

Interviewee Name: Ernest Kelley and Marilyn Kelley

Project/Collection Title: The First Coast Jonesport and Beals

Interviewer(s) Name(s) and Affiliation: Galen Koch (The First Coast)

Interview Location: Jonesport, Washington County, ME

Date of Interview: October 2018

Interview Description: This interview is with Ernest and Marilyn Kelley, residents of Jonesport. The couple discusses the history of their family and the various fisheries Ernest has participated in. Ernest fished as a child but started fishing for a living after he returned from military service. Ernest describes his experience harvesting lobster, mackerel, herring, codfish, haddock, pollock, shrimp, and periwinkles (conkles). He delves into the details of purse seining, stop seining, weir fishing, handlining, dragging, and other methods of fishing. Marilyn focuses her attention on her work at the Three Rivers processing plant and the experience of being a wife and mother in a family that works on the water, the worry that accompanies that role. Their family has four generations of lobster licenses. Based on their knowledge and experience, the two provide insight into the dynamics within and efficiency of the Lobster Council, which Ernest served on, and other aspects of fisheries management. They share their concerns regarding dragging, trap tags, the lobstering apprenticeship program, and the enforcement of regulations by wardens.

Keywords: Lobstering, boat building, purse seining, weir fishing, stop seining, handlining, gillnetting, dragging, hogsheads, mussels, herring, sardines, mackerel, codfish, haddock, pollock, shrimp, conkles, Jonesport, Beal's Island, Mason's Bay, Three Rivers Co, Ballast Island, Georges Bank, lobster council, trap tags, apprentice lobstering program, lobster licenses, enforcement, family history, military

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Transcriber: Olivia Jolley

GK: Galen Koch

EK: Ernest Kelley

MK: Marilyn Kelley

[Track 1]

Galen Koch: [0:00:00] Oh my gosh, these are amazing. Oh, I want to get photos of these. I might have to come back for them.

Ernest Kelley: That's the fellow and I – we graduated together and went into the service together, but he got the Army, and I got the Navy. When we got out, we went into fishing together. Of course, we each had a lobster boat, and then we bought a dragger, and we had seining twine and equipment. This is the weir.

Marilyn Kelley: Hi, how are you doing?

GK: Good, I'm Galen.

MK: Pleased to meet you. Where do you live?

GK: Pleased to meet you, too. Well, right now, I'm at the Jonesport shipyard in an airstream trailer. [laughter] But I'm from Stonington.

MK: Stonington.

GK: I grew up in Stonington, and then I live in this airstream, and I travel around Maine interviewing fishermen.

MK: Now you're living down at the shipyard?

GK: For the month, yes.

EK: Have they got a rent down there?

GK: No, I'm in my trailer.

EK: [0:01:00] Oh, you got a trailer down there?

GK: Yeah, I can pull it. So I just tow it around and live in it. I'll close it up soon, though, because winter's coming. [laughter]

EK: [Laughter] Yeah.

MK: And that's all you do is travel all the time?

GK: Well, I lived down in Portland for five years in between, and then now I split my time. I go home down to Stonington a lot more than I used to. I live in the trailer. In the spring, I was in Stonington and Lubec for a month, and then I was in Portland. Now I'm here, and then I'll live at Higgins Beach. You know Higgins Beach? It's in Scarborough. It's a total summer community, but in the winter, you can rent the houses for like three hundred dollars a month. Very cheap.

EK: She's got a nephew that lives there too –

MK: Kennebunkport.

EK: [0:02:00] Kennebunkport.

GK: Oh, wow. Kennebunkport's fancy.

EK: Well, I don't know what part he owns, but he got that – what is it? [Weirs?] garage. W-E-I-R, I think [inaudible] or something.

MK: W-E-I-R.

EK: W-E-I-R.

MK: [inaudible] Buick garage there.

GK: Yeah, okay.

EK: That's where he is.

MK: He's worked there for years.

GK: Oh, wow.

MK: You can look from his place almost right over on Bush's [inaudible], the Bush's place.

EK: Where the Bushes was.

GK: Oh my gosh. That's amazing. It's amazing down there. It's so fancy.

EK: We stayed there a little while with him two or three different times.

GK: Yeah. So I'm moving around. I think I'll end up settling in Deer Isle. That's been my push to try to come back.

MK: You got people in Stonington or just?

GK: That's where I grew up. Yes.

MK: Now, what was your last name?

GK: My last name is Koch, K-O-C-H. So my parents moved there in '88. I was born there, but they weren't born there. So I'm not a real Mainer. [laughter]

MK: [0:03:05] We got lots of friends up Stonington.

GK: You do? Who do you know up there?

MK: We go up there to [Stonington] – Faulkinghams.

GK: Oh, yeah.

MK: They're real good friends of ours.

GK: I went to school with Travis Faulkingham and Beth Faulkingham. I don't know if they're related to anybody.

MK: I don't know.

GK: They're my age, like thirty.

EK: Those other ones – I don't know if they had children or not.

MK: Well, they must [inaudible].

EK: Lemont's daughter and son. They had two grandsons there. I know one worked in the rest home.

GK: Oh, yeah.

EK: What was his name?

MK: Was it Frankie? No, not Frankie.

EK: I can't remember names anyway.

GK: I know. There's a whole generation of people. I know some – I mean, I've interviewed a lot of people who are older. I've interviewed Andy Gove a lot, but of course, he's well-known for lobster boat racing. He wins a lot of lobster boat races. And then my step dad worked on the sardine carriers, but other than that, my family's all artists.

EK: [0:04:19] What was his name?

GK: Pete Collin. He ran the *Queen Mary* for a little bit and the *Betsy & Sally*.

EK: *Betsy & Sally*?

MK: [inaudible] I don't know – he wasn't on there, I don't believe when they got in trouble. I had a load of fish out off of a bay up that way. I called Portland, and they were supposed to send down the *Pauline*, and in the meantime – this was the Stonington sardine factory. They had this one – my sister's husband built her. He built that, and he built two or three of them. In fact, he

built his own boat up in Stonington. He worked up there for quite a while. But, anyway, they showed up, and this fellow that was on the *Betsy & Sally* had – whoever was with him – he was the captain, but whoever was with him, they had to do an engine job overnight while they waited [inaudible]. And when he got back to the factory, whoever it was was fired because he [wasn't] supposed to come down here anyway, but he knew the fellow on the *Pauline*. So they knew they were going to get the [inaudible], so they held out, and we loaded the [inaudible].

GK: [0:05:37] Oh wow. I don't know. It could've been him. Who knows. I've never heard about – he was on – I think it was the – I think it was the *Queen Mary*. One of the boats he operated shipwrecked, and then he got out of that. It spooked him. It was too scary.

EK: [laughter] I helped put [inaudible] good many all along the coast, even Canada.

GK: Wow.

EK: Our oldest boy was born November – he's in November? Twenty –?

MK: November 27th.

EK: 26th [inaudible].

MK: 26th. 26th.

EK: [0:06:15] And I stayed home that night, and that was the first herring we caught for the year down back the island. And they loaded the boats [inaudible] two or three, and the inspectors condemned them, said they're sick. They had little black spots on the side. Weren't no more sick than nothing in the world. But anyway, they had an excuse. So get a hold of Canada, and they sent boats over there, and we made a year's work out of it as far as seining. But (Roy Ray?) up here – he showed up, and we told him a lot of herring, and he wanted to pull fish. And my brother was in charge – he's older than I am. He said, "Well, you can't pack them. They're sick fish." And he says, "I just want the trap, and I'll pay you right here." [laughter] We called him "Nudgin," my brother. He said, "Okay, in the morning, we'll lug you." He had a great big, long coat on, and they had bunks in that seiner – I mean in the [inaudible]. He piled himself into that bunk for the night. Next day, we lugged him – next morning. I don't remember if we lugged him fast as I can – but anyway, noontime, he showed up over at my brother's house. He lived [inaudible] with a coat and a check. He had one of them hunting coats, I called them, a red heavy jacket.

[0:07:47] Well, my sister lived here, her and her husband, and they worked for Roy. If he wanted them to do carpenter work, he was a carpenter. So he showed up, and I said, "Did Roy ever get rid of them herring? Them sardines he packed?" He said, "No." He said, "There's a pretty yellow ribbon around them." He kept coming [inaudible]. I guess it was in March or April; he said he'd made double on them. He got rid of them, and they didn't even know it.

