signs of Viking life here and all that has not been totally settled either. Out in Damariscove, what are those etchings on the rocks? Where did they come from? Harvard's still looking at it, as far as I know. Another thing in terms of the history which affects the coast here are the shell heaps. Damariscotta has the biggest shell heap depository in the world, and they're all up and down here. Ford Island right here at the neck of Damariscove, that's over there also. A friend of mine – one Sunday afternoon, we took the skiff up there, went up there, and started digging around just because I knew there was a small shell heap right there on Ford Island. (Colin Roy?) is his name from up in Hallowell. He lived in Hallowell. We were digging around, and we found a couple of pieces of stone that looked like maybe a utensil – something. I was hoping we'd find some arrowheads or

some damn thing. Colin said, well, I'll take it up to the history museum in Augusta. Didn't think any more about it. A week later, he called me up and said, "Are you sitting down?" I said, "Yeah, what?" He said, "You know that stone we took up? Five thousand years old."

SS: Really?

GS: Yeah. I knew nothing about the red paints. I've been thinking about three hundred years of American Indians, not the whole big framework of which these midden heaps and stuff – four billion cubic feet in Damariscotta alone. For years, they excavated that and made roads in Massachusetts with these things. And some guy from Peabody – not musician – museum had the sense enough to come. And on the grading line, he would take artifacts out before they got loaded in, and there were seventy-odd barrels of them down at the Peabody Museum. They haven't even gone through all those yet. When you talk about long arcs and looking at the preservation, the preservation of understanding the human context is as important as the preservation of whatever else we have with us. It's the absence of all of that together that is a concern of mine. They all resonate together. Know what you come from, know what's around you, and know what to preserve. Even the words conservative and liberal, as [George] Orwell knew would happen and has happened before, are both bastardized. These are not fighting terms at all. Conservative: preserving that which has abiding value. Liberal: living free among other free people. Those are not in conflict. It's when we bastardize them [inaudible]. Now what? You don't want to talk about the time I dug up a grave? Let's not talk about that.

JW: Tell me about the time that you dug up a grave. [laughter]

GS: No, let's not do that. [laughter]

SS: Maybe another time.

GS: Maybe another time. No, read it.

JW: Well, perhaps we could end with you talking about some of your experiences at sea in bad weather and when tragedy has ensued.

GS: Yeah. A couple of years ago, the local historic society – South Bristol Historic Society – asked me to come talk about some of the same stuff – the fishing and the cross-connections and stuff. Tracy Kidder was there. Tracy summers right here through the woods from me. You're looking at the wall as if you can –

SS: I thought you might have been pointing at one of his books on the shelf.

GS: No, that's Sarah Bernhardt. His real name is Sarah Bernhardt. [laughter] A lot of fishermen were there with a hell of a lot of summer people there. The place loaded up. What it told me is that there's a hunger now for just looking at context – you know, the telling of stories. Old (Jackie Frye?) was there, and I hadn't seen him in years. He came, and he brought me pictures of stuff that went way, way back because he wanted me to have them – of down on the wharf and stuff. And a lot of summer people. I sense a bewilderment now among a lot of the summer

people. They don't know how to engage with the roots and the history of the place. They don't know what that is. They feel an isolation from their communities from where they come. They land here, and there's not a sense of community now functioning like it used to function. So they don't know.

SS: Do you think there are summer people who genuinely do want to know about it?

