**Narrator:** Eva Cushman

**Interviewers:** Joshua Wrigley and Scott Sell

**Location:** Port Clyde, Maine

**Date of Interview:** September 4, 2013

**Project Name:** Maine Coast Oral History Initiative

**Project Description:** Through the support of the Maine Humanities Council and the Island Institute, the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association was able to collect hours of oral histories from fishermen throughout Maine.

**Principal Investigator:** Joshua Wrigley

**Affiliation:** Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, The Island Institute, Maine Humanities Council

**Transcript Team:** Fantastic Transcripts

**Abstract:** The oral history interview with Eva Cushman, conducted on September 4, 2013, is part of the Maine Coast Oral History Initiative. At eighty-eight years old, Cushman reflects on her life in Port Clyde, Maine, during the mid-20th century. Born in Camden in 1924, she moved to Thomaston and later to Port Clyde in 1946. The interview covers Cushman's experiences working in a sardine cannery and her husband's diverse fishing career, including lobstering, clamming, and seining. Cushman details her childhood in Thomaston, her father's grocery business, and her family's historical ties to the region. She describes her varied roles in the sardine factory, from cutting fish to packing cans, and highlights the seasonal nature of the work. Cushman recounts her husband's fishing endeavors, including his time seining on the *Marie H* and the challenges faced in the fishing industry over the years. The interview also explores the local community's changes, noting the decline in the fishing industry and the shift towards tourism and real estate. Cushman reflects on raising her children in Port Clyde, the strong sense of community, and the activities that occupied their time before the advent of modern entertainment.

Joshua 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 September 4, 2013. This is Joshua Wrigley, and today I am in Port Clyde at the house of Eva Cushman, eighty-eight years old. The subject of our interview is her recollections of Port Clyde in the mid-20th century, her work in the sardine cannery, and her husband's fishing career. [recording paused]

Eva Cushman: In 1924, I was born in Camden and moved to Thomaston with my parents after the delivery, and then went to school at Thomaston schools and met my husband while I was living in Thomaston. He worked on the mailboat *Nereid* that went from Thomaston to Monhegan to Boothbay Harbor and back, return trip the same day. We were married in 1941 and had a daughter, Arlene, and then we had four children in five years. Then, afterward, we had three more. So, I had seven children to take care of. In later years, when we moved in Port Clyde in 1946, I helped out. He was a lobsterman, a fisherman, clam digger – anything to make ends meet, and then I helped out. When he wasn't working, I worked in the sardine factory. I worked in all parts of the factory. I cut fish. I put the cans in cartons for shipment. I worked there quite a few years because my children was grown up more then, and they was taking care of themselves. So then I went to work steady, seasonal work. My husband went seining on a boat, the *Marie H*, with Levi Hupper. They fished out of Monhegan, wherever the fish were. They even went as far as Gloucester fishing. Got the herring for packing.

JW: That far south?

ECH: I didn't hear what you said. Can you block that out?

JW: Just to go back a little bit, Eva, what was it like growing up in Camden?

EC: I didn't grow up in Camden. I grew up in Thomaston. I went to school there. I went to schools in Thomaston, the grammar school and the high school. Then, I moved to Port Clyde in 1946. My father was a grocer. My mother was a homemaker. I had two brothers and a sister.

JW: Were your parents from Thomaston originally?

EC: My father was from Thomaston originally. He had the grocery store. He used to run the mail way back [in the] horse and wagon days for Port Clyde and Friendship. So, we go way back. In fact, my mother's family, the Richards, were the first settlers in Camden. My father's was the Spears family – goes way back. Oh, I can't tell you how many children there was in some of the family. The sea captains came from Ireland and [inaudible] and around. [inaudible] Then, when I moved down here because I had the children to take care of. Then, when they went to school, I would work in the factory. I also worked in the Port Clyde General Store. I worked

for Ralph Simmons when he owned it. I would go down in the morning. He'd take off. I'd be there all day during the winter alone, close it at night.

JW: What years were this?

EC: 1959. In 1963, I stopped working for him because I had – that was my last baby. It was a boy in 1963. Then, I went to work for a shrimp plant. I've done all kinds of work on the shore. I've even baited bait bags and knit bait bags.

JW: For the lobstermen?

EC: Yes, and knot the lobster pot heads. I have done that to pick up extra money.

Scott Sell: Would you just do that work at home? Or would you be –?

EC: The bait bags and lobster heads for the traps – this was wooden traps. I would do these at home. I had a box with a hook on it, and I'd sit with my feet in the box and the ball of twine, and I'd sit there and knit.

JW: How long did it take to knit a lobster pot head?

EC: The big ones? It probably takes about fifteen minutes. The small ones less – a lot less twine. But I could knit a ball in a day, working right at it – ball on nylon. So, I mean, I helped.

JW: Would you sell them afterward?

EC: Yes, I did them for a trap maker in Friendship over there. I can't think of his name right today. So, a senior moment. I can't think of his name. It'll probably come to me later. But that's all right.

JW: When you were living in Thomaston, how did you meet your husband?

EC: Oh, now, we go way, way back. This is when he worked on the mailboat. He'd come up to play pool at the pool parlor across from the store [that] my father owned. We lived upstairs over the store, so I was in and out of the store and up and down, and I'd see him. We got talking to one another and then just figured out we were for each other, I guess.