GK: Wow.

EK: He was quite a salesman to start with.

GK: Roy, that was Milbridge, right?

EK: Yeah, yeah.

GK: Yeah. Did you sell to him a lot?

EK: Oh yeah.

GK: Yeah.

EK: We even took a truckload of mackerel out because I knew he'd buy mackerel. And this fellow and I had weir, and we seined one morning, and we had three hogsheads of just mackerel.

GK: Wow.

EK: He said, "What are we going to do with so many mackerel?" I said, "We get them into that truck [inaudible]." We laid down a new tarpaulin in the truck. No matter where our weir was, we only had to drop down [inaudible] point, and there was deep water; you could back the truck down to him. Well, we loaded them in the truck and went out. He was sitting on a lobster crate, an old wooden lobster crate. I said, "Roy, how would you like to have a few mackerel?" He said, "Back her right in there" [laughter]. Backed her in. He paid [inaudible] for them.

GK: [0:09:12] Wow.

EK: Had three hogsheads.

GK: Was he packing like canning those, too?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Oh, yeah. He canned them in an oval can.

GK: Yep.

EK: Yep.

GK: First, you're just such a good storyteller. You just keep going on. [laughter] Can you say your first and last name for me so I have it?

EK: Ernest Kelley.

GK: Thanks, Ernest. Tell me where we are in Jonesport right now.

EK: Well, we're in west Jonesport.

GK: What are we looking out on? Is this [inaudible]?

EK: That's Beals Island.

GK: Is this a particular cove? Does this cove have a name, or is this? What's this part?

EK: What'd they call that cove there?

MK: Moosabec Reach.

EK: It's Moosabec Reach, but I forget the –

MK: Cummings Cove right down below here.

EK: It was on one of these [inaudible] in there – the other book. Anyway, Charlie Cummings owned it.

GK: [0:10:13] Where did you have that weir that you were talking about?

EK: Up in Mason's Bay. You've been up through there?

GK: I have been up there.

EK: We had the weir up and then a seining outfit we'd go everywhere with.

GS: Will you show me some of these boats?

EK: That guy come out of the weir.

GS: Oh, wow.

EK: That's a pumper we had – well, that was when him and I was with (Osmond?) before we separated there. We'd run over to Milbridge and pumped herring a lot of times with that boat.

GK: Who took these photos? They're so beautiful.

EK: I can't tell you. Now [inaudible].

GS: Really?

MK: The one that owned the twine shop over there.

EK: Oh, that is the one. The one at the twine shop made that one.

GK: Wow, these are so great.

EK: He owned that. Yeah, I can't see too good. But how it happened, we got those ones, these right there. I knew when I was looking at them [inaudible]. He owns the twine shop over here by the [inaudible]. At the time, my brother was in charge then.

MK: [0:11:23] [inaudible] Smith had them when they was going to close up Three Rivers, and he'd give them to you.

EK: Well, he'd come down on the sardine boat, and my brother had the purse seine made up because the other one we had was wearing out. So, he had the purse seine made up. He come down and on the boat we [inaudible]. That purse seine that he brought, you couldn't get fifteen hogshead in. And I was trying to look. I know these were the ones, but I had other ones here that showed –

GK: They're beautiful photos.

MK: Nothing over this way.

EK: Oh, she got more books?

GK: Is that you? Oh my god.

EK: You see that? Well, on Beals Island, once a year at the school, they'd have someone come over and take pictures of the kids. Well, of course, we'd been outdoors playing and everything. The teacher says send us home, the lot of us, [to] get cleaned up. Up on the hill there, we used to have to come down by the garage that's on top of the hill and take the road down where I lived. I lived way down by – well, I don't actually know if you'd know.

GK: [0:12:43] This is on Beals?

EK: Yeah. I lived over there until I was twelve.

GK: Yeah, where did you live? I could always look at a map later.

EK: Yeah, that place ain't there. It isn't there. That's it.

GK: You moved the house?

EK: No, they tore it down [and] built another one. It was a big old farmhouse. The building – I don't know if we tore that down a few years ago. We had that over here at – one of the building[s], the big barn; they never bothered with. But I went round around that corner on a bicycle, a borrowed bicycle at that. A fellow had a garden right across the road. When I turned, he had the [inaudible]. I landed in that garden. When I went back, the teacher said, "What on

earth has happened to you?” [laughter] She said, “You look worse now than when I sent you home.”

GK: It’s like you broke your nose.

EK: No, didn’t break it, but I cut it right wide open. I don’t know what cut it. Must’ve [inaudible] that bicycle.

GK: Oh my goodness. That is too funny. This other photo here – these are really remarkable photos.

EK: [0:13:52] Yeah, that fellow, I think, took them all. All except the ones that –

MK: They gave me the whole set. I worked down to Three Rivers, and when they got ready to close it up, he asked me if I thought that he might want them because it was taking up [inaudible].

EK: Listen, I don’t know who took that one. I couldn’t tell you.

MK: So, he gave me those.

EK: Unless they had a camera on the boat we was loading, but this one’s from out of the weir.

GK: Yeah. Wow.

EK: There’s more here.

GK: Oh, here’s some stuff.

EK: Yeah, that’s [inaudible]. We was up at the head of the cove. There was Joey, his boys. We took them in with the – we never had enough equipment, but there’s all kind of –

GK: Can you tell me about the equipment you were using for seining and how you did it? Because I don’t think I’ve ever – I guess I’ve seen someone purse seining, or was it stop seining?

EK: [0:15:01] It was stop seining. We did go purse seining years and years – before anyone ever thought of it, I guess. My father went with him and my brother. I thought there was more in here.

MK: There’s none in there.

EK: Huh?

MK: They’re all in the other one.

EK: [inaudible] I thought I saw one where we had the twine run out. Oh yeah, we got it, where we had the twine run out. There's a place there. That was my crew there when we was up in the cove.

GK: Who was in your crew?

EK: Two of the boys, (Carl Rannick?) and Tuddy Urquhart. And then those two were there with us. That was Joey Alley – and what was the boy's name? Some of the names [inaudible] right to me, and other ones [inaudible].

GK: Sometimes they just leave you.

MK: [inaudible] Alley and who else?

EK: [0:16:02] No, [inaudible] wasn't in this group. This is Joey when they took him and the boy in. That was the one up in [inaudible]. I thought there was one there with twine. Got everything in here.

MK: Kendall.

EK: Kendall.

MK: [inaudible] name was Kendall.

EK: Oh, yeah. Kendall was the other one's name. I thought I had that [inaudible]. But it was all stop seine. This was a stop seine. See this? This is what we call a pocket that we were seining. This is the running twine that we had, and we was just seining the pocket.

GK: So it's different. How did the fish –? How do you get the fish into this? Is it just sitting there for a little while, and then they'll come in?

EK: [0:17:06] You run the twine across the cove, and in the morning before daylight, if you could get a pocket on, you'd just sink the front of it down, and they'll go right in.

GK: Go right in.

EK: Yeah.

GK: So it's kind of like a weir?

EK: Yeah, the only thing – a weir fishes itself. You know what I mean.

GK: Yeah. It's always there.

EK: Yeah. Well, right here in the background – there's the weir in the background. Well, the weir wouldn't catch them all [inaudible] to get enough.

GK: That's an amazing picture because you've got the weir in it, and then you've got –

EK: Yeah, I never noticed that. I just happened to glance and see the weir.

GK: That's amazing. Is this an old –? What are these?

EK: That's the same running twine we used, but that there's been, it's made out of [inaudible] stakes you drive down and brush it.

GK: And then there's a net down there?

EK: [0:18:06] No, the net's in here. See, the fish will hit that and fall right in there, either side. The fellow that built that weir had three or four, and they wouldn't fish good. But he kept playing every year, building new weirs, and he got that one, and that weir never ever fished all while we ever had it. I mean, it always had [inaudible]. And sometimes, it'd surprise you. One Fourth of July, one of the prettiest Fourths I think we ever had, we decided we wouldn't get it – they always had poles up [inaudible], and you'd get up and watch them. Well, we decided after a year or so we weren't going to play with that because we could seine it quicker, and we had the seine [inaudible] barrels. If it was just a few fish, we'd keep it for bait. Then the people that was up there would buy bait.

