



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES STINSON

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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PROSPECT HARBOR, MAINE

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Interview with Charles Stinson
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Interviewer: Keith Ludden

KJL I want to start with a little bit of your background. Do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

CS When I was born? November the 27th, 1930.

KJL 1930. You were born at a rough time.

CS Yeah, I was born just about right during the Depression.

KJL Yeah, Yeah. Do you remember some of that when you were a kid, having to get by?

CS I remember back when I was four or five years old, things going on. I remember the first car my father had was a 1935 Buick. Back then Prospect Harbor was a lot different than it is today.

KJL How was it different?

CS It was a busy place. We had three fish plants here, my father had. We did ground fish in one of them, canned clams in another one, and sardines in another one. He probably employed somewhere around 300-350 people in the summer, because back in those days everything was seasonal. You didn't have the facilities to keep your pipes from freezing and all that stuff, everything was seasonal, your fishing business was seasonal. And so back in the late twenties and thirties, clear through probably 'til oh, probably early forties, this place was a busy place. Today it's nothing.

KJL You say it was a busy place--there were a lot of people around?

CS A lot of work here. We employed probably 300-350 people, in those three plants. A lot of boats here, a lot of activity. Of course we had the lobster--My father had the lobster business besides that. We bought and sold lobsters. He and my father had a big pound they built in Hancock, up here. So we had lobster buying, and the lobster fishermen in the summertime used to go [] trawling, what they called [tub?] trawling, they call hooking them [] probably 800 to a thousand hooks [] That's what I did for a living when I was a kid, eight, nine years old. I started baiting trawlers, and we'd bait trawlers, and we'd take them out and go fishing and they'd bring the groundfish in the fish plat then, in front of that big, white house where I used to live. And that's what I did for a living in the summertime--bait trawlers.

KJL So you baited trawler lines?

CS Yeah, I used to bait them, and the fishermen put them in the boat, and they'd take them out and go groundfishing, and that's how they caught the fish. That went on for several years until the draggers started getting in here and so when the draggers got in here, they kind of depleted the supply; kept the fish [] and the lobster fishermen stopped tub trawling, and they went back to lobster fishing during the summer. Before they used to groundfish. Then we used to can clams in that other plant where the town dock is there, now. They had a big building there that was all--they canned clams there for years, and that kind of run out and we started handling groundfish. We'd process them and place them in boxes, ship them to Boston [clock chimes] and we packed the sardines in this plant down here, which is different than it is today. It burned in 1963, the old plant did, and we build a new one.

KJL So there was a clam operation?

CS Yeah, there was a clam operation right where those docks are--see that dock in the middle, there? There was a whole--a great big building, run the whole lengths. In fact it went out in the water, in the harbor further that this here one does. And that's what we canned clams in there--and steamed them, cooked them and sealed them, shipped them around the country. We did that for years. And during the war, in the sardine plant, we took a piece of that plant, that we processed mussels. We used to go down to the shore and buy mussels, go down and pick them up in the truck and bring them back and process them. And we sold a lot of them during the war to the government to serve the military people and different things; and that went on for quite a few years.

KJL Now you said--you mentioned you father. Was he associated with the cannery as well?

CS My father? Oh, year, he owned the whole affair.

KJL Oh, Okay.

CS He owned the cannery, the sardine plant, clam plant, and the fish processing plant and the groundfish plant.

KJL Oh, Okay, so he passed it down to you?

CS Yeah.

KJL So when did he start operating the plan?

CS When did he start operating? 1927. Yeah, when he come out of the military after World War I he went lobstering first--he and my grandfather. They used to have a big schooner. They'd go up and down the coast buying lobster, and they turned around and built that lobster pound up in Hancock. And they had that for --I cant remember now, quite a few years--oh, probably back into the early '40's , and then they sold it and the sold it to and outfit in Massachussetts--the Consolidated Lobster, I believe it was; and he build another plant down in Anderson. My grandfather and father went down there and worked on that pound for ten or fifteen years, then my father decided to get out of the lobster business and sold it to his cousin [Cliff Hook?] which was his father's sister's children.

KJL I'm going to stop and check this real quickly to make sure it's operating properly.

CS Looking good, huh?

KJL Yeah. Did the plant exist before your father started operating it?

CS Oh, yeah. It was owned by the A.P. Russell Company out of Massachussetts, and they shut it down, closed it down. I don't remember how many years it was down, but it was closed for a period of years before my father bought it, and he bought it in 1927, and he and another guy named [], they went into business together [and he] bought a plant in 1930 over at Southwest Harbor. They called it the Addison Packing Company, and that went on about three or four years and my father bought him out. And in 19--just close to the war, or just before--somewhere around '41 or '42-- somewhere around there, he bought this property in Bath, and processed fish there for years until, well we sold out in 1990, and we had four plant going at that time. We probably employed somewhere around 850 people at the time.

KJL Was you father a first generation American, or did the generations in this country go father back?

CS He was the first generation in my family to be in the sardine business.

KJL But his parents, were they native to Maine?

CS No, they come out of Canada. My grandfather, he had a pound years ago down in Grand Manan, Canada, and they moved up here to Corea, and after that they finally moved over here to Prospect Harbor. When my father bought the plant, he moved over here, and my grandfather went up and run that lobster pound up in Hancock. But they come from over in Scotland, England and Germany, and the came across into Canada, and [they had] a lobster pound in Grand Manan, and he sold that and moved up here.

KJL I see.

CS So he started that plant in '27, but before that, like I said earlier, my grandfather [went on a] big schooner up and down the coast buying lobsters. They'd buy the and put them in that lobster pound and they'd sell them to different dealers and different places.