SS: Was the store and the pool parlor right on Main Street in Thomaston?

EC: Yes, it was. Yeah. The post office is along there now, right in that area on that corner, the store was, and the pool hall was across the street. So, that's how we met. He worked on the mail boat. The war took the *Nereid*, so they went to civil service out of Portland on those boats, three days on, three days off. It came down to – he had his papers to go – picture taken and certification, everything to go to England to carry boats over there. But before that, they used to go to – out in Lake Michigan and get the boats that they made and deliver them down to Mississippi for the war. I can't remember what they called those boats, but they took them down the waterways and down the canal.

JW: Would they sail up through the St. Lawrence?

EC: No, they came down through the Erie Canal and down that way and down through the inland waterway to Mississippi. Then, they [were] certified to go, had all the papers and went through the process to deliver boats to England during the war. I said, "Listen, you got a small family." I says, "You don't have to do that." That's when we moved to Port Clyde, down here. He went clamming one summer. He and his brother bought a lobster boat together. They [lobstered]. They went purse seining. They went dragging. It was when they were dragging with Levi Hupper on the *Marie H* he was a captain. The boat was built here in Port Clyde. They would come in some days – I remember one day they went out, made one tow, had ten thousand pounds of haddock. They couldn't begin to take care of them. They came in and hired people to help them get the haddock ready for market. And now, today, my grandson had one haddock in one trip. I don't believe he's getting any at all now.

JW: How long ago was that tow?

EC: Let's see. I was living upstairs over [inaudible] probably thirty, forty years. Probably forty years ago, close to it.

JW: Was such a thing uncommon back then?

EC: They just happen to hit a good tow, but they always did well groundfishing in the spring. There was one day, they went out and got pollock and loaded the boat with pollock, and come in. Then they had to gill all those pollack before they went to market. It was a twenty-four-hour job when you're a fisherman. You always got repairs.

JW: What does it take to gill a pollock?

EC: A knife. [laughter] Cut them out, the gills, their breathing apparatus.

JW: Is that standard procedure for pollock?

EC: That's what they said. They wouldn't take them unless they were gilled. Then I said to him – I said, "Why don't you get a boat yourself." That's when they really – I'm backtracking here, too – got a boat. They bought the (*Rip Tail?)* – my brother-in-law and husband. They partnered together. They was out lobstering one day. They took my father and the Baptist minister from Thomaston out lobstering with them. They had a little stove aboard. They cooked up some lobster and was eating lobster. Somebody said, "Where's old (Silly?) Ledge?" Just about that time, they hit it. They weren't paying attention where they were. They sunk it and hit the ledge. My father's still sitting on the stern, eating lobsters. He didn't want to go overboard, and the minister said, "Swim." My brother-in-law, "I can't swim, Shan. I can't swim." Next thing they know, (Shannon?) says, "Kick your feet and make your hands go." Next thing you know, the boots and all – with his boots on – he went way past him. There happened to be a boat nearby that picked him up. They said he never went so slow coming in as they did because they was all cold; this was October or early November. They come in. He'd come in. He said, "We sunk the boat." They did, but they got it up off the ledge and repaired it. His father repaired it. So, they still lobstered. They went back.

JW: How long did it take them to raise the boat afterward?

EC: That same day, they went back out, and somebody helped them get it off. It was [inaudible] work.

JW: How long had they had the boat before they sunk it on that ledge?

EC: Oh, probably two or three years. But they weren't paying attention. You could do that when you're eating like that.

JW: You mentioned Levi Hupper a little while ago. Who was he?

EC: He was the captain of the *Marie H*. He was a local fisherman here. He had the boat built. In fact, he and his – I think it probably was a relative somehow – cousin or aunt or uncle – in that family that had built the (*Fannie H?)*, so they was sister boats. The *Marie H* and the (*Fannie H*?) were sister boats. They were both built down here on the shore.

JW: And they were lobster vessels?

EC: No, they were dragging and purse seining. The (*Fannie H*?) stop seined at the Drift Inn Beach over here. But Levi rigged up and went purse seining, where you'd take a boat with you, another smaller motor boat with you, to haul in your net, circle your net, set your net, and like that. But they fished Monhegan waters, Matinicus – they even went as far as – well, they went

as far as Mt. Desert when they was ground-fishing. Then Gloucester, they'd go as far as Gloucester and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, when they was after herring in the fall, the big herring that the factories used to use to cut.

JW: So, when they were fishing near shore, in this area around Port Clyde, were they fishing for herring?

EC: Anything that swam. [laughter] Mackerel if it was mackerel season, or if it was herring season. We'd sometimes get it out here, and they wouldn't be getting it at the [inaudible]; they came with the Gulfstream, sort of seasonal, back and forth.

JW: When they would go down to Gloucester to sell their catch, how long would they be away for?

EC: As long as there was fish. Sometimes, they'd be gone a week, and then they'd come home, but they'd take the fish out right there. There was always a place where they could go and shower and stuff like that up there. Sometimes, if they wasn't fishing, we'd ride up for a day and come back, or go up and stay overnight and visit them up there. They was always in – sometimes, we'd go on the boat with them.

JW: All the way down to Gloucester?