[0:19:01] So this Fourth of July especially, we went and seined, and we had what they called a [inaudible] pocket on the back of it. We went and seined, and we couldn't get as far as the door. The weir was full. So we went back and got the other end and went the other way and forced them into the pocket. It was the Fourth of July. After we had done, he looked it over, my partner and I – he said, "What did you say was in that pocket?" I said, "Hundred hogshead anyway." So I never said nothing. We come home. Well, on the way home down what they call Charlie Stevens' place, down by the post office, that big building. He was sitting there on the doorstep, Charlie was – Charlie Stevens. I went over. I said, "Charlie, how you [inaudible] for herring?" Because we sold him a lot. "Well," he says, tell me there's a lot of them up on the harbor [inaudible]." Well, we got talking, and he [inaudible] said that they'd given extra, extra herring. I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I guarantee there's a hundred hogshead, if not more, but I'll guarantee a hundred hogshead, and you can have them for seventy-five." "Boat will be right up this afternoon." That was Fourth of July, too. He said, "Boat will be right up this afternoon." We took our hundred hogshead and got paid. But I come home, and I call my partner. He said, "Just right." Because if we can't get rid of them, we're going to lose altogether. And what we get is yours and mine. So you can look at it two different ways, but we got rid of them anyway [laughter].

GK: [0:20:40] Wow.

EK: But that was the biggest catch we had there at all.

GK: When you're saying – you're calling them something. Hundred hogs?

EK: Hogshead. They called them then.

GK: How do you spell it? Do you know?

EK: I can't remember.

MK: Hogshead, H-E-A-D.

EK: Now they go by the pound.

GK: Hundred hogs –

EK: And I can't remember how many pounds in a hogshead.

GK: Oh, got it. That's a type of measurement. You have a hundred hogshead.

EK: The boats was measured then. They was measured – I don't remember whether the state measured them or whether it was the federal government, but all sardine boats had to have them measured, and every measure up, every five hogsheads, there would be a mark – five hogsheads, ten hogsheads.

GK: Oh, got it. Interesting. An old saying. Hogshead.

EK: [0:21:40] But now they go by the pound. I can't remember how many pounds was in a hogshead. Junior told it here the other day. I think I told him about it.

GK: I'll ask someone down at Byron's. Maybe someone will know, someone will remember.

EK: Well, [inaudible] they would know, I suppose. Because that's how they handle them now. Now, see, we got twenty dollars a hogshead. And now they're twenty-odd dollars – twenty to twenty-five dollars for one measly little bucket. There's thirty-four buckets in a hogshead.

GK: Woah.

EK: And see how much they're making now for what we made. One time, when I was with my brother, we was down back of the island. We took out five hundred in one day, five hundred hogshead. We had to pump her, and then we dipped them, and they hoisted the dip and dumped them. I got one of the dip nets off one of them tiny [inaudible]. I think it was Underwood's sardine boat. I'm not sure.

GK: [0:22:50] That is amazing, the volume of fish that you were catching. Amazing.

EK: I forget now how many we had in that one [inaudible] down there, but it was a job to get rid of them.

GK: So, what got you into the herring business? Was it just something you were –?

EK: Well, I got out of the service, and my brother said, "I need a man." I thought he said, "man." [laughter] So, I went with him, and Papa was with him. Well, [inaudible], my brother was supposed to be in charge, but my father had done most of the catching the herring because he was an old timer at it. So we got one year, and I think we weren't married. When I had to go to the Reserves, we got married.

MK: We were married when you joined the Reserves.

EK: When I had to go to the Reserves down South Portland. That was the Coast Guard Reserves. So, I get out of World War II, and when Korea come up, they give me another call. So my brother lived over here, and he'd been through World War II with a – they put him commander of the Coast guard District. He called him up, and he said, "Send him right to Portland. He ain't going in the Army." So I went to Portland. These stories –I don't know. But I went to Portland.

GK: [0:24:16] You don't know what? If you can tell them? [laughter].

EK: Well, this could last all day. [laughter]

MK: They're all dead now. You can't get them in trouble.

EK: [laughter] Well, anyway, they couldn't take care of me that day, and we had to have it done because the Army would have had me. See, a certain time that I had to report for the Army. So they sent me down to Lewiston. And Lewiston, they couldn't do it. Well, I called [inaudible] up. His name was [inaudible], and I told him, "I can't get it done." But I said, "I'll tell you. We got a government doctor in Jonesport." Well, he said just take the papers to him, have him fix it up, and send it in. So, I did. So, when I come home the first time, I went to – Cecil Kelly down the road had a little – well, where the old schoolhouse was, he had a little store there, had an eating place. When I went through the door, there he was – Doc (Dion?). He said, "Pretty looking [inaudible]. You've got me in one hell of a [inaudible]." I said, "Why?" [laughter]. He said, "Your blood pressure's up." I knew that. It was always.

GK: [0:25:28] Oh my gosh.

EK: I said, "Well, what do you do about it?" [inaudible] He said, "I told him you just got married. Your pressure would be up, too." [laughter] So they never said a word about it, so I guess they just let it go.

GK: Right. Because you can't be in the Army if you have –

EK: No.

GK: Right. That's so funny. Oh my gosh.

EK: Oh, [inaudible].

GK: This house was the house that you grew up in and raised your children in, and you've been in this house –?

EK: Oh, no. He had another one. I should have left it. We built a new house down on the bank there. This was down there when it was built, and we moved it up after World War II. We moved it up here. Well, her and I got married, and we decided we'd build a new house right on that bank.

GK: [0:26:30] Where did it go?

EK: We sold it.

MK: We gave it away.

EK: My mother died. She took care of her and worked besides, and then my father was ill. He was ninety-odd years old, and she took care of him and worked besides. She'd been everywhere working [as a] nurse. So we both worked hard.

MK: They didn't want to leave their home. I don't blame them. She worked hard, and so did he. Well, I could not live here with four children. We couldn't see eye to eye. When I corrected him, they weren't [inaudible]. So, we built the house to the shore. We'd stay, but I could come up here to take care of them back and forth. Finally, his mother died, and they didn't want his father living here alone. There was eight in the family, and they didn't want his father living alone, and his father wouldn't live with any of the rest of them. So I couldn't keep two places going and work besides, so I moved up here. We sold the place down there, and they moved it over to send it over to the beach.

GK: [0:27:46] This is interesting to me. So people would buy – there's a lot of stories about people moving houses around.

EK: Oh yeah.

GK: So people would just buy the house but not the land? They didn't buy the land from you.

EK: No, no.

GK: Just the structure?

EK: They had the land over Mason's Bay. There's a sharp corner when you're going over, looking north in the water. After you leave here, the first water you'll see out across there. They moved it over there. They had land there. They used it for a cottage. We had three rooms in it [and a] kitchen.

GK: Does your family have a wharf down here?

EK: Yeah, and it washed down this fall.

GK: This fall?

EK: This spring, and we never got it built back, and the boys don't care if they build it because they've got the marina. So I know I'm too old to play with it. I got new lumber down there, but they wouldn't – now there's a storm come, and there was two-hundred traps out on the end, and somehow, [inaudible] was getting quite old, and away it went.

GK: [0:28:52] And all the traps, too?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Oh, gosh.

EK: I got some of them.

MK: I'm ninety-three. He'll be ninety-three years old in December.

GK: Oh my goodness.

MK: And he says –

EK: Ninety-two.

MK: – “I'm too old to lift that lumber and stuff around.”

GK: Ninety-two. That is quite impressive.

MK: Ninety-two. He was born in '26.

EK: Yeah, it's ninety-two.

GK: He doesn't even know.

EK: Oh yes, I do.

GK: [laughter] I wouldn't be able to count anymore.

MK: I think he does well remember all this stuff.

GK: I know. It's amazing.

MK: He [inaudible] work out around here.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Now, we don't have no help.

MK: And he walks right off.

EK: No help.

MK: He's smarter than lots of these younger people are. We'll put it that way.

GK: I know. Well, it's changed a lot. The fishing industry has changed a lot, it seems.

