

Interviewee Name: Gay Crowley

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Interviewer Name and Affiliation: Galen Koch, The First Coast

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Interview Description: Gay Crowley, the operator of a local bait shop on Beals Island, talks about the ins and outs of bait selling. Crowley discusses the process of packaging worms, how she got started in the business, and the problems affecting the worm industry in Maine. Crowley also talks about her local island community, including what she values about it and what fears she has for the future.

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Transcribed By: Griffin Pollock

GK: Galen Koch

GC: Gay Crowley

[0:42:46.4]

Galen Koch: [0:00:00] Just audio, so nobody will even know.

Gay Crowley: Good.

GK: We could be in a mansion; nobody will ever know.

GC: We could. [laughter]

GK: Well, Gay, I'll just have you say your first and last name on this tape for me.

GC: Gay Crowley.

GK: Can you tell me what part of Beals we're on and where we are right now? What road are we on?

GC: On 5 Shore Road, Beals, Maine.

GK: Is this your house? You didn't grow up in this house, did you?

GC: No, I didn't. I grew up in the house right next door, actually.

GK: Oh, really?

GC: Yes.

GK: Which one was that? This one?

GC: The blue one that Frank Alley is living in. My son bought it –

GK: Oh, nice.

GC: – from my parents. That was my parents' house.

GK: And Frank owns the [Bayview] Takeout.

GC: Yes, he owns the Takeout.

GK: When did that start?

GC: Eleven years ago?

GK: [0:01:00] Wow.

GC: He was also a worm digger and got done digging to start another business because he didn't know if the future in the worm business would continue. It's been some rough bouts along the way. We've had a lot of times where we haven't had worms there; they've been depleted

because of the flats with the mussel draggers dragging up the flats, and that's done a big number on it, and over digging through the years. But we've had one area that actually, this year, came back; it hasn't been back for ten years. So, that's got us through this year, and we're hoping that they'll come back next year and be there as well because the demand is still there, but unfortunately, they are coming out with some artificial bait. And so that, of course, is always going to be a threat in this business. But as long as they continue to have tournaments that they want them to use the real thing and not artificial, then it will persuade them to stay with the real thing.

GK: [0:02:17] You got your tea. Do you want to make some of that tea for yourself? It's boiling. [laughter]

GC: I leave it on low.

GK: Oh, you do? Okay, I just wanted to make sure it wasn't –

GC: No, I leave it on low, get a little steam in.

GK: Oh, it's nice, yeah.

GC: Did you want a cup?

GK: Oh.

GC: I have honey.

GK: Oh, maybe. Yeah, sure.

GC: Let me tell you. I have some tea. [laughter]

GK: You have some tea. [laughter] Why do you have so much Red Rose?

GC: For the trinkets. I hope I'm not on this right now.

GK: I love that. I love that.

GC: Oh, we're not on right now, are we?

[Recording paused.]

GK: So, I was going to ask you if you could walk me through – so you're saying there's fishermen who want to use this bait. But can you walk me through where it goes and who's using it? Because I think a lot of people don't know about the worm market.

GC: Well, I usually send it – I send to Connecticut. I send to Boston and New York. They have little shops, bait shops, along the shore there where they buy a box or two, whatever it is. When

they get through ordering, they go according to what they have for orders, then they call me, tell me what they put their order in, and then I have according to what I have for diggers that goes that day, I send them what I have for all my markets to go dig whatever there is for what they need.

GK: [0:03:46] Oh, so you'll get an order, and then you'll send people out?

GC: They usually send out when the market starts, when everything starts opening up, where they're really buying a few worms. They usually start running, and it's Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I have two trucks that pick up for me. I have a Boston truck that picks up Mondays and Thursdays and sometimes Saturdays. And then I have a New York truck that takes them Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. So we're pretty busy when things start.

GK: And when is that? When does it start?

GC: Well, we usually start – the first day of the year usually is right at the end of March, and then it usually doesn't start picking up so that they can dig whatever they can dig, all they can dig, until possibly the end of June. The third week in June, things start right in, where they order more. After the kids get out of school and people start rolling in – vacationers.

GK: [0:04:52] Because they're going – is that because people are starting to go fishing more?

GC: Right. When kids get out of school. They mainly fish for pogies. I guess they eat them. I really don't know a lot of what they fish for. Bass fishing when they're good size worms. There's all kinds of different bait for different kinds of fishing.

