

Assessing Vulnerability and Resilience in Maine Fishing Communities

Benjamin Crocker Oral History

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Length of Interview: 00:55:25

Interviewer: SR – Sara Randall

Transcriber: NCC

Sara Randall: It's going. So, to start with we need to get your background information. So, could you state your full name, birthdate, and place of birth and current address?

Benjamin Crocker: Benjamin F. Crocker. I was born in Machiasport in May 1945.

SR: Your current address?

BC: 35 Smalls Point Road, Machiasport.

SR: It's precise.

BC: Actually, Machiasport that is Bucks Harbor. But that's just a district of Machiasport.

SR: What year did you first start commercially fishing for any species?

BC: Well, I probably started in clamming when I was about 8. I started lobster fishing when I was 11. So, that would be what, [19]53 when I started clamming, [19]54, something like that. [19]56 when I started lobstering. I might not be quite correct on my figures. [laughter] But I do know when I was born. I know I started when I was eleven. Say, eight or nine when I started clamming.

SR: So, I'm going to ask you in a second about your history as a fisherman. But I also want to ask about your family and your family history. So, I was wondering where your family originally came from?

BC: They lived right in the area of Machiasport. My mother came from Palermo. She was in Machiasport too. My mother and father lived in Whiting for a while, but then they moved Machiasport. So, right in the area.

SR: Is Whiting –

BC: That's just down.

SR: Is it on the coast as well?

BC: Oh, yes. Well, let's see. Yes. See, Machiasport over on the other side of the river, that's the East Side of Machiasport. In between, you've got East Machias when you go up around. But the line goes across, and then it goes down so far. Then there's Whiting, and then there's Cutler.

SR: I haven't been up there yet.

BC: So, it's right on the coast, yes.

SR: Do you know what generation American you are?

BC: What do you mean? German or Italian or whatever?

SR: Yes, exactly.

BC: It's English, I think. Yes, England.

SR: Do you have any idea when your family came over?

BC: They've been over here a long while. I don't know for sure. But I think they first arrived in Massachusetts, and then they probably came down here on a boat.

SR: How, if at all, was your family involved in fisheries?

BC: None.

SR: None. You're the first one?

BC: Yes.

SR: So, do you have a wife?

BC: Yes.

SR: Does she come from a fishing family?

BC: No.

SR: No. Do you have brothers and sisters that are fishing?

BC: No.

SR: No. What do they do? Are they in this area?

BC: My one brother, he was killed in Boston in the fire. He worked in restaurants. The other brother was a school teacher. He lives in New York. He's retired.

SR: Do your family members contribute to your fishing business at all? Like, work as crew? Well, your son worked as a contractor.

BC: Well, yes, he took and worked with me. Well, he stayed on the boat. He was born in November. The next probably July or August, he was on the boat because his mother used to go with me some. She didn't work. Well, she did. She banded the lobsters. But she didn't fill the bait bags or anything. But she'd go with me in the summer when I was fishing up inside. So, he's been on the boat ever since he was less than a year old [laughter].

SR: Yes, he was saying 5 or 6, but yes.

BC: No, he was on the boat when he was – well, what would that be? November until July, eight, nine months old.

SR: Wow. Do you have any other children?

BC: One daughter.

SR: One daughter. Did you have her on the boat too or helping out?

BC: No. She used to go once in a while with me, but she just went. She didn't do anything.

SR: So, does your wife help keep your books?

BC: Yes.

SR: Does she help you sell or market your lobsters?

BC: No. She does the paint and the buoys.

SR: Paint and buoys.

BC: [laughter] She paints the buoys and does the bookkeeping.

SR: So, your children are now – let's talk to Benny, how old?

BC: Well, he's, what, let's see, 42, I think he said.

SR: Yes, that sounds about right.

BC: My daughter's 47, I believe.

SR: So, she's not currently involved in fishing?

BC: No.

SR: Do you have any grandchildren?

BC: Yes.

SR: Yes. Are they involved in fishing?