EK: Oh, yeah.

MK: He had his few traps this year. He just sold his boat.

EK: Had two-hundred out.

MK: Leased his boat for another – he's not going to keep it. Big expense to try to keep a boat up

EK: [0:29:56] Well, I can't chase her all the time.

MK: Well, they don't want him getting up on the bow of the boat by himself. He could go overboard just like anyone else. It kept them worked up all the time. "Where's daddy?" Well, you got to go down and watch him, see what he's doing. Well, he says, "I can't chase that boat night and day." So, he says, "I must just well give it up."

GK: When was the last time you had traps in the water?

EK: This year, we just got them up [a] month ago.

GK: Wow. And you were out fishing?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Wow.

EK: The boat's still in the water down there. My grandson's going to have her. I made her over to him.

GK: What's the name of the boat?

EK: *Marilyn E.*

MK: And he won't change it.

GK: Good.

MK: He won't change it. He'd come over, and he says, "I'm keeping the *Marilyn E.*" I said, "Put your wife's name on it." She doesn't want it. She says, "That's the *Marilyn E.*, and as long as I'm living, it's going to be the *Marilyn E.*"

GK: [0:31:03]]That's sweet. That is sweet.

MK: He was so pleased to get that boat because he always said he'd like to have it, but we didn't think he'd ever. When he got ready to get rid of it, he wanted it. Well, but he don't want no other name on it. He says, "That's papa's boat, and she's the *Marilyn E.*" It's nice you can sell it to someone that appreciates it.

GK: That's true. It is. Isn't it sort of good luck to keep this name of the boat?

EK: Probably.

GK: Probably, that's what I'd think. So your family has – someone was telling me – four generations of lobster licenses. Is that true?

MK: Papa had one [inaudible] he doesn't count. I mean, Papa had one.

EK: I was trying to figure which one because Kyle –

MK: Then Kyle got one.

EK: His son gave it up.

MK: And his son gave his up.

EK: He went to paper mills.

MK: Then, Randy's got one. His boy just bought the boat. His four sons have a lobster license. So the next generation down would be the one that bought the boat. But then we got another one that's in high school now.

EK: [0:32:22] Oh, that's Patrick. And anyhow, there's two there. There's three right there besides me.

MK: So there's Ernest.

EK: Ernest, Jr.

MK: And Ernest, Jr.

EK: Patrick.

MK: Patrick.

EK: Anson.

MK: And Anson. The fourth generation still fishing now.

GK: Wow. That's pretty amazing. Did you think it was going to be –? Did you think that your family would stay in the industry, that it would be there for –?

EK: Well, not really. I thought some of them would – well, one did go, and he took engineering up, and he worked in the paper mill up to – I guess that one closed. Before it closed, he went down to South Carolina, and they wanted him to go up to Washington. That's where he is right now. Manager at mill up there.

GK: The state of Washington?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Wow.

MK: But he can't wait to get back. [laughter]

EK: [0:33:24] He don't like the weather. [laughter]

GK: Rains a lot up there.

EK: The kids don't like it. He's got two children, and they don't like it.

GK: They don't like the weather in Washington?

EK: Yeah. The little girl – she plays golf. How old is she? She's only ten, twelve.

MK: Ten.

GK: Wow.

MK: She's in the championship up there for her age group.

GK: Oh my gosh.

MK: But he used to take her – my grandson used to take her when she was about three years old up to play with the kids. And you get that into them after a while, and it's just like any other sport. [If] you like, you like it, or you don't.

GK: Yeah, it's true. That's true. Is it grandkids or great-grandkids? Is Anson your –?

EK: Great-grand.

GK: Great-grand. Wow. That's impressive.

MK: Four grandchildren, but we've got one great-grand.

GK: [0:34:27] Great-grandchild?

EK: Yeah.

MK: That's got his own –

GK: That's fishing.

MK: Is getting started.

GK: Yeah, that's great. Well, I want to know more about what kind of boats you were going when you were doing this. Like this one, that looks like a – it's not a small boat.

EK: That's just the one we took the twine up in – seine. Just for seining the fish out. No, we had a big Novi boat. Them things, they –

MK: I don't think you've got her in there.

EK: No, but I was going to show her – she was [inaudible] like that. She was forty-odd-foot long. We used her for dragging, everything. We could live in it and everything. We went off the fish dragging for two years at different times. We used her for scalloping. These little blue mussels they got now, we started – him and I started that business here. Ralph took it over.

GK: [0:35:37] Oh, the Moosabec Mussels?

EK: Yeah, but they weren't here then. We were the first ones for two years or so. Then he wanted to get into it, and he did, but him and I got out of it because it was getting too much for us. We had the boat all ready to go, and we had the scallop drags on, and this man shows up from Rhode Island. [He] wanted to know if we'd go get those little mussels. He says, "We can get them in the summer if you can get them in the winter." Well, we thought it all over, and he told us what he'd do. He'd buy a washer. We had to have a washer on the stern to wash them. He'd buy it, put the washer on, and all this stuff, and what he'd give us [inaudible], and they'd have a truck here to get them. So we started out, and after a while, we found some. We couldn't wash them up here, down at the marina – red tide, all that stuff. So we'd have to drag them and go from here down Bucks Harbor for water. After a while, did we go in the –? We took them down in the truck once or twice.

[0:36:53] But anyway, we got caught down there one night in a nor'easter snowstorm. A fellow down there called me up on the radio, and he told me [to] bring her back and put her on his mooring. He'd let us [inaudible], but we didn't because that fellow's brother was down there running the business. So we put her on his mooring, and he took his brother's truck, and we

come home. Well, the next time, we got caught in the snowstorm, and we kept on coming and blowing hard northeast after dark. All we had was a compass. [laughter] I said, "If we get up through them narrows, we'll go in through and come up around the shore, get home." So, we did. He said, "Next morning if we're alive, that washer that we were supposed to have that's on that wharf is coming off the wharf next morning." We went down, got it, and put it on the boat. We weren't going down there no more. [laughter] That's a long sail after dark in thick snow [in the] wintertime in an old Novi boat.

GK: [0:37:54] Wow. What would you do for heat on that boat?

EK: Well, we had a stove in her.

GK: Okay. You had a wood stove?

EK: Yeah. [inaudible] That poor old soul – she's had cancer, and she likes to work out in the garden. She'd been up and kept [inaudible]. What is she? Sixty-five? Seventy?

MK: Seventy. She's older than (Kyle?).

EK: She likes to work in that garden.

GK: Still doing it.

EK: Yeah. The old people – most of them, it seems you can't put them down.

MK: She had cancer and [was] operated on, and we didn't even know it. But still, she'd go up there. She's got the beautiful garden. The whole thing is the most beautiful flowers. And she's operated on, got better, and worked all summer. Next thing, she had to go to the doctors, and they give us some kind of medicine, and she had a heart attack from it. So she's been laid up all fall, so she's behind on her garden work, but she digs all the time. That's her hobby.

GK: [0:39:05] And won't stop. She won't stop. It makes her feel good.

EK: She don't want to.

MK: She drives. Her husband has to keep after her not to overdo it. A woman don't always listen.

EK: No, that's right. You ain't telling me nothing.

GK: It sounds like you probably were in some scary situations when you were a young guy.

EK: Yeah, you're right.

GK: Did you ever worry about it?

MK: Worry. I guess that's all it was, was worry. Now you get over this [inaudible]. You all have your children, your grandchildren. When you've got a whole family working on the water, all it is is worry. One night they went aboard the boat because it's just the case down there – and cold, way below zero. They had an old CB [radio] then, not like they got now [where] you talk back and forth, the old kind. Someone asked where he and Tud was. "He's gone out aboard the boat." A man come on; he says, "If those two are aboard that boat tonight..." I can't remember how [inaudible] below zero [inaudible].

EK: [0:40:17] Twenty-four. He said it was twenty-four below.

MK: Twenty-four. He says, "They'll freeze to death." Well, they got out there, and they couldn't get back on the mooring.

GK: Because the seas were high or blowing?

EK: No, just the blowing.

MK: Ice and blowing and everything.

EK: Cold. [inaudible] The boat – that's what got me. That boat wouldn't leak a bit in the summer. You could leave her for a month. In the winter, you had to watch her every day. I guess she'd open up, just not much. She was an old boat anyway. It got us by.