GK: Yeah. But it's kind of remarkable that there's that much – I mean, it's mostly recreational fishing, right?

GC: Mainly, yes. It's for sports fishermen.

GK: Sports fishermen.

GC: Right, they'll take these boats out, pontoon boats, and they'll go out – party boats. They'll go out and party, I'm sure, and fish. [laughter]

GK: [laughter] And so this is – you're doing sandworms?

GC: [0:05:44] Mainly, I do pick up a few blood – when my sandworm diggers dig, they pick up a few blood worms on the side, and I buy those. I don't buy too many of those.

GK: Would those be sold to the same places?

GC: Same places. There's only a couple that buy them. Usually, a couple markets. I don't have big volume in here to worry about getting rid of.

GK: Where are most of your diggers going?

GC: Actually, this year, they've been going in Addison. That's the area I was telling you about that's been ten years that they haven't dug it, and it's come back. In years past, it was anywhere from Harrington River up towards Ellsworth way, Corea, and places like that.

GK: So it's not just local. I mean, it's semi-local.

GC: No, in the years past, ten years ago or more, at one point, they was going as far as Trenton and digging double tides there. A lot of traveling back and forth. But a good digger can make anywhere from forty to fifty thousand a year for the season.

GK: [0:06:59] Wow.

GC: I have had actually one digger that dug – he made almost fifty thousand this season.

GK: And did he work a lot? [laughter]

GC: Yes, he worked a lot. Double tides. A lot of double tides. A lot of crating when I didn't have digging. Or I had a limit, and they dug extra and put them in the crate. But you had to put your time in it, and you just can't take a day off if you want to make that kind of money for the season.

GK: Yeah, that's pretty amazing.

GC: Because it's only actually from – probably one day at the end of March until –well, I think I got done this year – it was on the – it was the end of [September] – no, first part of October, around the 9th of October I got done, so that wasn't bad for that time-frame.

GK: Yeah, that's basically half a year. Wow. So I'm just curious how this evolved for you and how you got started in this.

GC: [0:08:08] How I got started was actually – it was my oldest brother, William Harden. He decided that he wanted to open a bait shop because there was another bait shop that was on the island years ago before that. So he got into it, and it didn't work out quite as well for him, so my father and him worked together at it, and then my father took it over and took the business over. He made it a business for twenty-odd years. He ended up getting sick, my father did, with cancer, and so I started stepping in about six years before he passed away and pretty much was running things for him. I've been running it ever since. When he passed away, I took the business over to continue it. It's something that I take pride in. When it's good, it's good, and when it's bad, it's bad. [laughter] It's like with anything else, I suppose. But it's something I – he didn't think he taught me very well, I guess. He didn't think I paid attention, but these little things that he's taught me – it's remarkable – about how to try to push more worms on them when they probably don't need them or want them, but I do it.

GK: [0:09:33] He taught you how to be a salesman.

GC: Yes. I never even took business in school. I've had no choice, but I've done it.

GK: That's amazing. That's very self-made in a family business.

GC: Well, between that and – part of the paperwork my mother used to do. She used to do all of the paperwork, and that's something – she taught me how to do that part. No, I enjoyed the business. I do. I've done it quite a few years now. The thing I like about it more than anything now is that I have my shop right next to my house. Makes it so much easier. For years, we rented down to Albert Carver's, behind Albert's. My husband had to lug water for six years; I think it was like six years he had to lug water every day, so we would have the access to the salt water. Now in our new shop, we have it so it pumps it up. We have a black hose that goes under the shore, and we bring it up with a pump, and I have drain holes in my floor so that I can let the water out, and it will drain back out. So it works perfect now. A lot less work.

GK: [0:10:47] That's great. Are you using that to put in the buckets or to clean? What's it for?

GC: I have four big barrels, and when the tide is up, I let the water in. In the summer, I have to let it run for a while because it gets warm. I let it run, fill the barrels up, and that way, when they come in, they take the buckets – smaller buckets – and take the water out of the barrels, put them on the benches to help count them out. They always have access to that salt water, and that's something that's always very good for the business. Very good for the business because you need that water, and you need your reefer for your worms to be put in.

GK: And your diggers, do they come in, and are they counting them themselves?