BC: One of them is starting. I set his vessel. I set his traps. I said I think his father took him out to haul yesterday. He has had traps in the harbor a couple of different times. But now he's probably going to fish until he gets out of school anyway. Because his father didn't have quite as much interest in helping him out. So, now, I'm getting older. So, they can see that he has everything to go with just in a small way.

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

BC: No. Well, the exception of your lobster licenses is limited entry. If he starts now and I guess, so the –

SR: The apprenticeship?

BC: Yes. The junior thing or whatever it is, he'll be able to get his license when he gets out of school. If he gets it and he gets a job, I recommend he keeps the license up because in this day and age you don't know. You can be working and have a fine job. Next week, they can tell you, "We're laying you off." Well, if he has his license, it's something he can do. But as far as to go out full time, no, I wouldn't recommend it. But it's one of them things that, in my opinion, it's a good thing to have the license. Because when I started, I could buy any license I wanted to. I only actually had to have about three, and I could do anything I wanted to. Because clam license covered three or four different things, and a commercial fishing license covered what the clam license and the lobster license didn't. So, three licenses were about it.

SR: So, when you were growing up, do you remember any stories you would hear about what groundfishing was like in this area?

BC: Not a lot because I really didn't pay much attention to that because I was lobster fishing. There was plenty of fish around. I do know that. I did hear one fellow tell about right just about a mile down below the harbor here. A guy came in there, and he had probably a 35-foot boat. Made a tow, and they couldn't get it aboard the boat. They towed the whole net into Jonesport and grounded the net out. Went down on a little horn and picked the fish out. When I was a kid, 12, 15, we could go just down here to Libby Island. That's just about a mile down below here. We could catch all codfish and haddock you wanted on a handline. But I don't know if you could even catch one now.

SR: What year did you first start fishing commercially for groundfish?

BC: Let's see. Probably it was [19]65, give or take a year or two.

SR: So, that would make you 20?

BC: No.

SR: You said you were born in [19]45?

BC: No. I'll take that back. Well, probably about [19]70 because I was about 25, right in that.

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

BC: No, it was my own.

SR: How difficult was it to get into the groundfishing industry at that time?

BC: Not very [laughter]. You just went. Of course, I didn't know nothing about it, and I didn't catch many fish. But it was something I wanted to do. By the time I learned anything about it, the fish were gone.

SR: So, how did you first learn to fish? Because you didn't come from a fishing family.

BC: Trial and error [laughter].

SR: Trial and error. So, what port did you fish out of?

BC: Most of the time Bucks Harbor. But I have fished out of Southwest Harbor quite a lot. I've been up there quahogging. I've been up there scalloping. I've been up there fish dragging. I've been up there shrimping. So, about probably five years. I might as well say I've lived up there as much as I did here aboard the boat.

SR: So, the first boat that you got that you used for groundfishing, how old were you when you got that boat?

BC: Well, I'd had it probably a couple years.

SR: So, you got it when you were 23?

BC: Somewhere around there, yes.

SR: What kind of boat was it?

BC: A 36-foot fiberglass boat.

SR: Do you know the gross tons?

BC: Well, it was measured under 5 tons.

SR: Because it was a Novi boat?

BC: No, it was an American boat. But it still wasn't documented.

SR: Do you know the horsepower?

BC: 135 horsepower Ford [laughter].

SR: Then what gear types did you use on this boat?

BC: Otter trawls.

SR: Trawls.

BC: Groundfish trawl. It wasn't a beam trawl, so it was an otter trawl.

SR: An otter?

BC: Otter trawl, yes. That's the one that's got the doors that spreads the net.

SR: How many other ground fishing boats did you use over your career?

BC: Two.

SR: Two. Besides the first one?

BC: Yes. I had a number of boats.

SR: How many boats did you have total for all your fisheries?

BC: Probably close to twenty.

SR: Really?

BC: I used to change them just about like you change your underwear when I was young [laughter]. Couple of years and I'd get another one. Then I'd get another one. Then I'd get another one. Sometimes I had two.