MK: Finally, they got out far enough, so they got into someone else's wharf and got all right, but what is five minutes seems like an hour when they're gone.

GK: And you've got the radio still. I just heard it, right? Your VHF [very high frequency]? Was that what that was?

EK: No, that's the VHF there. Oh, I got the scanner on.

GK: Oh, the scanner.

EK: [0:41:17] But that's no good no more. They talk on the telephone. They don't want no one to know what's going on unless they get in an emergency.

GK: Right.

EK: Now, the ambulance don't want no one to know. It's confidential. But if they have to call the fire department in for a lift, they tell them right where it is.

GK: Right.

EK: But they can't do it any other time.

GK: Oh my gosh. I know that used to – I'm sure communication has changed so much with the cellphones now.

EK: Same way as equipment in the water. One of my sons – I guess he can see everything on bottom he's going. Two, three thousand dollar [inaudible] or more.

MK: When our oldest son first got his boat – he and his brother decided they wanted a boat, so of course, whatever they wanted, we let them try. They went by themselves, shut down – thick fog. Of course, we was up there in the big boat because I used to go with him a lot. I says, "Ernest Kelley, if they're lost ...". We didn't know where they were. So Ernest says, "How come you found your way home?" He says, "Well, Papa told me you couldn't get lost up in that bay." That was his grandfather. He says, "All you have to do is shut your motor down and listen." He says, "So we listened for the seagulls on the rocks. We knew when we heard the seagulls there was a rock close by." Then they'd listen and use their –

EK: [0:42:53] One island there, Ballast Island – they always had to go on this and everything. Could hear him all the time. He told his boys, "All you got to do is listen. You know where that is. Then just come over on the Jonesport side and come down." But he never had a compass that I know of. I went with him on the start. Well, not really. He went with me in the boat to teach me what to do.

GK: This is your grandfather?

EK: My father.

GK: Your father?

EK: Yeah. He was always on the ocean and sailing vessels and everything. But he was down in the bay, down in this bay in thick fog when I started up the bay, and I thought I was going right. He says, "You keep going, and you're going over those islands." [Laughter] So, after a while, he taught me what to do with the wind and the sea and all that stuff. He even said, "You watch the sea on a breaker," a ledge underwater break. He said, "You count three times from one time that breaks until the other time; you'll hit it every time when that [inaudible] break."

GK: [0:44:07] Wow.

EK: Yeah, he taught me a lot of stuff.

GK: It's such different knowledge than the knowledge –

EK: Today.

GK: Yeah, so different.

EK: They have all these electronics today.

GK: Do you worry about what would happen if they suddenly didn't work?

EK: Well, that's what I've been telling her. Of course, it wouldn't bother me now because I said I wasn't going again, but the boys [inaudible] go with one or the other of them and set a few traps. I don't know. I might.

GK: She's shaking her head. No, no.

MK: If he wants to go, he'll have to go because he'd drive me crazy at home. I mean, he would. He'd walk the floor, "Oh, I'd like to be out there." Go. Your time isn't coming until it comes, so that's it.

EK: Now, you tell about seining. I think of that all the time. I used to love that.

GK: What? Seining?

EK: Yes. As I say, back then, you never got the price, but I'd still like to go. I told her the other day – I said, "[inaudible] herring, but you can't catch them." You're on a limit, and that's it. We had to seine [inaudible] two of them, purse seining. They had [inaudible], and I guess that one's going back home. One of them went quite a while ago.

MK: [0:45:27] Yeah, but I could tell you why he liked seining if you'd flip that off just a minute.

GK: [Laughter] You won't tell me on the record? [Recording paused.]

MK: He'd like to tell you the truth, but we may [inaudible].

GK: It's a good story. When you went seining, did you stay out for a couple of days or was it just always overnight?

EK: No. Well, we'd be in this area, so I'd come home during the day sometimes.

MK: That's how he'd eat.

EK: [laughter] We had plenty aboard the boat, but we was right in this area [inaudible]. We got the herring or the twine taken care of; we'd go home for two or three hours. My father and brother used to go western seining. They'd go up there first, and they'd work back down east where the herring were.

GK: When you say western, how far west?

EK: Oh, they'd go up far as Portland.

GK: Oh, so really far west?

EK: [0:46:27] Yeah, they'd stay [inaudible].

GK: When you say you really didn't make much money, it wasn't that profitable?

EK: Oh, yes, you'd get by, but you had a job to get rid of them after you caught them because there were so many along the coast then that were seining. What was it? Three or four right in this area besides the weirs. Used to be a lot of weirs here.

MK: And then, of course, when the factories started closing down, you had more of a job to get rid of them.

EK: Yeah. We used to sell a lot for bait.

GK: Would you sell that directly? I mean, did they have a bait dealer, or would you sell directly to fishermen?

EK: [inaudible] fishermen. Down here at the co-op, when that first started, we used to sell some there. They had a couple of tanks out on the wharf. I guess they'd hold five, six hogsheads. We'd fill them up at times for them. It was a job to get rid of them a lot because there were so many – as I say, so many seining. They'd even go away from here with herring here. I know [inaudible] send boats from here going to Marshall Island after herring.

MK: [0:47:46] They didn't use so much bait back then because now they're fishing probably eight hundred traps. Back then, a hundred traps was a big game.

EK: A hundred and fifty was a big game around here then. [inaudible] Look at the boats over in that cove. There was only seven or eight boats out years ago.

GK: And how many do you think there are now?

EK: [inaudible]

GK: I mean, in all of Jonesport and Beals, I would guess a hundred and fifty or something.

EK: [inaudible] I think it's more than that.

GK: You think it's more than that? I want to get a list. I'm sure it's easy to get.

EK: [inaudible] the marine department.

GK: Yeah, from the DMR [Department of Marine Resources].

EK: I used to have them because I was on the council, and I used to get them every year, the ones on the waiting list and all of that. What is it? A couple of years now? I quit.

MK: I guess so.

EK: (Didn't do much?). You go to a meeting, and all they do is argue back and forth, and you wouldn't get things settled, so [inaudible].

GK: [0:48:51] What were you on? The fisheries council? Was that the Maine Lobsterman Association?

EK: Lobster council.

GK: Okay.

EK: Now, when they come up – that council come up with some good ideas, but a lot of times, the marine department wouldn't go along with it, and they'd be outvoted up to the [inaudible]. Now there's another one that I was thinking of that they was coming up with – I read in the paper a while back, but I know it came from up [inaudible]. The only one we got back – we voted for two out and one in. Next thing I know, or we knew down here, was that the state had changed it. They went by the trap tags that we put on them, so many trap tags. Well, [inaudible] probably get one out of every ten or twelve that would go out before one could come in.

GK: [0:49:54] So you're saying ten or twelve fishermen have to die –

EK: Before one would get in.

GK: – or they stop fishing before you could have someone [inaudible].

EK: So then, we put it up again, and it's back to the two and one. But up to the [inaudible] – I even got a letter from – can't remember what. Was it Winter Harbor or Stonington? – [inaudible] threatened us for doing it that way because they didn't want anyone in the business. They wanted the business for themselves, you see. The more they could keep out, the better off it was going to be for them. But we got it back on just the same because there were little kids around here, a lot of people. Nothing to do. What is there to do? A lot of them was elderly that was fishing. They'd be in their forties, fifties. Nothing they can do in this area. Now they shut us down on handline fishing. We can't even go catch a fish. Well, one summer or two summers, we done good at it.

GK: [0:51:06] What were you catching with handlines?

EK: Codfish and haddock. Pollock.

GK: With a handline, are there multiple hooks on those?

EK: Yeah.

GK: So, how many could you catch on one line? I think [inaudible]

EK: Well, we only used three hooks. But the oldest boy put six hooks on, and we was on a big piece of bottom offshore that no one was on because that time they couldn't find it, and my

father showed me where it was. Well, anyway, he lowered the line down, and he's got a bite, and he had a fish, and he started up. Before he got that line up to top water, he couldn't haul them. He had six of them great big pollack on there. They bit as he was hauling. They kept biting, and two of them got them up and got them aboard the boat. We had two of mine with me all the time. This other fellow had one. He had his boy with him. It was—

MK: (Lessing?).