GC: Yes. They come in, and they count out 125 per tray. Actually, technically old school, it's supposed to be 127 due to cut ones or whatever. But they count 125 and put it in a tray; eight trays is a thousand worms, and that's how they do it. As soon as they get them counted, they put them in my cooler. I'll leave them in my cooler for about an hour or so and then bring them out and pack them. Then the trucks come and pick them up, and they go on their way.

GK: [0:12:07] And you pack them – so you're cooling them because they're alive?

GC: We cool them – it hardens them up, and it toughens them up, and it's so much better for them, especially when it's warm because they should cool down. There's such a difference in an hour. They're not soft anymore. They toughen them up. They're harder. They just are a better worm when they've been cooled down and refrigerated. Of course, they always have to be refrigerated because they're very sensitive to any warmth. They don't last when they get warmed up too much.

GK: They seem like they would be pretty finicky.

GC: They can be. In any kind of fresh water, they do not like any fresh water. You put in a little bit of freshwater with them, and some of these rivers, if they get too much fresh water in the

rivers, they don't last; the worms won't last because there's too much fresh water in them, especially in the Spring. That's when it's bad to dig in the rivers.

GK: [0:13:15] So, also, you work with Amanda, who I interviewed to get the worm weed.

GC: Yes, I actually got her into this business through another bait dealer in Connecticut, so I guess things work out great for people when you want them to.

GK: Yeah, yeah. And it was interesting. I was so interested in talking to her about how I didn't realize you had to ship these worms in a specific type of seaweed.

GC: Yes, it can't be just the other kind because they just don't last. I don't know if it's the bubbles in the coarser weed, but this is softer, and they last great in it.

GK: Do you put them in there in something? Or do they just kind of sit in —?

GC: This is how it works. We start out — we make our boxes. We do that upstairs in a building. Make our tops and our bottoms, and then we line them up with newspapers. We send them down on a chute, and we weed them up according to how many I have for orders. After they've come in and counted — we usually have them weeded before they come in and count out. That way, after they're gone in the cooler, we can bring them out and pack them. After they've been in the cooler — after we've weeded them and we've got them on our benches waiting, we leave the worms in the cooler. Then we bring the worms out. I have two U-boat carts I put my worms on, so it's so much easier. We pull the cart out, and we just pack the worms up. We tie them up, put them back in the cooler, and I put on packing slips, and the trucks come pick them up.

GK: [0:14:56] Wow. It's these little things — these industries that you don't really even think about happening, but they're there.

GC: I know. It is amazing that these little critters, these little worms, all these years, they've been meaningful to a lot of sports fishermen, that's for sure.

GK: And there's seasonal income for a lot of [inaudible].

GC: Exactly. Especially, I provide jobs for about fifteen diggers. So, it is a big help around here. Big help.

GK: Do you know how many other buyers there are around?

GC: Around here, there is Ed Hagen. Kevin Robinson in Harrington. There is also Chris Kittredge in Milbridge. And there's a few more up that way. I don't know the names of all of them, but they're scattered from here up [inaudible]

GK: [0:16:09] But it's not nearly as —

GC: Right to Wiscasset, actually.

GK: Oh, okay, but it's not nearly as –

GC: No, it's not like lobster fishermen, the wharves and things, no.

GK: Yeah, yeah. Or even clams.

GC: Or clams, right. No, there's probably more buyers with clams than there is worm buyers. I don't know, though. There's only a couple around here that buys clams, so it's probably about the same. Probably about the same.

GK: Do some of your diggers also dig for clams? Is that kind of—

GC: Yeah, I've had diggers in the past that in the winters, they – yeah, I do right now even have diggers that will go digging in the winter when the worming is over, or the lobstering's over; they dig the clams in the winter. And then when Spring comes, and the worming opens up, they'll start digging the worms.

GK: Has it changed in terms of where people are going and how much they're able to get in the time that you've been doing this?

GC: [0:17:09] Oh, I've seen, yeah, big differences in a lot of it. Like I said, it's because the worms just were not there. They had been reduced a lot of – over digging or being dragged up – mussel beds. But no, this year has actually been a better year because they have found some worms that – [Telephone rings. Recording paused.

GK: So, this was one of the first years you saw a lot – they were finding some in places they haven't found because of dragging.

GC: Right. This has been a better year. It's been a better year due to the fact that they found worms in this area, so it has been a definitely better year than it has been in the past, but we've seen a lot of bad years.