EC: No, Portland. We'd go out of Portland. We'd go whiting fishing. I used to go with them when they done night fishing. They'd done night fishing for herring down around Monhegan. When they was going down around Monhegan, I'd sometimes make a trip out with them that night. They'd stamp on the bow of the boat and all that phosphorescence and the fish – the water, you could see. One night, we went out – the most beautiful Northern lights we could see. So, we had a lot of memories.

JW: Was this around 1946 when you moved to Port Clyde?

EC: Soon after. Early '50s. Soon after. I don't remember dates directly.

JW: Was it customary to fish for herring at night?

EC: The big herring, yes, usually. You could see the phosphorescence and things like that. Mackerel is mostly day fishing. You'd see them schooling on the water. Sometimes herring you'd get during the day, but mostly at night. They'd go out, set for the big ones. So, that was fun. Then, he bought his own boat and went lobstering, more or less. That's the way we made a living after that.

SS: Would he also crew on groundfish boats with other guys as well?

EC: He did once on [inaudible] boat out of Rockland, but that was in the wintertime. It never did much. The captain was ugly; if something went wrong, he'd take off his hat and jump up and down on deck and stamp on it. My husband says, "I don't have to put up with that." So, we found other things to do. But that only lasted for a little bit. But he also worked at O'Hara's before we moved down here, fish-cutting when the bigger boats came in.

JW: I meant to ask you before what was your husband's name and where was he from.

EC: Shannon. He was Shannon.

JW: Shannon Cushman?

EC: And Port Clyde. Shannon Cushman from Port Clyde. He had a family of five brothers and a sister. They were all fishermen. The sister wasn't, but she married a clamdigger from Bremen. [laughter] Her first husband was a cripple, and he whittled lobster pegs.

SS: For the claws?

EC: Yeah, for the claws. No, they was all fishermen. One of them went on a big boat out of O'Hara's.

JW: Was Shannon working as a lobsterman as he was also working for O'Hara as a fish cutter?

EC: No, no. That's just before we moved down here.

SS: What was it like raising your family in Port Clyde? What was it like at the time for them to grow up here?

EC: Yeah. When my kids was younger, there wasn't the things around there is today. There wasn't TV. They would go out, and you'd see them playing games, hopscotch, jump rope. When the snow come, they'd shovel off the pond. They'd go skating. They would be sliding down any hill. Even we went sliding with them. It was like that. No TV. Today, you don't see kids on the street. They don't go down and shovel the pond so they can skate. Once in a while, you see them sliding down the hill back of the post office – very seldom.

SS: How many families were there in Port Clyde back then?

EC: The school bus would be full. Today, it goes by here empty. Very few children in Port Clyde itself.

JW: Would your kids go to the school in St. George?

EC: Yes. Two of them, I think, ended up going to Thomaston – Georges Valley. They went down here and graduated down here in Tenants Harbor.

JW: How far away is that?

EC: Thomaston. Fifteen miles. Bussed them in. Bussed them in. But Tenants Harbor, they'd be on the bus for – there was a school – three of my children started school here in Port Clyde. There was a school here in Port Clyde. Three of them started here. Then they tore that one down and went to Tenant's Harbor. They were bussed most of their school years.

JW: Did the Port Clyde school close down because of the diminishment of the student population?

EC: I think so. Run down, too. It was a very old school. No plumbing. It was an old school. It needed a rejuvenation, I guess, so they tore it down and moved them to Tenant's Harbor.

SS: Where was it in town? The school? Was it right on the main –?

EC: It was right here on the – right down street where the four corners intersection. It was on one of the corners there, across from Monhegan parking lot, just up the ways right here in town. It was on there. There's a house there now. Oh, dear.

JW: When your husband was working for O'Hara as a fish cutter, what did that entail?

EC: It was mostly redfish that they cut. Of course, the skeletons would go for bait, and they'd process the filets to sell. They'd go deep freeze from there. I don't know really the whole process.

JW: Was redfish popular to eat back then?

EC: I never ate it. [laughter] People from away don't know what fresh fish is. I don't buy fish in the market. Never had to. But way back when they were dragging down here – fishing – a lot of grown-ups come. "Can I get a fish? Can I get a fish? Can I get a fish?" I'd like to see the pile of fish that they have taken away from the boats. There would have been a lot.

JW: So, in that era, you had a lot of local residents who would come directly to the wharf to buy their fish?

EC: They didn't buy them.

SS: They just asked for it for free?

EC: Yes, they didn't buy them.

SS: And the fishermen would just give it to them?

EC: Way back then because they wasn't – they had bigger catches then and lower prices, but they never got the prices that they're getting today [for] the fish. But they had more of them – the volume. They got more volume.

JW: Was there a species that they'd prefer to give away over others?

EC: They most always wanted hake and haddock. Very few flounder takers – flat fish. It was mostly hake and haddock that they would be after.

JW: Why not flounder?

EC: I don't know. It's good fish. Sweet. The spawning flounder are good, too. My daughter and my husband used to fight over them. They'd see which one could get them first. So, there you have it. I didn't get any haddock spawn this year either because Randy always saved them, and the Johnson boys saved them for me. But we didn't get any this year.

JW: Randy is your son, right?

EC: Grandson. He has the *Ella Christine*.

JW: Right down in the harbor here?