EK: [0:52:07] Lessing and Alfred.

GK: Do you think there's a difference between handlining for cod and then other forms of fishing? I mean, is handlining just —?

EK: If they hadn't started the gillnetting and the draggers, there'd be plenty fish today. Because I went dragging for two years, and you destroy almost as many as you catch. The small ones — they're dead. Up in that net and put in a boat and picked over. Everyone used to bring them home. People used them for bait, what you was throwing away — small flounders and scad and all that stuff. You wouldn't throw nothing back. The only thing you'd throw back was the lobsters. They passed that awful quick. You couldn't keep a lobster aboard.

GK: Did you like dragging, or was it —?

EK: Yeah, that was good. The only thing — that was tiresome. If anybody had a bigger boat or had that rigged up that you could stay overnight, but when you leave here, and you steer three hours, make three three-hour tows, then three hours back, you haven't got much time to eat or sleep. [laughter]

GK: [0:53:29] Yeah, that sounds pretty intense. How many miles offshore were you going?

EK: Oh, probably twenty-five to thirty.

GK: What do they call that area? Is that the Georges Bank area?

EK: It was inside Georges Bank

GK: How far out is —?

EK: Schoodic Ridge.

GK: Schoodic Ridge.

EK: The Schoodic Ridge is up the [inaudible] where we was. There's a lot of broken bottom up through there.

GK: How far is Georges Bank? Do you know?

EK: I wouldn't dare say. I wouldn't dare say.

GK: It's far out there. I can easily picture –

EK: We was down on Marblehead Bank. We went there once. Raymond Smith up here talked me into getting bait and meeting him offshore, and that way, I could give him some bait, and we was going off the bank down here. But there weren't no fish. We couldn't catch no fish there. I don't know what he got, but he left and come in. I told Alfred, the fellow who was with me, and the boys – I says, "I'll go to [inaudible], so I can get that piece of bottom that Papa told me about. I'd been with him on it. Went up and hit it, and you'd just get fishing, and she'd swing off of it. I said, "I'll fix her. I'll put an anchor on both ends." I caught a good boatload of fish right there when we come in. We was down at Three Rivers, and Raymond was there – Raymond Smith who went [inaudible]. He said, "Where on Earth did you find them?" And I said, "Out there in the ocean."

GK: [0:55:11] [laughter] What was Three Rivers?

EK: They handled seafood. They had shrimp when it was shrimp season and codfish they tried – he lost a lot of codfish. He was trying [inaudible]. I don't know whether he knew how or what. She worked there then.

GK: What did you do there? All sorts of things?

MK: We cut the codfish up [and] put them in those little packages. Each one had to weigh so much. We had smoked herring come in, and we had to put so many herring in. You couldn't go over or under. We had shrimp. We picked out conkles.

GK: Conkles. Do they still get those here?

EK: Oh, plenty of them.

GK: Yeah.

EK: But you can't sell them. I guess some of them – I noticed in the store they pickle them. Had them in little boxes.

GK: I've heard about pickled conkles, and people really like them.

MK: [0:56:11] We started that business down here, too.

GK: Really?

MK: [When] they get overloaded, they smell good. [laughter] He got too many, and they got rotted and –

EK: They couldn't handle them. He told that fellow and I – my buddy says, “Bring them in. We can handle all you can get.” [laughter] He found out he couldn't.

GK: Oh my gosh.

EK: You bait those traps with sculpins – just cut them a little. And you go back in an hour's time; you had a job getting the trap onboard. Yeah, that's how thick it was. My oldest boy was with us, and we'd haul them up; you'd have to take the trap and dump them. We'd dump them right in the boat.

GK: And what were they full of? Conkles?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Wow.

EK: Well, we'd go haul probably twenty to thirty more traps and go back, and they'd be the same. Well, we had as much as eighty cans there once. They were falling out the bucket.

GK: Wow.

MK: We worked a day and half the night picking on those things.

EK: She says, “I'll get a lobster cart.” Put them in, and it didn't make no difference. We filled them up in a couple of days.

GK: [0:57:15] Did they just pop out?

EK: No, they have to –

GK: Do you pick them?

MK: You have to pick them out with a knife.

GK: Okay.

MK: And then clean them besides.

GK: Yeah. So it's not that easy.

EK: No.

MK: [inaudible]

EK: Well, you had to. There was nothing else.

MK: When you bring a family now, you don't have to work as hard as you used to because there's so many freebies out there. When we brought ours up, we never had no freebies.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Not taking anything away from the woman that got governorship, but I'm going to say seventy-five/hundred percent voted for her on account of this seventy-nine to eighty-thousand people in Maine that she wants to put on the welfare list.

GK: You think that's why people voted for her?

EK: I know it was. Half, two-thirds in these areas here is on welfare. You can't get [inaudible] get nothing. We can't even get the oil.

GK: [0:58:25] You think it's the welfare, or do you think it's the healthcare?

EK: Well, it could be both.

GK: They're two different things.

EK: Yeah, it could be both. That's the way I got an idea of it.

GK: I could be wrong, but it seems like it's still pretty hard for people to get welfare handouts. I don't know that many people are on welfare.

MK: Everybody's got a lame back.

GK: The worker's comp.

EK: Then they go on disability. That's all you hear – the elderly and disability. Well, I don't know how many in this area on Beals over here that's getting it and getting disability. One boy right up the road, he's – what? – fifty.

GK: He's getting it.

EK: He got it after he got out of high school. He's been on it ever since. He goes, plays golf. I don't know how he got it. There was a woman on the island I know. She was – what? – probably in her forties when she quit work. Didn't work no more. She's on it. Go to ball games. Goes even mud driving. She's got a vehicle to go – what do they call it?

MK: [0:59:47] Mud running, is it?

GK: Mudding.

EK: Yeah. [laughter] So you see.

GK: Well, that would be frustrating to see.

EK: But now that's the first thing she said about – no, I won't say it's the first thing. But she was the one that said that she would go bring him in. Now, [Paul] LePage wouldn't do it because he said they never voted any money to support it. Where's the money coming from to support it?

GK: Yeah. Well, they could tax rich people.

EK: Yeah. Well, [inaudible] rich people, I wouldn't be paying no more. But the [inaudible] will be paying.

GK: Maybe.

MK: I have to pay – I'm only eighty-eight, but I have emphysema and COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease]. I have to pay over two hundred dollars a month for medicine.

EK: That's just the one.

MK: I can't get no help. I don't want it to pay for my medicine, but I'd like for them to put me on the low bracket.

GK: [1:00:49] Do you have health insurance?

MK: I have health insurance.

GK: But they don't pay for the medicine?

MK: No, I have to pay a percentage of it. I have RX plan besides. But when you go just so far, you're in a donut hole unless you're paying so much, taking up all your pension almost to make a payment on big insurance. We'll put it that way. Most everybody – I know most of them [inaudible] in town – is getting on MaineCare. Well, I don't want necessarily – I'd just like to get a payment decent on my –

EK: Well, there's one fellow up the road, up where the boys live. He had the same medicine you did and paid five dollars, and you paid almost three hundred.

MK: This is what bothers me. I come out with a box of medicine. Hundred and fifty dollars. Okay? I know it's mine. I need it, and I'll pay for it. I worked for it. I got the – and he says, "What did you pay for that?" I said, "A hundred and fifty dollars." He says, "Let me see it." And I showed it. He said, "Five dollars." Now that's what puts me out. He paid five dollars for what I paid a hundred and fifty for.

EK: [1:02:03] And he was – what? – probably in his fifties?

GK: They are trying to have the Medicaid expansion, which would probably be good. If there is anything that can help. I think with healthcare, drugs don't need to be that expensive. They just don't. It's a racket. They're making money off of us.

EK: I get [inaudible] ten dollars a month. I got two pills – five dollars each a month.

MK: I never smoked. But if I didn't have COPD and emphysema, I don't take no medicines.

GK: Which is amazing, as a ninety-year-old. Are you also in your nineties?

MK: Eighty-eight.

EK: No, she's eighty-eight.

GK: Eighty-eight.

EK: April, she'll be eighty-nine. But that's the way the ball bounces.

MK: I'm not [inaudible]; I just thank the Lord.