GS: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I came away more hopeful after that meeting because that's what I got from them. They've read my stuff, and they know the hit – I take on summer people on here, which you got to be careful about because the writer of the book is a summer person. So, you got to be careful about that. Anyhow, in the course of that, we got talking about risk, and risk is a way of life and part of the community. And Tracy asked me afterward – Tracy took me uptown, and we had a drink and supper together a couple of weeks later, and he was curious about it – “How many people do you know who've gone down?” I had never stopped to count them, and when I did, they were in the low thirties. Not all I knew personally. For instance, the worst sea that I ever saw was 1969, maybe. I was shrimping. We were making a lot of money shrimping – a lot of shrimp – so we were pushing it, going on the risk edge, which you wouldn't otherwise. But just going day after day after day. Cold as hell – it was the end of January – and there were only three boats of us. Albert Thorpe in the (*Brant?*) was out. We were out there with the *Alice M.* And (*Hannah?*) came from New Harbor. There was only three boats on the whole coast that was out. And the sea was making up a big, long fetch to the sea, the biggest sea I ever saw – just like a pipe organ. It wasn't a choppy, slow fetch, knock you around. It was this enormous fucking thing. We were down off the Hellhole, which is a couple – three, four miles south-southwest of the ledge at Pemaquid Point, down in that area, and the sea making up. It got worse and worse through the day, and we were hauling back, and finally, we all knew – we were all in touch with each other, and we knew that we were in some trouble. So we determined who was going to haul back first because you're very vulnerable when you haul back, and the others haul a turn – when the other person got the gear back up, you're ass to the sea, stern to the sea, when you're hauling back, so you're vulnerable then. Meanwhile, I was looking over, and the *Brant's* mast was going out of sight. That was a forty-two-foot mast – down and under. Frankie Lester said, “Glad, take a look at the lighthouse.” I looked at the lighthouse – this was in high water. I looked at the lighthouse about a mile and a half away, and water was breaking and going over the top of the lighthouse at Pemaquid Point, and the wind was picking up that foam and carrying it across the parking lot into the woods. Now, if you've been to Pemaquid Point, you can see how much of a headfuck that was. I mean, we knew we were in trouble. The sea was just enormously coming up. As we were hauling back, we stood by with axes to cut the cable in case we started going stern under. *Brant* got up, we got up, (*Hannah?*) got up. We were all clear of each other. We were going to run – *Brant* and us were going to run to Boothbay Harbor, *Hannah* was going to run to New Harbor. *Brant* went offshore to get away from and then come in ass to the sea into Boothbay Harbor, and Henry said we were going to go in around Crow Island and take a cut down to the Thread of Life and sneak in that way. We got to Crow Island, and the water was breaking clear over Crow Island and all the way to the shore. We couldn't get in under that – I mean, the Thread of Life – so we had to hightail out of there. We finally got to Boothbay. Albert got to Boothbay okay. We got to Boothbay okay. *Hannah* was never heard from. He and that crew went down. The following day, this monster of a sea – just gray overhead, low overhead. And the entirety of the coast – I'll never forget it. I need to write

something about this somewhere just to pass it on. The entirety of the coast from [inaudible] to people in Port Clyde to Portland, they were just kind of randomly slowly crisscrossing the coast, looking for remnants of this boat and the two guys on board going down. In my kitchen – the cupboards in my kitchen right here – that kitchen was built by (Schroeder?) – a kid (Schroeder?) that I knew, played basketball with. He was a summer person who turned into being a year-round person here – Pete (Schroeder?). Third generation, and he wanted to be a fisherman. He built those cabinets, and he stayed through one winter and went swordfishing out of Portland, and they were down along the Carolinas, and the boat went down. He was asleep, and the boat went down stern-first, and he was lost. One of the crew members told me a vision of him, which I have not said to my own kids because I didn't want to leave that imprint. But as they went down, there was Pete in the porthole looking at him as the thing went down. My kitchen – and I know the parents and all that. Arnie (Gamage?) – his brother was coming back from East Boothbay one night with booze and fell overboard with another guy. They floated and floated and floated and finally drowned – went down. There's a lot of them, you know? So it's nothing to fuck around with. People that want to do sport – we were down at Christmas Cove setting on fish – I don't know if it was the same time we caught that great amount of fish. But in the edge of the dark, in comes maybe a twenty-six-footer with a guy and his wife and two kids, maybe eight- and ten-year-old kids coming in. You could see that he didn't know what he was sailing or doing much. I knew something was fishy, and I ended up talking with him. He had sailed up from Boston on a Mobil road map with his family. And I blew up. I just fucking blew up – out there playing King of the Sea with two kids? Anyhow, there ain't much romance in it. You aren't brought to it for romance. Or you don't stay for it, anyhow. Yeah.

SS: Yeah, the ocean's not there to be forgiving to you.