EC: Yeah. I think he came in yesterday or last night, so he'd been out again another trip. But it's going some – when you can take what fish you catch on two and three-day trips to Portland in your pick-up truck, you didn't get very many. I don't know how much longer he can make it.

SS: Yeah, he told us a couple of weeks ago that it's starting to not make much sense to drive all that way with gasoline –

EC: No, it isn't. It isn't. He went to boat building school down in Calais, too, but nobody wants wooden boats. His father, which was my son, learned boat building from Harold Gower down in Jonesport-Beals Island.

JW: Was Beals Island a well-known place [for] boat building?

EC: Yes. Everybody named Beals down there built boats. Yeah. But Harold Gower was the one that – I think I read in the paper here not long ago where somebody still had a Harold Gower boat and was redoing it.

JW: What was so distinctive about his vessels?

EC: I don't know. The scale. The model. I believe that's what it was and the scale of it. I don't know. Lee finished off a lot of boats. My son finished off a lot of boats right over here in the Marshall Point Road in his boat shop. Randy has worked on boats over there, too – skiffs.

JW: Did your husband Shannon build boats, as well?

EC: No, no. He'd build the lobster trap. He wasn't handy that way. Didn't have to be when he had a son that would do it for him. He put a new house canopy on my husband's last boat. He had the (*Rip Tail*?). Then there was a boat I don't remember the name of. It was a World War II boat. Then he had the [inaudible] and the *Moby Dick*. My son put a new canopy on the *Moby Dick* for him. The *Moby Dick* is still fishing, and it's a wooden boat, but they fiberglassed it. It was a Friendship-built boat.

JW: Did your husband build all of his lobster traps on a regular basis?

EC: When they were wooden, yes, he built them. Then he would buy the wire ones. The wire ones only come out a couple or three years before he passed away. But he would buy them and then head them.

JW: What year did he pass away?

EC: 1989. In September.

JW: So, the wire ones are a relatively recent invention.

EC: He would knit his funnel hoops – not knit his funnel hoop. In the wintertime, he'd get the spruce boughs, bring them in, heat them in the oven and sit there, bend them, tie them, and make

his own funnel hoops. We've done everything like that way back then. Now they make it easy for you.

SS: You can just pick them up at Brooks Trap Mill.

JW: What part of the lobster trap is the funnel hoop?

EC: That's what you're putting – the heads that the lobsters goes through.

JW: So, that leads to the main chamber? From the parlor to the [inaudible]?

EC: Yeah. From the – [laughter] boy, you know.

JW: I worked on a couple of boats.

EC: You have?

JW: What part of the trap was the lobster pot head that you used to knit?

EC: They was too small. One on each side. Then it went into the bedroom. The big head went into the bedroom. That's when they couldn't get out.

JW: So, that's the interior chamber that finally traps them.

EC: Yes. But he only fished the wire traps. He never took sternmen with him like they do now.

SS: He was just by himself.

EC: He fished by himself. He fished so many traps inside at what he could haul himself in a day and so many of what they call over across the channel, so many. So, he had two strings out. He never fished more than six hundred traps.

JW: He would pull all those himself.

EC: Done all himself, yep. We didn't have a sternman to bother with or keep running off or not show up.

SS: Pay.

EC: Yeah, a percentage. But he didn't fish [inaudible]. But when the wire traps come out, everybody bombarded the – what could they fish? Some of them fished fifteen hundred, two thousand traps. But you couldn't tend them.

SS: Right. Long double traps that you need a sternman for.

EC: Yeah. Now, they've regulated – the regulations, I think, go down to – went down so many traps for one year or two years and then down some more. I think [it's] eight hundred traps, isn't it, for a person? They're still taking sternmen with them and making a living.

JW: In what year did Shannon switch from purse seining herring to lobstering?

EC: Sixty years ago. Sixty years ago. Then he went stop seining and went lobstering.

JW: So, he stopped stop seining?

EC: Yeah, he did. Levi moved away. He took his boat and moved to – well, he went through a divorce and moved over to Bremen, Round Pond, over that way – New Harbor and fished out of there. But things were slowing down somewhat then. He didn't go seining as much and dragging. He was older, too.

JW: During the herring years when he was seining, did a lot of those fish then go to the cannery at Port Clyde?

EC: The big fish did, yes. They'd take them out down – put them on a carrier down here – would come in. The big herring. We used to cut them. That would be more or less fall and winter and salt them. Then they'd be salted in barrels. That would be a winter job for some of the ladies. We'd go down there and have to split open those salt fish and pull the bones out. It was hard on your hands, the salt – and you'd always get burned. Not burned – stuck with the bones and things.

JW: Were those herring then used for bait by the lobsterman?

EC: No, they pickled them. They made pickled herring. They soaked them out and pickled them. They used to pickle fresh herring, too. But I can't remember what brand they did under. In fact, they did a lot of the big herring in Rockport. They used to be down where Andre is; there used to be a factory down there that would do some of the herring, too. In fact, Doug Anderson that just passed away down here –

JW: I heard about that.

EC: He used to be the manager up there in that one up there. Yeah. And his wife used to pack the herring down here, too, the sardines. She was fast.

JW: Once you would pack the herring here in Port Clyde, it would then go to Rockport?