GK: [1:03:03] You're what?

MK: I just thank the Lord we're able to live here together, take care of each other. We don't have the very best, but we have what we need. We have food and everything. But it's aggravating to see people who are younger running around – they'll go to a ballgame. They eat from the time they go to the ballgame [inaudible]; they're out on disability. Now, you couldn't run those bleachers if your back was hurting that bad.

EK: They tell about jobs in the state of Maine. There's plenty of jobs, but no one wants to do them. I told her [inaudible], I'd go work at Walmart. Just go out and get them carts, fourteen dollars an hour, and you can talk to people. No, they ain't going to do it as long as they got that check coming in. Trouble is, they get more than we do.

GK: Do you think that's a majority of people or just a few people?

EK: [1:04:07] No, probably just a few. They claim that – because I had it with them in Bangor, the Social Security office. They said they have to have more to live on than we do because we can work. That's besides the point. We paid in. We should get what we paid in. Now, I've been paying every year since I take my social. About ten years – wasn't it? – or so, I never bothered. I just paid in. I got the same. She worked for the hospital, I think – when you was working there. Anyway, she got a slip where she got a raise that year. We went to Bangor. She gave me the devil. She said, "I [lost] mine." I said, "Don't make no difference. You ain't going to lose it. They can't take it." I asked her, "How come I don't get a raise?" "No one gets a raise." I was mad. I said, "That's a darn lie. You read this." "Oh," she said, "if you work for a company." I said, "Now, show me the difference from the company and from me. Because I pay in just as the company pays in." Next check was – that had been added on for that year. I'd been getting notices every year until this year – I get notice from where I pay in the last year. They add on just

a few dollars, but it's a few dollars. I never heard – and I told her – I said, "I got to call them up or stop in and have a talk with them." Last year, they never said nothing, and I never saw – it was after December, I got a notice – they just discovered I'd paid in. But they put it in one way and took it out another [inaudible].

MK: [1:06:05] [inaudible]

EK: So it didn't make no difference. I'm getting right now – I was sixty-two when I took it. I'm getting right now less than I did when I took it.

GK: Wow.

EK: People don't believe it. I got the papers to show it.

MK: The last few of my life, I went around to the houses taking care of sick people, giving them their baths, and making sure they had their meds. I did about six people a day, traveling in the car from house to house. Out of it, I could see the people that worked and tried and tried to be honest were the ones suffering. I had one man that I don't know if he worked after he was twenty years old, but he was sick. No question about it. He was on MaineCare. We have these [inaudible] we put under them, and also if they wet a bed and everything. If they were clean, I always straightened them out and put them back under them when I made the bed. He said, "Throw those away." He says, "They bring me those by the cases. I don't want [inaudible] sleep [inaudible]. They're wrinkled up." And he's someone that's worked hard all of [his] life out in the cold and everything. You have to go easy on them because they're expensive. They can't get no help like that. This is the government that's unfair. They don't sit down to reason. That's my idea.

GK: [1:07:32] My hope would be that it could be a little more of a universal system, where everybody was able to get a piece of the pie instead of a few people.

EK: There is a lot of people that really need things like that.

GK: Yes, that need help. Also, unfortunately, it's a personal responsibility thing. People should be able to not be collecting disability if they don't need disability.

EK: A lot of people –

MK: They should have a little pride, shouldn't they?

GK: Yeah.

EK: A lot of people collect everything that they can get for nothing. You can see that because we're in a small community, and you can see what's going on.

GK: I think it's particularly hard, too, for a fishing family because you are self-employed. How do you get your health insurance? You have to pay a lot of money. I have my health insurance.

I'm self-employed. I don't work for anybody. So I have the Affordable Care. That's actually been good for me because I don't make that much. So it's been good for me.

MK: [1:08:47] That's bad. Now, we never had any insurance until the hospital took it. I went to work for them. Then, instead of taking – I put him on it because I knew we'd gambled long enough without insurance. So I says, I might just as well put him on my – I guess we had Blue Cross at the time. That made it a lot easier to sleep at night when you got insurance. But it's the idea that these people that don't work – they get more than you do with insurance. Of course, now, we don't have to carry any big one because we have Medicare, and then we have the supplement, and we have the RX plan, but the ones that's out there doing nothing is getting more than that. How do they do it?

GK: I don't know. I don't know how that works.

MK: And they'll be sitting around – that food truck comes in town. Ernest told me yesterday someone he saw down there for it, and he says they need it. They're older people. They both were taking [inaudible]. They worked right up until [inaudible]. They went to the food pantry and got food. Well, they were in the – that's wonderful. That's wonderful. But there's some that's right there after. What they don't want – I've seen they're picking out – how do we know how old those eggs are? Throw them right out in the dooryard. If you don't want it, leave it alone.

GK: [1:10:14] Yeah.

MK: Whoever is administering this stuff should pay attention [to] who is getting it.

GK: I know. Well, I think that everyone is in agreement that there needs to be some sort of reform. It's just different ideas of how to do it. That's all. I think most people would be able to say something's not working because you've got a lot of people who are sick and suffering. It's an old state, so we have a lot of people who are elderly and need care.

EK: When I bought this last boat – she's what? – twenty-eight, thirty years old now. I just got her, and we went around to different banks because we couldn't really afford to buy her. So, Bangor Savings – was it? – let us have the money. We put half in her, half out. [inaudible] I fell off that darn doorstep, broke my leg in two places, had a cast [inaudible] up to here. She was working in the hospital at the time. She'd go to work, and I'd go get [inaudible] that cast on. I'd go to haul. Another fellow would stand by and put her on the mooring for me – get up on the bow. This day, I was out hauling, and I forgot the tide. The tide was running hard, and I was [inaudible] run up over it [inaudible]. I never fastened the crane. That came back and hit me in between the eyes. I landed over in the corner, and I was – "Whoa." I got up, blood running, and I said, "Oh, my. [inaudible] in the mess now." I took a paper towel, I guess. I got salt water right out the water. I kept rubbing it down, and after a while, there didn't seem to be any blood.

[1:12:21] My buddy was dragging quahogs, just [inaudible]. And I said, "Is my face cut open any or what?" [inaudible] "No," he says, "You're alright. You're tougher than (white lightning?)

[inaudible].” That’s all I got out of him. Yeah, I don’t know how many days I went that way, but you wouldn’t find anyone doing it, I don’t suppose. They wouldn’t be crazy enough.

GK: That’s crazy. Tough as nails. [Laughter] That’s pretty tough. Oh my gosh. Do you think there were any –? Were any of the regulations that happened on the fishery side –? I mean, were there some that you thought were warranted and some things that just weren’t okay at all? Did you have different feelings about –?

EK: Well, when him and I started, all we had to do – we’d buy a lobster license. Then all we had to do was have a commercial fishing [license]; we could do anything. They kept breaking that down now, so everything that you do, you got to have a license. And I didn’t –

GK: [1:13:30] Every species, yeah.

EK: Everything you do. Well, you had to have a license for the weir. You had to have a license to go seining and dragging.

MK: Dig clams.

EK: What?

MK: Dig clams.

EK: Yeah, everything you had to have a license for.

GK: Yeah. That’s a pretty big change compared to what you were probably used to.

EK: Well, they needed money, and they still need money. Now, when they put the trap tag on, it was only going to be for that year. Well, it went from ten cents. It’s fifty. Now they want more. The more money they get, the more they hire. New scientists, biologists, all of that. They got more now than – well, a year, they got more – the last time I was on the council, they’d hired another one. When we had meetings, sometimes there’d be two or three [that] come down. Different parts of the marine fishing they’d have a say about. That was one thing I didn’t go along with, but then when they shut down the shrimping, [inaudible]. They shut that down, but they let so many up to the western drag. You see it every day on television. Well, the first time I discovered it, we was up to (Governor’s?), wasn’t it, and they had shrimp on the menu. I said, “Where’d you get this shrimp?” “Oh, they’re in state.” See, they drag them. But no one else can go.

GK: [1:15:16] When was that? That was kind of recent, or was that a while ago?

EK: No, that’s been probably ten years ago.

GK: Yeah, ten. About ten years. Not so long ago.

EK: No.