GK: Yeah. Did you have years when you thought maybe you weren't going to be able to keep doing it?

GC: I've had two years where I had bait dealers that owed me money, and that's rough, but fortunately, I got paid back by one of them anyway; the other one still owed me some. But oh well, I survived. I'll just never deal with them again.

GK: [0:18:22] Oh, they owed you money. So you had the worms.

GC: Oh, I provided them the worms, and then they didn't pay me. It was like two thousand dollars.

GK: Oh my god.

GC: But it could've been worse. I've seen worse. I've heard of worse, so I just take it as a loss.

GK: Yeah. How do you know who you can trust?

GC: Well, the ones I have mainly are all older markets that my father had twenty-odd years ago. And some of the markets I have are all new markets that I have had myself. I've had no problem. It is hard to know, but you have to kind of just talk with the truck drivers, and they know if they're a market that you can trust and not too, sometimes. Word of mouth.

GK: Right. They would probably know a lot about what was happening beyond here.

GC: Right.

GK: [0:19:22] And you were saying something about the synthetic worms? What's that about?

GC: Well, they make artificial worms. They've made artificial worms before, and they do have artificial bait. It's not the same as the real thing, and the real sports fishermen would rather have the real thing. But others don't care if it just means catching that fish.

GK: Yeah, but you might be getting the bigger, the better fish with your real sandworms.

GC: Yeah, really. [laughter]

GK: [laughter] I am curious how far your bait actually goes. I wish you could track it.

GC: I know. I wish – I do know that I think that some of them are sending them to the Carolinas, mainly the blood worms, and probably even some go to Virginia. I think they do, but I don't know on my end where they go. I send them to these areas, and they send them wherever. I don't know where they go for sure. I really don't.

GK: [0:20:31] I know. How would you know? It's like you want a little tracking – put a little tracking device in your sandworm.

GC: Exactly. See where those worms are going. [laughter]

GK: So you have fifteen diggers. Do you have employees, too, or is it mostly just you?

GC: I had one young guy who works for me, and this year, due to my hands getting bad with arthritis coming in, I needed an extra worker. So I hired another one this summer to help me on tying up because that's something – we tie up all the – two boxes together is a bundle, and we have a lot to tie. Sometimes, it's really a lot. We've sent out, a lot of times, a hundred thousand a week.

GK: A hundred thousand bundles!?

GC: A hundred thousand worms. A few times. Not a lot, but a few times.

GK: That is crazy.

GC: Oh, yeah. It is. Like I've said, we've had a better year.

GK: [0:21:33] Wow, that's like a factory operation. With one little – I guess it's probably not as big as a factory, but it seems –

GC: Well, it can be quite – a lot more work to it than a lot of people would realize unless they were doing it or trying to do it. But we keep busy. We keep busy.

GK: Does the price of the worms fluctuate based on the bait dealers, or –?

GC: The price of the worm has been fluctuating – it goes on both sides. It could be the diggers, and sometimes we, on the other end – us dealers have put the price up ourselves. I'm trying to keep the price down because if we keep going too high with it, we're going to – that's when they're going to turn to the artificial. If they start introducing artificial into these tournaments, it's going to really hurt us; it really will.

GK: [0:22:41] I wonder if worms could be used for any other kind of bait other than just sport fishing. Have people tried –? I don't know what.

GC: I'm sure they could be used for something, but they probably wouldn't want to be used – they wouldn't want to pay the price for them probably if it wasn't going to be something that they really wanted to use them for, like the sports fishermen. You see what I'm saying? If they wanted –

GK: Yeah, it's a niche. It's like a little niche market.

GC: Yeah.

GK: Yeah, I guess I've never realized – you probably get more bang for your buck, so to speak, worming than you do clamming.

GC: Yeah. Well, one thing about the worming, they know the price is the same. When they go clamming, it's been up and down so much that there's a lot of diggers I've heard that don't like that. At least when my diggers come in every day, they know the price is going to stay the same. They're not going to go dig and say, "What are we going to get today?" So I'd rather know every day when I was going to go digging I'm going to have the same price.

GK: [0:23:55] Are there worms that come to you that you have to throw back?

GC: I've had worms that are caught that I've had to take out because I try to pick out all the cutworms that's in their trays. If there's any cut ones in their trays, I try to pick those out because

they can damage the rest of them. Cutworms – worms that have been cut by the tongs of the hose, the worm hose.