EC: Sometimes, they'd be shipped out, yes. So, it was – I don't know – a lot of – they was handled a lot. They went from here to there. You catch them, went aboard the boat, they get unloaded, and they'd go on the runs. I never know where they all went. Some go in the cans. Some would go for bait. Sometimes, the fish wouldn't hold up in the tanks. They'd soften up. You never know. Some of them would go out for bait.

JW: So, when did you start working in the cannery?

EC: That's a good question. We moved down here in the summertime. So, probably '47 or '48.

JW: How many people were employed at that time?

EC: Oh, a hundred and fifty or more. There was big employment down there. They had buses come in from Waldoboro, Spruce Head, and around. There was a lot of factories.

SS: They would pick people up in Spruce Head and Waldoboro and take them down here?

EC: Yeah, that wanted to work down here. And St. George, upper St. George. There was a bus come down from Warren full and Waldoboro, Friendship. They would come down here and pack. They had a good crew. About a hundred and fifty people. Because you had them unloading on the dock, salting, putting on the run. You had the packers. You had the picker-uppers, the sealing room, the taking away, the taking down the (re-tots?) in the bins, and then you had the pickers down underneath [in] the bottom of the factory putting them in the cases to go to market in the warehouse. There's a lot of handling.

JW: So, in that supply chain, who would receive the herring first when they would reach the facility?

EC: They'd unload them, put them in tanks. Then they had a run. It was a long run – tables on each side of it. Two runs they had. They'd keep putting the fish on the – I worked first with cooked fish. Sometimes, they cooked them, and all we had to do was snip the heads off. Then, I worked with raw fish. Then, I started doing raw. But then they was in there, and then there was a conveyor belt that kept all the cans. You'd have to reach up and get your cans on the table. Then you had racks, where you'd pack, and you'd put in the racks. It was a long process.

SS: What was your job with the raw fish? What were you doing with them?

EC: Cutting with scissors. Cutting and putting them in the cans. They was most always five and six to a can. Very seldom eight because they were bigger fish.

JW: And would those fish usually be pickled then?

EC: No, oil. Oil, mustard, or ketchup, they would do them.

JW: So, I've heard you refer a couple of times to a big herring. How big was a big herring?

EC: How do I want to say –? Bigger than a sardine. [laughter] I think the sardines were probably about a six-inch fish. A big herring would probably be ten, twelve, like that. So, cut them. They had to find something. That's why they pickled them and done that. Too big for cans.

JW: So, when you talk about a sardine, are you talking about the sardine as a smaller herring or as another species altogether?

EC: Yeah, it's the same species, only the sardine isn't grown up.

SS: Baby herring.

EC: Yeah, baby herring. [laughter] Yeah, baby herring. I don't know. After I was fishing like that, I worked for the store. I worked down there. He bought lobsters. They had some fishermen there at the store that sold the lobsters. Then I stayed home for a while. Then I went back to work on shrimp down at the shrimp plant. They had that down at the end of the road. We did raw shrimp and sometimes just the tails. I worked there for shrimp season. Then I stayed home again. Then I went back to work in the store again for another owner. So, I've been all through everything down here, I guess.

JW: I hear that Port Clyde had a really large year-round community back then.

EC: Way back, they used to have a KP [Knights of Pythias] hall down here. They used to have dances down here at the KP hall. They used to have roller skating at the KP hall. Then, everybody went different ways.

JW: Was that during the 1950s?

EC: I'll say when my husband was small, he used to go roller-skating at the KP Hall, and that's where he got appendicitis up there.

JW: Did he fall?

EC: About 1919 – no. So, he was probably ten, twelve when he had appendicitis like that. So, that was way back. There used to be things going on. We used to make ice cream a lot – nights. There was a group of us. There was my brother-in-law and his wife, and our friends, our neighbors. We used to play Flinch. We used to get out and do things. Then [inaudible] and his wife bought Hupper Island. It was when I was working in the store. I used to have to – they didn't have telephones or anything. They built a lot of cottages on Hupper Island. People would want to come weekends. They'd call – hang up the onion bag, so I'd hang up the onion bag down on the corner of the store, and they'd see it from the island. Then, he'd come over and pick up people when they'd come like that. I was more or less in between – he'd come for a telephone message if I had messages that they wasn't coming, like that, back and forth.

JW: How far away is Hupper Island?

EC: Stone's throw. Just across the harbor.

JW: Oh, so not far.

EC: Yeah, it's right here across the harbor. We used to go out – my husband and I used to go over there nights and play cribbage, stay until 10:00, 10:30, and come home.

SS: You had friends who lived out there.

EC: Yeah, we was friends way back then, and we'd go over there and play cribbage. Of all the games we played over – over a thousand – that we kept run of, there was only one twenty-eight hand, never a twenty-nine.

JW: You're making me wish I were more familiar with cribbage.

EC: It's fun.

SS: It's a good game.

EC: It is. It is a good game.

SS: Good winter game.

EC: Yes, it is.

SS: Play for a couple of hours.

EC: That's what we did. We came back from that one night, and then we had that bad northeaster. I can't remember what year that was. Probably you could if you – I don't take a lot to refresh my memory. But way back then.

JW: So when you moved here in 1946, how many grocery stores were there in Port Clyde?