SR: Really?

BC: Yes.

SR: What prompted the changing the boats all the time?

BC: I don't know [laughter]. I don't know if it was too smart. I'd been better off if I'd – I'd get one that I didn't like. So, then I'd get another one. Then I didn't like that one. I'd get another one. Or I had one that was too small, and I wanted the bigger one.

SR: So, what was the biggest boat you had for groundfishing?

BC: Well, I had one that was 45 feet. But I had one that was 40 that probably was bigger because it was a lot wider. So, those were the two that I used. They were both Novi boats. But they never were rigged for lobstering when I had them. They were just rigged for draggers.

SR: So, the first boat that you got for groundfishing was 35 feet?

BC: That was just a lobster boat just rigged up for dragging and scalloping.

SR: You used that boat for how many years?

BC: Well, I don't know when Benny, Jr. got it. I probably had that one seven years. But I also had another one at the same time. Before I didn't have it all the time, but then I went and bought the big one.

SR: So, you were operating two boats at the same time?

BC: More or less, yes.

SR: Would you hire a crew for the other boat?

BC: I did have, yes. So, I might have had that one even ten years because I had three or four different ones running.

SR: At one time.

BC: Yes. Then I had the other Novi boat that I had rigs just for dragging.

SR: So, when you first started fishing for groundfish, what species would you target over the year?

BC: Well, I only went just in the spring. So, it was mostly flatfish. But anything that was sellable that came up in the net. But it was mostly flatfish that we were after.

SR: How important was fishing to your overall income?

BC: Well, not –

SR: How much for commercial fishing in general to your overall income?

BC: You mean lobstering and everything and scalloping?

SR: Yes, everything.

SR: It was 99.5. That's all I've ever done. I might have maybe 3 percent over my lifetime that I didn't make. Clamming, I count that as fishing in a way. So, one way or the other, that's all I ever did.

SR: How important to your overall income was groundfish fishing?

BC: Not very.

SR: Not as.



BC: Not a lot, no. I've done it a lot because I like to do it. So, my main thing was lobstering and scalloping. Then I went quahogging for about ten years. Well, for about fifteen years, I gave up lobstering and went dragging all together. But it was mainly scallops and quahogs. I groundfished a little bit in between just when there wasn't nothing else to do more or less.

SR: When you first started groundfishing, you said you went groundfishing during the spring?

BC: Yes.

SR: What's the spring?

BC: Usually April, May, and June, parts of them. It might not have been the whole of April, but it'd be back and forth. Those three months were the best for inshore fishing. The first of it, like I said, I didn't know anything. If I had, I would have made some money because there were some fish. If you don't go with somebody that's done it and been on a boat, it's not something easy to learn.

SR: Right. I bet.

BC: You've got to learn the bottom and whatnot. We mended the net the first trip as much as we did anything else.

SR: Would you mend the net yourself?

BC: After a while, I got so as I could. Yes. Now, well the last two winters, we've had nets in here all winter, shrimp nets. Mending the net is the same thing. Now I can do almost anything and Benny, Jr. can.

SR: So, you didn't really try to target one, or you tried to target the flatfish?

BC: Well, yes, that would be the most that you – yes.

SR: How long were your trips?

BC: Just day trips.

SR: Day trips. So, what time would the day trips start? What time of day?

BC: Well, we used to leave at 2:30 a.m. and get in at 10:00 p.m. Because we'd be setting out at daylight, and it'd take a couple of hours to steam the way you were going. It was totally dark. So, you'd be a couple hours steaming in or about two hours and a half.

SR: How many trips per year when you first started groundfishing was typical?

BC: I would have no idea [laughter].

SR: It would vary a lot.

BC: Yes, it would.

SR: Especially because you were undergoing the learning curve.

BC: The mending curve [laughter].

SR: Yes. So, how many crew members did you have?

BC: One.

SR: Just one, the whole –

BC: All I ever had was one with me when we went.