GK: How do they damage the rest of them?

GC: Well, mainly just cutting. By cutting when they get nicked or something. That's what they call cutworms. If they puncture them, then they can go bad, and it can destroy the rest of the worms in the box.

GK: Got it.

GC: Or some, they're spawners; they're black worms, but they have this green mess that comes out of them. They're real soft, and they can through the rest of the worms and destroy them. So you have to be aware and watch when you're packing them, especially in the Spring of the year, to watch for those worms. They're translucent. They're a greenish color worm. Actually, like I said, they're translucent. You can almost see right through them; they're real soft, and they have milky stuff that comes out of them. If that comes out, that can go right into the rest of the worms and destroy the whole box. So we have to be aware to pick all these things out. So, yeah, we do lose.

GK: [0:25:24] So you're picking those out and putting them back?

GC: And when I take them out, I'll have a [inaudible] tray with like twenty-five, thirty worms in it, and as I take out worms, I'll replace them with good worms, so that way they're not losing their worms out of the box.

GK: Oh, got it. There's a whole system. I'm impressed that the diggers are able to get worms without cutting all of them.

GC: I know. I couldn't do it myself. I know I couldn't. But no, they got their knacks. They each have their own way of digging, and some of them pluck them right out, just grabbing them right up.

GK: Wow. And they don't pinch you or anything? Do they have a –?

GC: Oh, they can bite. They look like snakes when the fangs come out, and they can latch on; they'll bite. But it's not like they'll take your finger off or nothing. They just sting.

GK: I just don't want to be bit by a worm. I just don't want to.

GC: [0:26:26] No, I don't think anyone wants to be bit by anything. If they can help it. [laughter]

GK: [laughter] I know. Were you ever, as a kid –? Was this going on when you were a kid?

GC: No. No.

GK: Okay, so this was a little later in life that your dad was doing this.

GC: Yes.

GK: How old were you when he started?

GC: I was actually, I think, a junior in high school, so I was up there in age. Actually, I think I was a sophomore when my brother got into it and either a junior or senior when my father was doing it. So I've been pretty much helping out and part of the business ever since.

GK: Wow. Did you go to school, or did you stay here?

GC: I finished high school, and that was it. I got right into the business.

GK: Were you at Jonesport?

GC: Jonesport-Beals, yes. Don't forget Beals. [laughter]

GK: I wasn't sure if it was consolidated back then.

GC: Yes, it was!

GK: It was?

GC: 69.

GK: [0:27:26] That's when it got consolidated?

GC: Yeah. I graduated in '77.

GK: Wow. Was it the same building that it's in now?

GC: It's the one that's torn down now.

GK: Oh, right. The rocks are there.

GC: Right, right.

GK: I'm going to go maybe see about the – talk to someone about what they're doing with the bridge, but that seems like a pretty big deal.

GC: Yes, actually, the bridge was being built the year that I was born. My mother and father had to walk across – there was a pathway to walk across at the time, and they walked over the bridge – my mother and father with me in tow as a baby. [laughter] And had me in Jonesport – my mother did. That was the year that – and now this year, at sixty years old – that's my age – they are building a new one.

GK: [0:28:26] Wow.

GC: Sixty years later.

GK: Sixty years later.

GC: So I'm going to hopefully see the second bridge in my lifetime.

GK: I know. Just a couple more years, maybe it'll be –

GC: It'll be nice when it is done, that's for sure.

GK: It makes getting back and forth kind of a pain.

GC: It does. And I didn't know if it was going to affect me this year with my diggers, but it was no problem. It was no problem because of the lights. That's the thing that works because they have the lights, so we can get back and forth easier.

GK: Did it have any effect on your trucks? Do you have big tractor-trailer trucks come?

GC: No, not that much. [laughter] Just box trucks.

GK: Okay, good. Yeah, I guess you don't need to be shipping that many worms.

GC: [laughter] I know. I need more diggers than what I had for that many.

GK: I know, seriously. Yeah, I'm excited to – I haven't seen any pictures of what they're trying to do with the bridge, the new one. Have you?

GC: Me neither, no. No, I don't know for sure what they're going to do, but it'll be nice when it's done, that's for sure.

GK: [0:29:28] And then I'm also really curious about all the wharves right here. These are all privately owned, right, mostly, or family wharves.

GC: Yes, they all are privately owned wharves.