EC: There was four. Three. There was a big general store. There was another one right on 131. Then there was one where the Monhegan parking lot is now. I can't remember what the Huppers – that was Hupper's store. Then Ralph Simmons owned the other two. Then, Hap Wilson started a gas tanks – what do you call it? Not a general store. Store when the other stores are closed.

SS: Like an A&P?

EC: Like gas stations have where you can come in, get a loaf of bread or something if you –

SS: Like a quickie mart.

JW: A variety store.

EC: Yeah. Variety store. A little like that. I have a lot of senior moments.

JW: You're entitled. [laughter]

EC: [laughter] I do. Especially when it comes to names, but it always seems as though the post office used to be down where the ice cream store is now. That moved up across from where I used to live. In fact, they built one of my husband's boats in what was the post office – the [inaudible] was built in that building. They sold it, and the post office was there. We had a postmaster that lived here to be in her nineties. She was one of the oldest postmasters and the longest postmasters in Maine, anyway. She passed away two years ago. We had a lot of ninety-year people in Port Clyde. In fact, Doug Anderson was ninety-six. His wife is ninety-four. He just passed away this past Saturday. His wife and son was at the Advent Church on Sunday, and they sang a song together, a hymn together.

JW: You said Doug Anderson worked up in Rockport.

EC: Rockport. And he'd been a fisherman, too, a lobsterman. In fact, my son built his boat, his lobster boat, and I can't remember what he named it, either. Probably the *Verena* because that was his wife's name. They built that down back the Advent Church in a building down there. I don't know. I think you've interviewed Randy, haven't you?

SS: Sure.

JW: Yeah, we spoke to him a couple of weeks ago.

EC: Got me in this mess.

SS: Yeah, you can blame him.

EC: [laughter] I can blame him and Melanie, right?

SS: Totally.

JW: When. You moved here in the mid-'40s. Was the fleet mostly composed of purse seiners or draggers back then?

EC: (Bertie?) Simmons was here then, and he had a dragger. I cannot remember either name of it. Randy didn't remember it either. (Bertie?) Simmons had two purse seiners. I can't remember the names of them. But there was Levi and Forest Davis that was a stop-seiner. There's a difference between the two. Then, there was – we had draggers come in from – let's see. Levi done some dragging. Then there was Ernie Kavanaugh, and I can't remember the name of his boat. He used to come in. He came in to do shrimp. A lot of them the – the (*Fannie H*?) was Forest Davis, but he would stop seine summers. He'd fish spring fishing and dragging. He'd go. I can't remember because they was from out of town that would come in and sell down here. I don't remember all the names of the boats. There was some Grovers from – I can sometimes remember the Grovers. They come in, and another family from Clark Island. They used to tie their boats down here and sell fish at the cold storage. But I don't remember the names – the boats.

JW: So, did most of the vessels in the harbor here sell their catches right at Port Clyde?

EC: Yes, at cold storage. Of course, the seiners would have carriers that carried theirs off. Port Clyde packing, the sardine factory, had two carriers. I can't think of either name of them now.

JW: And the carriers were big transport vessels, right?

EC: Yes, they're the ones that took the fish from one place to the other, to the factories for packing. If they shut off fish out here – herring out here – these carriers would load them up in the ocean and bring them into the wharf to be unloaded, or they'd take them to another factory if they wanted them, if they couldn't use them down here. Or sometimes we'd have other carriers bringing them down here, too.

JW: Did the carriers mostly stay local, or did they also go down to Gloucester as well?

EC: They would get down to Gloucester, too. Yes. The *Delca* was one of the carriers, and I can't remember the name of the other one. I want to say it was the *Nereid,* but I don't know if they turned that into a carrier or not. There was two of them. Oh, dear. Memories.

JW: You said that the *Nereid* was also the name of your husband's mailboat, too, right?

EC: Well, it was a mailboat. They took that for World War II.

JW: How did they repurpose it?

EC: Bought it back. Then, the *Nereid* – they had another one that they carried the mail with. I can't remember the name of that. But they put the American flag on it when they had to use it here. That was right on the bough of the *Nereid.* That ended up as a carrier and a seiner, too. They reworked it after the war. Captain [inaudible] didn't have anything to do with it again. So, it was up for auction, maybe. They auctioned some of the boats off that they didn't use and got it that way.

JW: So during its lifetime, the *Nereid* served as a mailboat, a troop transport, a purse seiner, and a carrier.

EC: I believe it did. Yeah.

SS: Busy boat.

EC: Yeah, it was. It was a good seaworthy boat, too. I used to go with him a lot on the mailboat.

SS: Just for the trip, or would you help out?

EC: Just for the trip. No, I didn't have to help work. That was just for the ride.

JW: How long was the route usually?

EC: Well, you'd leave Thomaston at seven o'clock in the morning. You'd go from here, where they stopped in Port Clyde. It stopped at Monhegan. It stopped at Boothbay, and it stopped at Monhegan on the way back, about five a night. It was a long day. But you was on the water. It took passengers also – passenger boat, too.

JW: Was this shortly after you met Shannon?