SR: Where did you go fishing for groundfish?

BC: Well, when I first started, I tried it out here. Like I said, this was not a good place. There were fish out there, but the bottom wasn't good. Not knowing anything about the bottom, it was quite costly. Then finally, I went to Jonesport and fished up off the Tippmann End. The bottom was a lot more forgiving up there.

SR: Where was it again?

BC: Up off of Tippmann End, I fished out of Jonesport. Then the last three or four years, the different times that I went, I fished out of Southwest Harbor.

SR: Did you change it to Southwest Harbor just because you were changing overall your operations to Southwest Harbor? Or were you just thinking it was a better place to catch fish?

BC: Yes, it was. Well, there was no chance down here actually to sell the fish, or not that much. Then over in Jonesport, the guy I sold to, he left there. But that wasn't really the answer. Southwest Harbor, I could go east or west up there.

SR: To land your fish or purchase some?

BC: Well, no, to fish, to get to the fishing grounds. I fish some down to the west side of Southwest Harbor and some to the east of it. But here, you've got a long steam to get anywhere. Then you can't even get down to where I was fishing at the west, down off Mount Desert Rock, unless you want steam all night.

SR: So, how far offshore would you typically go when you first started groundfishing?

BC: Well, the first year, it was just outside the 3-mile line to 4 or 5 miles. We just fished outside the line here because you can't tow inside the 3. Well, I guess, what is it? Schoodic, I

think is where now I guess you can't tow anywhere inside the 3-mile line. But it was about 3 to 5 miles out here. Then when we went down there. It was 20 to 25 miles after I got the bigger boats.

SR: Offshore?

BC: Yes.

SR: How far up or down the coast would you go from here when you first started groundfishing?

BC: Well, it was just outside to the line out here. So, it was right handy. Then Jonesport, it was just outside up there. But then when I went to Southwest Harbor, then it'd be aways. I had gone down off of Portland a trip or two.

SR: Oh, you did?

BC: Yes.

SR: So, you would fish out of there, or you steamed down there?

BC: Well, we steamed down there, yes.

SR: When you first started groundfish fishing, what condition do you think the stocks were in at that time?

BC: Well, I think they were pretty good then. It was over a period of say, what? When did I say I started in? Around the seventies, wasn't it?

SR: Yes, you said –

BC: Somewhere around the seventies.

SR: Yes. You said 1970 is when you were 25.

BC: Yes, it would be in the seventies. Then the last time I went, I made a couple of trips alone from here down to outside the Tippmann End. That was probably [19]99, somewhere around there. There was nothing. Then you had to go way off. I didn't even bother with it anymore. [19]92, that probably was one. There were a few fish. But after that, I would say they were on their way out.

SR: So, when you first started fishing, what was the mix of fish that you would typically get in your net?

BC: Well, you would get blackbacks, dabs, gray sole, haddock, cod, monkfish, few catfish, wolffish, I guess the monks they'd call them. No, that's catfish they call wolffish. I would get

the monkfish, yes.

SR: That would stay pretty consistent within your first couple of years fishing?

BC: Yes, they were.

SR: What were the prices when you first started fishing for those flatfish?

BC: Somewhere between 20 and 35 cents, I believe. I believe that's what they were.

SR: How much for the pollock and the haddock and the cod?

BC: I can't remember. But there wasn't a lot more because fish was cheap back then. Then they went up after the scaffold. I would say anybody that knew what they were doing back there, was catching fish, they went with the bigger boat and everything.

SR: How much would your first boat hold for fish?

BC: About more than I could catch [laughter].

SR: Oh, really?

BC: It'd probably hold five thousand. That's all I'd wanted to put into it. Probably it would have held more.

SR: Would you store the fish on deck, or did you have a hold for them?

BC: On that boat, they were in totes. Yes.

SR: So, you said that you thought the fishery seemed to change in 1992 abouts?

BC: Well, from that and a year or two down the road, they were pretty well gone inside. Then they just had to keep going off and off and off.