GK: Are most of the houses around where you live year-rounders? Not seasonals?

GC: Yes. There's a couple that isn't, but there's more now that are seasonal than there used to be twenty years ago because a lot of people have passed away or sold their homes. Everything changes. Everything changes.

GK: I know. I'm surprised being here because I'm from Stonington, and there's just not as many boarded-up houses. There's a lot more year-round residents living here. I mean, there's a lot in Stonington, but there's a lot of houses that are seasonal.

GC: [0:30:28] Yeah. See, that's almost like Bar Harbor.

GK: Yeah, it's getting more like that.

GC: I don't want that here. I love my little town, and I don't want to see – I'm not saying anything bad against tourists. I know they want to see a piece of heaven – that's what I call this place. But I don't want that. I don't want Bar Harbor. I don't want to have to worry about if I'm going to jump to – if I have to go to the store, I've got to wait for an hour before I can get across the bridge because there's so many people. [laughter]

GK: I know.

GC: I don't want to be overrun with big boats coming in and checking everything all out. With Frank's Takeout, we've got enough of it. [laughter]

GK: So, yeah, that's probably one of the major – or only?

GC: There's no restaurant but his Takeout on the island. Right. And he's got a nice little takeout, so we see a lot of people coming and going. That's enough for me that I don't want to see Bar Harbor here.

GK: [0:31:33] No, no. I know. Stonington's a funny town because it's definitely half and half. Do you have a lot of –? Are there a lot of Massachusetts plates that will come to Frank's Takeout?

GC: I've seen a lot of New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, a lot of everywhere – Texas. I've seen them from all walks. It's amazing. A lot of people out this summer. Especially I've noticed this summer, a lot of people was out and about.

GK: This summer was – I am in Portland a lot of the time, too. It was crazy.

GC: Crazy.

GK: It made me almost lose my mind. [laughter] It was crazy. I mean, it's a lot of money which is good, but it was crazy.

GC: See, that's what I don't want to see. Too crazy. I don't mind. I know that people like to enjoy other places, but I just don't want them to get too close to this place and decide they want to stay. [laughter] I'm afraid of us getting too overrun with out-of-staters. That's what bothers me because we won't have our own little closeness we always had with our town if everyone else steps in.

GK: [0:34:47] Do you worry about what your own values are as a community in terms of work?

GC: Well, see, one thing that's hurt is the fact that – with the diggers, a lot of these out-of-staters have gone in and bought property, and that property is right on the shore, where a lot of these diggers have to go in the past to walk, there was no problem in the past. But with these new out-of-staters moving in, that's a “no, no.” They don't even stop and realize that these guys are just out there trying to make a living. Even though we've got a few that just are not doing the right thing by maybe being noisy at night – those are the ones that we don't want to be down there digging, but the ones that are honestly trying to be quiet and go make their living and not throw paper down, or anything like that. That's what hurt us, though, is a lot of the tourists coming and staying and won't allow them to be on the shore to make their living.

GK: [0:33:52] Do you have any of that intertidal zone stuff, where technically they could dig there right because the property's owned up to the high-water mark?

GC: Right, but their land is connected to that so far so that puts them on – stops them. They can't go on their property. If they could get there through boat, with a boat – but not everyone has boats.

GK: They have no access from the –

GC: Right. If it's on their land. Even though they can dig as far as high water to low water or whatever, you can't cross on their land to get to that. So that's what has hurt a lot of diggers in the past from digging areas, especially up around Bar Harbor. When they went to Bar Harbor back ten years or so ago, people stopped them from digging up there on their property, up by their property. They wouldn't allow them to walk to the shore.

GK: [0:34:56] I know a huge issue is access. It seems like, at least in Jonesport and Beals, there's still a lot of access. But not necessarily for worms.

GC: Right, right.

GK: Do you think that's true, that there is access here? Is that right?

GC: There is access. There is a lot more access right here. But even down the island, there's a few out-of-staters down there that's that same way. But if they had boats, there would have no problem, but not everyone has boats, so they can do that.

GK: Are the diggers talking to anybody in the government about this?

GC: No, because there are a few that let them go in the area, so they go across on their land and then cut across the other way.