EC: Yes. Oh, gosh. Oh, dear. I'm trying to think where he went from there. He did try the cement plant, but he got burned – the lime burned him so bad he couldn't stay there. And O'Haras. Then fishing, clamming – you name it, he's done it. [laughter] Summers, I used to take my children – we was renting from the (Balanos?) down here in Port Clyde. They had quite a few rentals. My mother had a cottage in Hathorne Point, near the Olson House in Cushing. I used to take four of my children and go over there and stay summers. Lug my own water and kerosene lamps and do my handwashing. My husband would come up the river in the boat. But you wouldn't see kids do that now – take a family and go out, I'll say, live in the wild because nothing was – you lugged your water. You heated your water over a stove and cooked by candlelight. My children helped [inaudible]. We helped bring in the potatoes. Helped him in his gardens. They've had a good growing up and getting out. We knew Andy Wyeth. Now our town is full of artists.

JW: Was that Andrew Wyeth?

EC: Yes.

SS: He lived in Cushing.

EC: No, he lived in Port Clyde. But Betsy was in Cushing, down on Bird Point, which was adjacent to Hathorne Point. I used to know them before they were married. He'd be dating Betsy. Of course, we'd see him over there, and then they'd come summers like that. I've known him for a long time. Knew Betsy and Andy and all that people way back then. Now, Port Clyde is the Wyeths – Andrew's father and Andy as a young boy – started painting. Then Bill Thon across the street. Now, our town is full of artists.

SS: On Monhegan especially.

EC: On Monhegan, yes. It's all people from away now.

SS: You've seen that change gradually, more summer visitors?

EC: They're the ones that have bought up all the property. Retirees. Now, where that's going when they're gone? Passed on. But the real estate got so high you couldn't afford to buy more real estate, which would have been a good asset. It's a thorn in my side. I guess I won't say anymore. I don't dare to.

JW: What did the fishing industry when you first moved to Port Clyde mean for the community?

EC: It was employment for the factory. It was something the men did. There was always a market for fresh fish. The lobsters were always shipped out. It was our living. It was our bread and butter. When I worked at the store, I worked for – he was out of college, and he was running the store. It was bought by a corporation. I'll call it a corporation. He was the manager down there. He had one of the natives come in one night after he'd hauled all day and got some milk. I don't know if he got bread, too, but he had a five-dollar bill. The manager of the store changed his five-dollar bill for a penny. I said to Bruce – after that, I said, "You know what? He comes in here every day. He's a native. He puts the butter on your bread. Why did you change that five-dollar bill for a penny?" And he got so mad at me he stomped off upstairs. He never come back down. I closed the store at six o'clock that night.

SS: What did he have against the man?

EC: I don't know why. Why would he change a five-dollar bill for a penny that he was short? He had the money for his milk and bread, but he needed one more penny. He changed that. A five-dollar bill for a penny. I said, "He puts the butter on your bread because he's in here every day. He doesn't go up – he isn't going uptown and spending all his money."

JW: And drinking and whatever?

EC: Yeah. But he didn't like it because I said that. What can you say? How do you take people –? The manager was from away.

JW: Got you.

EC: The manager was from away. I used to have people come in the store because they wouldn't take – not credit cards. They wouldn't take – what do you call it?

JW: Checks?

EC: Checks. I'll call it checks. It was when you travel – traveler's checks. They wouldn't take traveler's checks at the mailboat. They'd come in. They wouldn't even buy a candy bar.

They'd want us to cash their traveler's checks for the store. Because they said they wouldn't take them at the mailboat. I have seen Zero Mostel in the store.

JW: When did Zero Mostel come in the store?

EC: Way back when I was working for Ralph Simmons to get supplies to take on Monhegan. I didn't see them, but the Kennedys used to come in the harbor, and they played touch football on the lawn up on top of the hill across from what's now the ice cream store. Playing touch football. I was working in the factory that day, but my kids all saw them. I can't remember all the names they saw, but they were there.

JW: Was Zero Mostel just here on vacation?

EC: He used to own a place on Monhegan.

JW: Really?

EC: Yes, I believe he did.

JW: Anyway, he went out there pretty often.

EC: Yes. Summers. I think he spent summers out there. He either rented or owned, but he was a summer person out there when he was working. Used to see all kids – a lot of people. I used to have a little building out back. When we bought this property, there was a little small – I'll call it a – camp out back. People used to live in it, and they used to pay three dollars a month's rent. Frank [inaudible] originally owned the general store. In fact, he owned a lot of boats that brought supplies in. Everything used to come by crates. Several of the houses are built by packing crates.

JW: The houses around here?

EC: Yeah, several. Several houses. I've had people ask me where was [inaudible] drug store. Well, that was in Tenants Harbor. They'd tear something out, and they'd come across the board. [telephone rings] My phone is on. [recording paused]

JW: You're not recording, are you?

SS: I am. I have a question if you want me to pick up –? Did you have something you wanted to ask?

JW: Please, ask your question. I was also thinking of maybe trying to just get a little bit more of your youth and growing up in Thomaston and whether or not your father was still using a horse and buggy at that time.

EC: Not when they were married. He owned the grocery store. He used to own the stable. He delivered the mail to Friendship and Port Clyde before they – the horse and buggy – before they paved the roads, the muddy roads in Tenants Harbor – they'd call it the [inaudible] flats. They'd always get stuck. He had the grocery store, and credit put him out of business way back then. The Depression, like that.

JW: Was that in 1929?