SR: How far was the farthest you ever went offshore?

BC: Probably 25 miles, something like that. Yes.

SR: Was that towards the end of your groundfishing career?

BC: Well, that was after I went into it in the late years after I got the bigger boats. Then we just went a little further off.

SR: The last year you went groundfishing was 1999?

BC: Late in [19]99, somewhere in there. I can't remember. It might have been even 2000 or

something like that. It was the year before there was the big groundfish thing that was going into effect. I figured, well if I go and get a trip or two, I'll have landings for this year. I might not lose my permit. But I didn't get no days, and they had the buyout. I put in the bid, and they took it.

SR: So, your decision to get out of the fishery had to do with the new regulations that were being put in?

BC: That and the fish were getting depleted. I was getting old enough, so I didn't really want to put those kinds of hours in.

SR: So, I was wondering if you had any idea how many boats were groundfishing out of Eastern Maine fishing ports when you first started. So, that would be like Vinalhaven on up the coast.

BC: I wouldn't have any idea of the other side of Southwest Harbor. Then from there, well, let's see. There were none here because I was the only one that ever went groundfishing here. In Jonesport, they probably were six or seven. What did Killa think?

SR: Something around there. I think he gave me a few more names.

BC: Probably there was but, oh, yes. Well, David, I didn't think of him. I don't know for sure how many, the Cobblers. Then there was K. Lauren and Herbert. Oh, yes. There were a couple more over the bill zone. Yes, they probably would have been – well, I would say he'd know how many there was because he was there, and he'd known each one of them there was. I don't know whether the Addison there was any or not there. There were three or four in Milbridge or maybe more. Then there were some that were gillnetting out of Corea. There were quite a few in Winter Harbor, like probably eight to ten there for a smaller place. Then there was Bar Harbor. Well, I think at that time, Lubec had three boats. Surry, four. Raymond, Lawrence, probably two or three more. So, they must have been ten probably out of Bar Harbor. Southwest Harbor, that was kind of up and down. Because once in a while, the scallopers would rig up and go. But there was one that went all the time. Hano went all the time. There probably were three or four there. I don't think there was anybody at the time. Yes, there was one or two open in Bar Harbor. Swans Island, I think there were some gillnetters. On Frenchboro, there was one or two gillnetters. From there, I don't know what there was up in Stonington. I know there was quite a few. I know there was a lot of boats that went gillnetting out of Stonington. But I don't have any idea how many, and I don't know what there was on Vinalhaven.

SR: So, in those boats, if you did not say that they were gillnetters, can it be assumed that they were draggers? Because a couple you said they were gillnetters.

BC: Well, yes. When I'd say they'd be eight to ten, some were draggers, some were gillnetters because the groundfish you're taking and gillnetting is the same thing, yes.

SR: Gillnetting and the groundfish, yes. Also, the longlining.

BC: No, I don't think that there was anybody that did that any more than the halibut trawls.

SR: Killa did that. I think it was Killa.

BC: He went for groundfish?

SR: Yes. I think it was him that said that.

BC: Well, probably he did.

SR: At one point.

BC: Yes, probably he did before he started gillnetting.

SR: Yes, that was it. So, did you ever see non-local boats, meaning boats that were not from Eastern Maine, fishing on Eastern Maine fishing grounds?

BC: Yes. Where were those boats from?

BC: I think that most of them were out of Portland. They might have been one or two, somewhere in between. But most of them were the Portland boats. They used to fish down here, right what we call the Corner, right where the Canadian line goes out back of Seal Island. It comes down by Seal Island then runs from New Hampshire line up through this way. So, right down in there, they used to fish a lot down in there in the deep water.

SR: Were they draggers that were up here?

BC: Yes. Then there were also some Massachusetts boats up here.

SR: Those were draggers too?

BC: Yes.

SR: Did these boats ever land their fish in Eastern Maine?

BC: I doubt it.

SR: Doubt it.