GK: Well, that was one of the things in Portland I was always surprised about. I guess I knew there were draggers, but there are like six draggers there or something like that. I was always sort of surprised. Because I thought that had phased out. It seems like if you don't allow handlining, why would you allow –?

EK: Dragging.

GK: Right. It doesn't really make any sense.

EK: Now, that doesn't make sense. These draggers can go out, bring them into – I guess, Southwest Harbor and Portland, they land them there – and Gloucester, but you can't go out and catch one.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Some of them sneak some in. I did last year and the year before last. I catch one in the trap, and I'd bring him home.

GK: And you'd eat them here?

EK: Yeah.

GK: Yeah.

EK: [1:16:16] But the Coast Guard was aboard. The oldest boy was with me, and they was aboard the boat. I asked them the question if I could have a fish because my fellow that was with me seining and everything – they made him throw one overboard, and it was dead. He'd got them in the trap and [inaudible]. So I asked him the question, and he says, "We can take your boat, fine you, the whole nine yards, if we catch you with one aboard the boat."

GK: Crazy.

EK: So, you didn't really dare to, but what a lot of them is doing isn't helping. If they get any in the traps, they cut it up for bait. Waste.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Oh, there's so much – they should have lobster fishing the way it was years ago, but now they've caught onto it; a lot of them has got these big boats. They go offshore and fish, bring lobsters in ten, eleven, twelve o'clock at night. Who's going to check them? They're bringing in a lot of short lobster and big lobster. They can say what they want to. You know it as well as I know it. Now my grandson goes out, but he's back before dark or just after dark. He goes off thirty miles or so. He was off – what? He didn't go yesterday, did he?

MK: [1:17:45] Day before yesterday when it was so bad.

EK: Day before. Yeah, day before yesterday, he never got home until after dark, but he comes in [inaudible] a warden should be in the place. But they'll wait. One of them's right up to shore. You can see any time of night he's coming and going. They don't bother him. But anyone that lobsters during the day, warden's right there checking them.

GK: Do you worry about the volume of lobster that they're bringing in on those big boats? Or the debt that some of these guys are in? I mean, there's so much going on on those huge boats.

EK: Yeah. Now I guess it don't matter [inaudible]. I don't know if it was China – we've lost some market to China. They was getting a lot of markets there, getting rid of a lot of lobsters there. But I don't know where they're getting rid of them now. I thought they started a processing plant in Southwest Harbor when they closed that sardine – but I guess they don't. They ship an awful lot to Canada for that, and I don't know what they get for price.

MK: [1:18:56] If a man wants to go out and get a lobster license – this is what gets me – because [inaudible] home, he can't have one. He has to go through this [inaudible] process. But if you have a boy or girl – don't matter which it is – you can buy them a license. Now, you know these little kids aren't hauling those great big traps on.

EK: Oh, we watched that.

MK: And then they go [inaudible]. Why make these rules if you can't follow them?

EK: They come up with that deal where kids have a license.

GK: The apprentice program, right?

EK: Yeah. Well, you got kids eight years old. Now, there's another one. We voted – twelve. We got in an argument over it. They said, "Well, you lobstered when you were a kid." I said, "I was twelve years old." I lobstered right up this shore. So they set the limit at twelve. State said eight. They can't even pick up a trap, let alone haul it. Well, I had it with the head warden that was here. He said, "They supposed to haul them themselves and tend them themselves." But they don't. The warden got after one or two, [and] told them they couldn't do it no more. Well, the kid that he got after must have been ten, twelve years old. But all of them.

GK: [1:20:21] Yeah. I knew some friends in Stonington who had boats when they were nine. Their parents would go and watch them, but they did everything themselves.

EK: Yeah, well, the trouble is these here have been hauling them. Their parents is hauling them.

GK: Yeah. And how many traps can they have?

EK: Well, it all depends on the age. They can have ten traps up to twelve years old. Then they're allowed fifty. Then up to – I think it's fifteen – they can have a hundred and fifty. Then if they get a license at eighteen, they can have three hundred. Then work up. But now, you take those

kids; their parents are tending them. I've fished right along with them. So you know who's getting them. Now, we got a boy on the island that's blind. I think he's really blind, ain't he?

GK: [1:21:22] Yeah.

EK: He's got a lobster license and trap. He can't haul them, can't even see where they are. But that kid goes along with it. I mean, he enjoys going.

GK: I would assume there's some sort of different rule for that?

EK: Probably.

GK: I have no idea. I haven't looked into it. I don't know. Because they must have – that must be like a special case.

MK: Oh, yes, it is.

GK: Since he would have to have his parents.

EK: But we sat right down here at the marina when a fellow took the traps, and the kid tried to drag them down to the float to put them aboard. He couldn't even drag them.

GK: Yeah.

EK: Well, now that don't even make sense to let a fellow have – you know who is going to tend them. We have a garage down here. He works in the garage.

[Recording paused].

[Track Two]

EK: [0:00:00] [inaudible] that door's open and shut. Yeah. You'll hear it.

GK: You got a ghost in here.

EK: [laughter]

MK: That's not as bad as when the (McCains?) got –

EK: Oh, that was when we was living on the island. They used to have a – where'd she go?

GK: I'm here.

EK: They used to have carnivals here –

MK: She's just like a ghost.

EK: – two or three times a year. The boys would win something – my older brother. They’d get canes. There was some knickknacks. Anyway, she had an old-fashioned –

MK: Organ.

EK: – organ. It had posts stuck up on the side, and they had those canes on that organ. Well, we was out in the kitchen having our supper [inaudible] dinner – [inaudible] and next thing – the worst doggone noise you ever heard: them canes on the floor. Now, how’d they get there?

MK: [0:01:02] And they was crossed.

GK: Oh, creepy.

MK: How about the pigs?

EK: [inaudible] My oldest brother – we left him one Sunday morning because we all had to go to church, but he never went; he was too old. When we come home from church, he was out sitting on a rock. He didn’t dare go back in the house. He got so scared.

GK: Why? What happened?

EK: Well, I don’t know whatever the noise was in the house, but he never went in there.

GK: What about this house? You were saying this was the haunted house.

EK: This was the house they tore down.

MK: I don’t believe it is. They believe it. I’ve got a grandson that will not go upstairs and go to sleep.

EK: It was the old farmhouse.

MK: My son [inaudible] – “Papa?” He told so many ghost stories.

EK: Well, when this was on the island, my mother used to work in the factory. My brother that was next to me – we’d have to bring her over in the boat – row. That never had no outboard. We went back, and she worked until nine. We got on the island, was going down this path, just about like this right here, only it was all covered [inaudible], no houses. But our house sat down way down on the bank. Going down, my brother said, “That darn-blasted pig; he’s out again, out of his [inaudible].” We went down to the house. He went after him. He come back cussing. He said, “The pig’s right in his pigpen.” But you never knew what you were going to see or hear.

GK: [0:02:48] Weird. That is weird.

EK: [laughter] I was always scared.

GK: Oh my gosh.

EK: It didn't bother him any,

MK: Is that the kind of pigs that's out right now in the field? Or cows or something?

GK: But they weren't really out.

EK: No.

GK: Ghost pig.

EK: People wouldn't believe that stuff.

GK: I know. I know.

EK: There's a lot of people [who] would because they've seen something like that.

GK: I believe it. I believe it. Well, we need to go.

Greta Rybus: Got to get moving?

GK: Yes.

GR: Will you do me a favor?

GK: Because we have another –

GR: Can you put both of your hands on that –?

[Recording paused.]

[Track Three]

MK: [0:00:00] [inaudible] shell the clams out. About the time we got home, the lobsters had (died?).

GK: Oh my gosh.

EK: I went out here and hauled the traps. Then ran around to the back of the island [inaudible].

MK: But that was fun to go clamming with him because we was with him, and then dig a few clams, bring them up, and we'd start shelling. They'd go dig some more, and we'd shell them as fast. Had that nice water right there to wash them in.

EK: The other thing I never liked on the water or anywhere at all was worming. I couldn't go worming. The boys tried to talk me into it, and I went with them once. I just couldn't [inaudible].

GK: I don't like them. Yuck.

EK: But anything else – I was into everything there was.

GK: That's great. Let's plan on an hour on Monday.

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

Reviewed by Molly A. Graham 11/29/2022