GS: That's right. It's not a sentimental place to be. It's beautiful as hell. There's nothing like it. I remember periodically, we would need to haul up the mackerel traps. We do that on Sunday morning when there's no market – haul them up, take them up. We always hated that. Put them in the dory, salt them down, brine them down. One morning, it was just a beautiful morning. No wind, water like glass. We were going down Johns Bay. We went out that way and took them. Then we went over to Pemaquid and hauled that, then came across the Thumbcap. We were coming back into Johns Bay, just poking along, and the still air and the golden sun out, and Paul Ferrin and Dave Ferrin and I and Junior Ferrin at the helm – we were sitting there, not saying anything to each other, and we were coming – I thought I brought a map out here. How's this make good recording?

SS: [laughter] How's your arm, Josh? You want a little break?

JW: It's okay.

GS: Oh, we can't see it here because it's the next one over. Anyhow, we were coming up along in Johns Bay – coming up along. We were near Crow Island, heading to Birch Island, and there's a ledge up there. It's kind of like canoeing on a calm mountain and – whoosh – a great white that nobody had ever seen here before. A great white with a seal – a full-grown seal in its mouth. And halved the damn thing in slow motion. Of course, this broiling of blood and shit and stuff on the Lord's day. [laughter] It came up one more time. Nobody said anything. Junior

just cut the engine, and we just sat there for a long fucking time. That'll stay with you. There it is. One time, we came into the mackerel trap, and we started drawing the damn thing up – a crew of four of us – we started drawing up to get closer and closer to the opposite cork edge, bring the bottom of the hairnet up, and let it drop down behind you so you are crowding the fish. You can get an idea of whether you've got ten thousand pounds or twenty thousand pounds, or if you've got eighty thousand pounds, you're grunting like hell to get in motion. And there was this boom down in there, and I thought, oh, shit! It was about a five-hundred-pound tuna fish that had come in – boom! I said, "Junior, what do you want to do with this sucker?" He said, "Well, let's keep drawing her up, Glad. Let's keep drawing her up." So Junior didn't know what the hell to do. He didn't have a gun aboard. I knew that. What the hell are you going to do with a five-hundred-pound tuna with nets? So we got it greased off, and this damn tuna, a third of him was out of the water, and this big old eye looking at us just like that. Junior said, "Well, maybe I ought to tie it – take a hitch around his tail." So, he did. I said, "What are you going to do with that, Junior?" He said, "Well, tie it to a cleat on the dory." I said, "Okay." Of course, the tuna fish had finally had it, and he just went like that and tore the whole side of the dory out – went nose-first through the net and the whole goddamn thing. Junior said, "Well, I guess we lost him." [laughter] The mackerel fishing was interesting because it was the kind of thing that attracted people to go with us. It was like a two-hour, two-hour-and-a-half trip twice a day. It was a wonderful ride. You go down the Thumbcap, and you watch [inaudible], and you come up. So, families would like to come with us, and some of them got to the point of thinking – presumed thinking that people would come in – that this again was an offering of the local constabulary to service people. I remember a woman came in one time on board, and she said, "Mr. Ferrin, you'd get more people here if you had benches here, you know?" [laughter] Well, sometimes we'd get into trouble. One time, it was one of the rare occasions that they had a stiff southwest wind and fog, which can happen in the heat of the summertime. It was August. We went downriver, and the fog was coming in. And it was pretty stiff, so it was choppy to go across – probably a twenty-five-knot wind to go across from [inaudible] Point over to Pemaquid Point. Fog closing in on us – we hauled to Thumbcap. There was a man and his wife and about a seventeen- or eighteen-year-old daughter aboard. Okay. We were pulling two dories and heading through the Thread of Life and started going across to Pemaquid Point. Closed totally in, taking the sea on our quarter. Sun in the sky, but it was really fog-driven. And the engine cut out – had run out of gas. There we were, with the southwest blowing us towards Pemaquid Point or into open water. I went down forward because we normally keep an anchor down forward, and we'd use that on a set. Junior sat down and said, "No gas down there?" "No, Junior." "No anchor?" "No." He looks around, and he looks at these people, and he says, "Well, I guess this is it." [laughter] All three of them just went to their knees at the tail end of the sun going out of the sky. Couldn't see a goddamn thing. We had no anchor, no nothing out there. Dave, who was Junior's brother, is six months older than I, and Paul was six months younger than I – another brother. Dave, who's a real smart fisherman, and he and I eyeballed each other and said we got one of the dories, and he got a watch or clock. I don't know whether it was mine. I don't think I had one. But we had a watch and a clock and took a compass with us and he had me sit on the compass and call time. Because he was a lobsterman, and he knew where we were – where we headed off the Mackerel Shoals and where we were. There was a section of about less than a quarter-mile gap in the Thread of Life that he was going to row that dory in through to get in back and try to steal some gas off of the wharf in behind Beaver Island. So, I was watching this and keeping him on course with the thing, and he was rowing the dory – rowing a seventeen-