EC: Yes. So, he went to work in the shipyards and cement plant. In fact, that's where he retired from, the cement plant. Then they moved to Cushing. My mother's parents had bought a retirement home in Cushing. So, they went down there summers. It wasn't winterized. My parents would stay with my sister, one of my brothers, and me. That's how they spent the winter around. It made it good because they would be babysitters when they were at my house. And it was good for the kids to know the grandparents. We used to have our gardens over there. My husband and I – he'd fish all week. We'd go over there Sundays and work in our vegetable garden. We had two – a great, big – all your vegetables, and then we had a great big potato patch. We got forty bushels of potato out of that one yield. So, we sold some to pay for our seeds. It fed us all winter. And I'd done a lot of canning, too.

JW: The garden was in Cushing?

EC: Yes, South Cushing.

JW: Is that just to the northwest of here?

EC: Well, what we used to do was, I'd say, go up the river and down the river. We'd go fifteen miles to Thomaston and ten miles down to Cushing. It was about that way. We always either took lunch or had dinner with my mother over there, or we'd pick blueberries. There was blueberries over there. We'd can. We picked raspberries over there. We did that to supplement our food in the winter. I used to have to do a lot of canning. Dug a lot of dandelion greens and candles. We'd light those. Always worked. There was always something on the table. Always food. My kids never went hungry. I'm thankful for that when you see television – so many people that are hungry. So, we did all of that. I had a lot of friends, but my schoolmates, my school class – I think there was thirty-some-odd in my school class. I think there's only a handful left. It would take me a while to find all of my – well, students that I went to school with.

JW: In Thomaston?

EC: And to find out how many are still living. I don't think there's more than ten of us that's in that class [inaudible] all passed away. I'd figure I've led a good life. Had a good family. I've had good – well, good daughters-in-law and a good daughter-in-law, and good son-in-laws. Always have. Got along good. Good families. Good grandkids. None of my kids went to college, but they've all had good jobs.

SS: They've stayed busy anyway. [inaudible]

EC: Yes, they made money. They've all had good jobs. Quick learners.

SS: Yeah, this sort of segues into my question. I was just interested in how you have seen your family – your sons and daughters – I'm thinking especially of Randy and Gerry and Dennis – how you've seen the fishing change around here through their eyes?

EC: Of course, I feel bad for Randy because he tries so hard. He tried lobstering. He didn't make a go of it. When my husband died – before he died, he sold Randy the *Moby Dick* and the traps. Randy tried lobstering. Nothing went right for Randy. It was a year that there was not lobsters. Nobody was catching lobsters. Well, he didn't make a go of it. So, we sold the boat to another grandson. The traps went. Randy is a ground fisherman. There's no way getting around it. He just doesn't want to go lobstering. He could have gone sternman with anybody and made a percentage. Or he could have had a boat and tried harder. But it just wasn't for him. Dennis and Gerry and Michael – their heart and soul's in lobstering. They go bad weather. I don't like to know they're out in some of the weather they go in. But it's their living. And their families – they've all got families to look after. Gerry, I guess, is the one that does the most talking. [laughter] Gerry likes cameras. He likes microphones.

SS: Yes, he does. I know that much about him.

EC: Yeah, you do.

SS: Yeah. I've talked to him a few times.

EC: They've all had good lives, good families. Good families. We're close. We get together. Try to get together once a year. Have reunions and one thing and another. It's good. Gerry will call me up – "Gram, you ready for lobsters?"

SS: Bring them over for supper?

EC: Yeah, he does. Yes, he does. Michael, I think he's done well with one arm that he lost – a snowmobiling accident. It didn't stop him from getting his boat finished off, his new boat, and lobstering. He makes a go with it, but he's a hard worker. His boy is working hard. All my other grandsons [are] working hard. All of my kids have good jobs. Good jobs [inaudible]. My oldest daughter has worked in the hospital. She's in housekeeping. But she's worked there – going on her thirty-seventh year.

SS: At Pen Bay?

EC: Yes. She had open surgery when she was eighteen. She had a hole between the walls of her heart and hooked up – they had to transpose the arteries from one side to the other and patch the hole. She recently had a catheterization – several times. She's doing all right. But they can still see the patch when they do her things. So, he held up – plastic patch. Miracles. All of my kids are near, except one lives in Georgia [inaudible] all of my girls. Because I lost both my boys, one to cancer and one to suicide, which wasn't good, at nineteen. Pricilla – her husband was the manager of a sardine plant down here. Then he went to Rockland – managed up there. Then, they wanted him to go to Jamaica. So, she was down to Jamaica for two years, down there, in a sardine plant. Lived down there. She doesn't want to go back to Kingston. They bought a restaurant, and she managed that until she retired now. They've all done well for themselves.

SS: Well, that's good.

JW: Eva, thank you very much for talking with us today.

EC: I don't know what you can get out of it.

JW: Lending your story –

EC: We've gone from one thing to another.

SS: No, that's the way it usually goes.

EC: I should have had an outline.

SS No. I think it's best to be freeform.

EC: You can switch it around. That's the modern –

SS: The power of editing.

JW: Thank you very much.

EC: Yeah.

SS: Yeah, thank you.

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

Transcribed by Fantastic Transcripts 10/16/2023
Reviewed by Molly Graham 10/17/2023