BC: Well, no, because they were all big. They're big boats. So, they would take and go back to at least Portland. Because there'd be no place that would be equipped to handle that volume.

SR: Oh, okay. Did you use ice?

BC: Yes.

SR: For your whole career?

BC: Not when we first started, no. Because it wasn't that long a day. But when we started going from twenty-hour days, we were icing them. Well, when I had the 45-foot, wooden Novi boat, that one we didn't have no hole on that. So, those were iced on deck in Xactics.

SR: In the what?

BC: The big fifteen or so bushels, insulated totes, the big, insulated boxes.

SR: What did you call them?

BC: Xactics.

SR: Xactics?

BC: Yes. That's the name right on them. Then you've got a fish tote which is these things right here. But these Xactics were big, and they'd hold 1,500 pounds apiece.

SR: Where did you get your ice?

BC: Southwest Harbor. Because that's when I iced them was when we were in Southwest Harbor. So, we'd get the ice there.

SR: So, you didn't need it when you were fishing out of Bucks Harbor?

BC: No.

SR: Because you had the smaller boat here?

BC: Yes.

SR: Where did you sell your catch?

BC: Right in the Southwest Harbor. Some of them, they'd be there at different times. Most of them went to Portland. There was somebody who was trucking them.

SR: So, was there a couple of companies that you would sell to in Southwest Harbor?

BC: Well, I would sell some to Beals wharf if they wanted some fish picked out, like a couple hundred pounds. That would be right at the wharf. But the rest of them went on a truck and went to Portland.

SR: So, was it a company that did the trucking?

BC: Well, the two guys had boats. Well, one of them was, yes. One of them was a company. That was Alfred Pettygrove. Then the other two, they had a boat, and they took and trucked

some of the other fishermen's fish for the smaller boats.

SR: Do you remember that trucking company?

BC: I don't know how the company was because one of them was George C.V. He had a boat. The other one was one, and he had his own boat.

SR: Was there one that you preferred to sell to?

BC: It didn't make much difference, no.

SR: How would you choose who to sell to?

BC: Well, it was actually, one of them was buying, and then I guess he'd get done. Then the other one was buying, and he'd get done, then the other. Whoever was trucking the fish.

SR: That day.

BC: Well, or that year or whatever, yes.

SR: Right. Because you're talking over a span of twenty years, months at sea?

BC: Well, yes. If you went up there this year and that guy was trucking the fish, he trucked your fish. If he'd get out of the business and somebody else was trucking the fish. So, whoever was doing it.

SR: So, there was usually only one person from that area trucking the fish?

BC: Most generally, yes.

SR: So, you know that they would truck the fish to Portland to the Fish Exchange?

BC: Yes.

SR: Did they go anywhere else?

BC: I don't know for sure about Pettygrove.

SR: Petty again. Do you know where the fish ended up at when they got on the truck?

BC: Well, I'd say I think that most of them went to the Exchange. I don't know about Pettygrove, whether he took them. He might have taken them somewhere else. I don't know. But I know that George and Lang, they went to the Exchange.

SR: George C.V.?



BC: Yes, George C.V. and Russell Lang.

SR: Do you know if any of your fish went to Canada for salting?

BC: The first ones might have because I did sell some of them, the guy over Jonesport. When I was going into Jonesport and when I was fishing down here, he used to come pick them up. So, those ones possibly might have gone to Canada.

SR: Was that Mike Kirby?

BC: No. It's been so long, my memory – I know him well. Gordon.

SR: [laughter]

BC: Gordon Kelly.

SR: Kelly.

BC: Sometimes now, I take and go, and I see somebody who may speak. Who was that? I guess that happens after you get older?

SR: Happens to me. I'm already older.

BC: Yes. Right. You are just a spring chicken [laughter].

SR: So, landing in another harbor influenced the way you sold your fish. What form were the fish when they were sent on the truck? Were they gutted?

BC: They were all round fishes gutted.

SR: Round fishes.

BC: The flatfish just whole.

SR: Just whole.