foot dory. And the dory's steep-sided enough so that if you got a good southwest wind, you got a drift going. We got in through the Thread of Life, got down at the lower part of the island, landed, found five gallons of gas on the wharf, and got back in. Dave – we got to the crack in the Thread of Life, and he said, “Okay, how long have we been?” I told him with the watch. And he told me what to call out to, and he said, “Okay, well, the tide's going, and we probably had drifted six amount of [inaudible]. Keep me on this target.” It was getting dark as hell by now, and I had a flashlight on the compass. By and by, we heard kitchenware being banged. They didn't have a horn, but they had kitchenware that they could bang. So, Junior was popping with a ball-peen hammer on it. We heard them and went to them and landed there with the gas and got the thing started. Okay. Now, the summer people were not going to die, and they began to understand that. We figured out where the hell we were. Meanwhile, Junior said, “Well, we ought to have a party.” [laughter] Paul said, “Well, I got some traps over here on the east shore.” So, we can haul some traps. We put a dozen shorts and started a fire down forward and cooked lobsters, and we had lobster coming in home. By the time we got home, they had gone around the horn of human life.

SS: Death and despair to [inaudible] party.

GS: Well, I guess this is it. And down they went and grabbed me right around my knees and said, “Oh, Lord.” I have a brother-in-law – ex-brother-in-law now – who is a minister from Battle Creek, Michigan. Good guy. He's not a fundamentalist, not a pain-in-the-ass Christian at all. But he and my sister, (Jean?), landed her with her kids, and he loved to go fishing. He would go with us every morning and every night. Junior, who never liked ministers, would go with the Parodi, would taunt him a little bit, and he knew Carl, my brother-in-law. Carl would taunt him in good [inaudible]. We got down – we hadn't been catching any fish, and we got down and hauled the Pemaquid trap. There was no fish there – some [inaudible] pollock, but nothing there. And we just sat there for a long time. Junior, with his Parodi again, said, “Well, Carl, now, the Lord prayed for fish, right?” Carl said, “Yes, it's in the Bible. Yes, he did. Peter ...”. “Well, if you prayed, could God make us have some fish here?” Carl said, “I guess. I reckon he could.” “Well, would he?” Carl said, “Well, he could, but he wouldn't.” And Junior took a Parodi out, and he said, “Well, what the fuck's wrong with him?” [laughter] It's that milieu in which Gene Tunney felt at home, and a lot of other people have felt at home. They cut the crap. And it's the people who you turn to when you're up against it. It was not by chance that when (Drummy?) Ferrin blew his brains out with a shotgun that Howard (Plummer?) and I were the ones asked to come and clean it up, because we fished with him. My son's best friend was (Drummy's?) son, (Drummy?), Jr. So that's part of it, too. It's not a postcard; it's people that have real lives. That's the name of that tune.

SS: People who have real lives.

JW: Well, Gladden, thank you very much for talking with us today. It's been a real pleasure.

GS: Well, tomorrow we'll meet at the home and garden center, and we'll talk about bouquets.

SS: We look forward to it.

JW: I don't know if that topic is quite as compelling, but we'll take it under consideration.
Thank you very much.

SS: You will certainly make it compelling, I know.

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

Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/20/2023