GK: Cheating the system a little bit. That's good. No, I know it's a real issue. When I was with Amanda, she was at a place in Trescott that was some summer person who just allows her to go to this one place, luckily. [Recording paused.] I did want to ask, how does it feel to be [in] a

town where the kids stick around, and there's so many – I'm down at the variety store, and I'm sitting next to someone, and then someone walks in, and they're like "That's my son, and that's his son." There's so many generations here.

GC: [0:36:38] Well, I guess it's because we love it here. That's the only thing I can think of. It's a peaceful, quiet, nice little community. I mean, probably, we are a very nosy bunch, but when it comes to being there for each other, we're always there. Matter of fact, we just had a young man in Jonesport that just drowned recently, Scott Chandler, and the community has helped Erma out greatly, and that's what we do. When we have problems and people are down and out and have serious problems, we always stick together and help each other out. And that's a bond between the communities that nobody takes away. I moved away for about a year and lived in Augusta, and believe me, after a while, you realize when you move out of town, people don't know each other, they don't pay attention, they don't care like they do in this little, small town. I'm glad to live here. I'm proud to live here. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I call it God's Country.

GK: [0:37:47] It is.

GC: That's what I tell other people that come by. I'll say, "Shh, don't tell anyone; this is God's Country."

GK: I know. Well, I've been struggling with being here and doing the little stories and photos and stuff that I do take, and some of it's on social media. I'll post on the thing, being like, "Oh, Jonesport." And then I'm like, "Oh, God, I don't want to tell people about this." I don't want it to get around. I don't know. Maybe I'll just post, "Just so everyone knows, it's off limits. They don't want anybody to come here!" [laughter]

GC: [laughter] No, we're not that bad. We welcome them, just long as they don't take over.

GK: I know. I have felt very welcomed here. It's amazing. It's amazing. I went in there with Gina the other day, in your little shop.

GC: Did you get in there?

GK: [0:38:47] Yeah, I did.

GC: I didn't know if you could because my boy's in there with his lobster gear now.

GK: Oh, yeah, he was in there. We just looked around. Is there anything else about worming specifically that's a concern or something that I didn't ask you about that you think I should know about?

GC: Well, it's mainly just – I wish that they could stop dragging in the mussel beds up high and let them have a chance to grow like they should grow so that we can put worms back. They'll come back and keep jobs going for us.

GK: Are those mussel draggers around Jonesport and Beals too? Do you know?

GC: I think so. I think they're around any shoreline. I don't even know the times when they do the mussel dragging, but it does hurt.

GK: What about the –? Do you have any run-ins with the –?

GC: [0:39:50] Green crabs. Green crabs is something that is helping to destroy the worms. They're all over the flats – sand worms and blood worms and clams. They're invasive species, and I wish we could get rid of them somehow or another.

GK: I know ... Yeah, the green crabs are a really serious thing. Has anyone talked about –? Did any of your diggers talk about ways that they might be trying to get rid of them? Are they doing traps or anything?

GC: No, there are some people that have tried to trap them and sell them, but the market for them is only a certain time of year for the green crabs, which is right now in New York. They use green crabs for fishing. But other than that, there wasn't enough price for them. They wasn't going to pay enough for them for anyone to really do it. There are a few boats that do just fish for crab fishing, for the crab fish. But there's not many around here. I don't think there's anyone around this area.

GK: [0:41:23] No, I don't think so either. So it's dragging, green crabs, and access to the water. The dragging – I can't believe they're still dragging for mussels to tell you the truth.

GC: Well, they shouldn't because there's enough mussel beds down below rather than high water, up higher water, that they could do that, I would think.

GK: Yeah, and they're doing mussel aquaculture, which seems to be working pretty well on the rafts and ropes and stuff.

GC: No, I haven't seen that, but that's probably –

GK: They grow it down in Southern Maine; they're doing a lot of that, and it seems to be working pretty well and doesn't interfere as much with everything else that's going on.

GC: Yeah, that would be a lot better, so they didn't have to drag and bother other areas with worming and the flats and such.

GK: I know. I wish there were someone worming now that I could go and follow around. I want to see them, but it's not the right season. [laughter]

GC: [0:42:23] Come back in the Spring.

GK: I know. I will. I will come back in the Spring.

GC: Actually, Frank's back to worming, so you can tag along and watch him dig. [laughter]

GK: Oh, that would be so fun. That would be so fun. Yeah, that's great. Well, I will let you get back to your life, but I had a really good time talking with you.

GC: Good.

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

Reviewed by Molly A. Graham 5/4/2023