BC: You had to head the hake. But cod, pollock, and haddock, they were just gutted, head on.

SR: Why did you have to cut the heads off the hake?

BC: Don't know.

SR: Don't know. That's just the way they want them.

SR: So, there's –

BC: They wouldn't take them with the heads on. Yes. I don't know what the deal was there. But anything else, you could leave the heads on it. But you had to take the heads off the hake.

SR: Do you know where the fish were processed?

BC: No.

SR: Were there any fish processors in Eastern Maine?

BC: Kelly was processing them when we first started there at the Three Rivers. Other than that, I don't know. I don't really think so, but they could have been.

SR: Would you know the price when you put the fish on the truck that you would be receiving for your fish?

BC: Not totally, no. Because when they went to the Exchange, you'd have an idea what they are, but you don't know. Because they bid on them. Pettygrove's, I don't think his went to the Exchange. I think his might have gone to Boston or somewhere. Because I think we did know pretty much what we were going to get for those ones.

SR: Is Pettigo, P-E-T-T-I-G-R-O?

BC: I don't think there's any I in it.

SR: So, P-E-T-T-G-R-O?

BC: I can look in the phonebook.

SR: Oh, is it a common name up here?

BC: Yes.

SR: Oh, okay. I can look it up.

BC: Yes. I think that you were right the last time, I'm not sure. If I was me spelling, no, I couldn't. I don't spell nothing. I only went through the eighth grade.

SR: Oh, you did? Now, what were the prices like?

BC: The best prices we got were probably somewhere around [19]85. That was when they were about the best that I got.

SR: The year of [19]85?

BC: Yes. That I remember of, yes.

SR: Do you think the prices were fair?

BC: Well, I guess they would be if you were catching a big volume of fish. But there wasn't a lot for what we were catching with a small boat and not knowing what we were doing. But that was the best I'd done. I think it was about [19]85. Because like I said, I didn't go every year. I went off and on. Right then, there were few fish. I'd learned a little something, and we were catching a few fish. That was about the best prices that I got for what fish we were catching.

SR: Do you know how much trucking would cost? How much they would deduct for that?

BC: It seems like it was somewhere around 6 cents or something like that. I can't remember for sure, but I think it was something like that.

SR: So, would your fish just be thrown on the truck with some other people's fish?

BC: Yes.

SR: Would there be ice in the truck?

BC: Oh, yes. It was all ice wood when they went on the truck.

SR: It was refrigerated too, or no?

BC: I think it had a reefer on it, yes. If not, it was a good, insulated box, and there was ice wood from Southwest Harbor. If they loaded them today – well, what we'd do is most of the time, we'd come in the middle of the night. Then we'd have to take the fish out the next day. So, we wouldn't actually be able to go the next day. They'd be two or three of us small boats. We'd unload, put our fish on the truck, and then they'd go and be down to the auction that night.

SR: Do you know whether your groundfish landings were ever recorded?

BC: Only the last two or three years that I had to make out the –

SR: The forms.

BC: – the landing reports.

SR: Do you still have that information?

BC: No. When I got done and I sold the last dragger, I threw the books in the stove.

SR: So, you eventually had a limited access, multi-species, groundfish permit when you ended your career?

BC: Yes.

SR: Did you ever have an open access permit?

BC: What do you mean?

SR: I guess it would be the permit that was before the limited access, multi-species, groundfish permit.

BC: I'd had a groundfish permit probably whenever they first came out.

SR: To go fishing.

BC: But I didn't need it actually. But when they'd start with these permits, you could just get them. I'd get them. Well, I'll get it. They more or less were just a piece of paper when we first started because there were no landing reports and not this or that. But you more or less had the permit, I guess, so that if they boated you, it said, okay, you've got a permit. That's it. That's all it amounted to.

SR: Part of the reason you got out of it was because your permit, you didn't have enough time at sea?

BC: I wasn't going to have no time to speak of. No. I didn't pay. Even if I'd have got any, I don't know what I would have got. I might have got seven or eight days, ten days. I might have got one day. I don't know what it would have amounted to. Because actually, I had probably three permits. Because when you could just get one, I didn't save the permit that I had on the first boat and put it on the second boat, the one on the second boat, on the last boat. I just let the permits go and get a new one.

SR: So, what years did you originally get each three permits? I'm just wondering.

BC: I have –

SR: No idea.

BC: Well, the first one I had when they just about first came out. Then I probably got another one in about [19]80. The other one was in about [19]89 or something like that. I'm just guessing because I haven't got the figures or the facts in front of me.

SR: So, I'm going to ask you about the future now.

BC: [laughter]

SR: Assuming that groundfish stocks returned, in your opinion, what would need to happen to revive a groundfish fleet in Eastern Maine?

BC: Well, I guess the first thing, they'd have to issue some permits. That would be the first thing. They'd have to give them enough days so that it wouldn't be bothering to go. There

probably would be a few going. But most of us that were doing it is old enough so that we're never going to go back and doing it. I don't see Killa going back at it. I'm not going back at it. I don't see Herbert going back at it. But I don't really see Herbert's nephew maybe in Jonesport would be about the only. Maybe one or two other ones over there. There might be a few who try it. If anybody makes any money at anything, well, yes, then you're going to see anybody that can get at it, do it. That's the nature of the beast in the fishing business.

SR: Would you be willing to be a consultant to the younger fishermen?

BC: What do you mean by that?

SR: To teach them how.

BC: No, I'm out of that. I'm clear of it.

SR: What about new services or infrastructure that would be needed, like markets, infrastructure, ice providers?

BC: Well, you're going to need some shore facilities where you unload, where you get your ice, and so on. Starting out, there'd be market enough because you could be able to take all your fish right to the auction. There would be maybe a few that would want a few fish. Or if not, you can take them to Boston right to the cutting houses.

SR: Did you ever sell any of your fish locally to restaurants?

BC: No.

SR: People?

BC: Well, one or two or three fish here and there if somebody wanted them. But I've never been one to bother with that. It's more hassle than it's worth for a few cents. No more than I bother with lobsters. My lobsters, they go to the wharf. A few friends and family, if they want five to ten lobsters, I will bring them in. That's the same way with fish and scallops. Anything I want to unload it and be done with it.

SR: What about the availability of nuts and hooks and gear for groundfishing?

BC: I guess that you could get that without a problem. The nets maybe. Net makers that might be a little different because you shrimp nets, it's a job to get them right now. So, it used to be that it was no problem. But I guess you can get them in Massachusetts, but they just cost you quite a lot more.

SR: So, you said that you think that you don't want to go groundfishing again because you feel like you –

BC: That's too long adays. I'm sixty-six years old. That's more or less a young man's business

when you put in twenty-two hours a day. It's not for me.

SR: Do you think the groundfish fishery would be important to your community?

BC: Not right here in Bucks Harbor. But from Jonesport west, yes.

SR: Why not here?

BC: The only one that would even go would be my boy. I don't think there's anybody else here that would even think about it. You haven't got any place to sell them. You're going to have to sell them in Jonesport or whatever. I would say if he could get a permit and go fishing, he wouldn't bother to fish out of here. He'd go to at least Southwest Harbor or Rockland or Portland or whatever. Because there's not the bottom around here and there's no way you could even think about towing out here because there's many lobster traps as there are today. That's going to be a problem if the groundfishing comes back. Because when we were doing it back then, these tows were open. Now, these tows are plugged full of gear. So, that would be a problem to start, a bad problem.

SR: Is there anything else that you think that is important to know about groundfishing that I haven't asked about?

BC: Well, I think you pretty much covered everything that I know about it and say that I never was that really that big in it.

SR: Because you would use it as a fill in?

BC: I say I liked to do it. It wasn't the money I made doing it because I made more money doing other things. In my circumstances, it was more or less something I just wanted to do. I liked to do it.

[end of transcript]