KJL And what was your grandfather's name?

CS John.

KJL John Stinson?

CS Yeah.

KJL And you father's name was what?

CS Calvin

KJL Pardon me?

CS Calvin

KJL Alvin?

CS Calvin C A L V I N.

KJL Forgive me. I have Midwestern ears (laughs)

CS That was a long time ago.

KJL What's our first memory of the canning plant?

CS My first memory of it?

KJL Do you remember the first time you saw the inside?

CS Yeah, I used to go down there when I was six, seven years old. It was a lot different than it was today, 'cause back then--It would be hard to explain to anybody the process they had back then. Ad it's too bad, maybe somebody at the museum [at Searsport] may have pictures of them, I don't know. We had pictures, but when the plant burnt in 1963, we lost a lot of those pictures--lost all of them. I got a few, but i don't happen to have any when--

Years ago the cooked the fish differently. They steamed the fish before they packed them, and they--That stuff, everything was seasonal, you fishing business was seasonal. And so back in the--

Years ago they'd bail them out of the boats. they had a big net, and they'd bail them out, dump them out, and they'd run them into the flume in where the water is [to] the fish tank--what we used to call the tank room. And there'd be a man there bailing the fish out of the tank, into a wooden sluice [] what we call a flaker, and elevator flaker--a conveyor belt that took the fish upstairs to the second floor, and they're be a guy who put flakes on it. There was a big drum that dropped the fish on this flake, which would spread them evenly, that drum would, and then they put them in these tall, wooded, what we call fish racks. I don't remember how many flakes would be on a rack today. That was a long time ago. And they put them in what they called the steam cookers , and they cooked the fish, depending on the size of them, how--the length of time that they'd cook them. And they'd cook them there for anywhere from 10 to 18 minutes, whatever.

Then they'd go to this big room room with these two big huge fans and coils, heating coils at the other end that would draw this warm air down though the fish and dry them. And they'd stay in there so--maybe for half an hour or so, an hour. An then they'd take them out [] of the conveyor, and the guy would put them on the conveyor and the girls would take them off. There'd be two girls to a table . They'd take them off and they'd back them cooked back then. Put them in a can, then they put them on these trays and when they got so many trays, like there's 25 can in a tray. When they get four of them there would be a case. They got paid by the case, so much a case. Piecework, [they worked by]. And when they got so many piled up, a guy come along and picked them up and punched their card, said that they got a case, and showed how many they got. Some of them they get 31, 32 cases during the day, a goo, smart, fast packer would.

KJL What would a really fast packer make?

CS What would they make then? I don't know, but wages back then was--

KJL How many case?

CS How many cases?

KJL Uh huh.

CS Oh, she'd make 30, 31 in a day, yeah. Of course back in those days, eight hours was nothing. They work 9. 10, 11 o'clock at nigh. Back in those days you caught the fish by way of stop seines, and wait for them to come to shore. It was different than the way they did it in the later years. They had to bring them into the plant, whenever we could get the fish, we'd pack--after supper, 10, 11 o'clock at night. Many nights, sometimes we packed Saturdays, whenever we could get the fish. It was a lot of work.

KJL The process you just described--was that the way it was done when you were a small boy?

CS When I was younger, yeah, it was done that way. And I think it was back in probably--no, probably the late '50's, early '60's--they went and converted over to what they called a raw pack. We eliminated all these racks and stuff, and we put these fish on the conveyors raw, and they girls would put them in the can raw, and we'd pick them up, take them off, and cook them in a different type cart. And we'd cook them in the same, you know, cooking box--cook them in the same box, the same way, but we'd cook them in the can. And once we'd cook them, we'd turn them upside down and let them drain, wash them off, and then they'd take them over to the closing machines, where they put the cover--the oil in them, mustard in them, whatever--tomato--oil, put the cover on them, and that's the way we did it for many, many years.

And probably the last year or two that we had the company we totally automated this plant, here. We had one in Bath partially automated. The fish would come in, the girls would--They was all cut. We had cutting machines, that we'd grade the fish, whatever size it was, like [], put four in a can, eight in a can, or ten. They was all graded out through these grading machines. And we'd grade them out, and then they'd go up and cut them and they'd go to the girls all cut, and all the girls had to do was put them in the can all cut. And that would go through an automatic counter, so they could get counted for so many cans that they'd packed a day.

Then it went to the cookers--the cookers and the closing machines. We had a system that was built--after they was sealed, the oil, the sauce was put in them. It would convey them out to the automatic stackers and put them in the cans, the cases that way. Before, it was all hand work.

KJL This was the way it was done--what, in the '50's?

CS This was the way it was done that way probably the last two years we had the plant--'80--We sold it in '90. We probably had it going I think two years, I think--'89 80, 89, '90 we had total automation going. Before that it was all hand labor

KJL When did it switch from the hand work to the automation?

CS Well, probably 1988. We sold i in 1989--[corrects himself]--'90--'90 we sold it, and they continued it.and then of course Connors bought this guy out that we sold to. And they took everything out of it and took it to Black Harbor--and all the cans, because we used to make our own cans and covers down here, and they took all that equipment out and took it to Black Harbor when they bought the company from the guy that we sold to. So that's about the story on it.

KJL Now, the way the cans were made was kind of proprietary, wasn't it?

CS Yeah, they was made out [] that long building in the back where they made the cans. And we had the easy open lids. We made those as well--the covers and stuff. We made all those. We started doing that in--oh, probably back in--probably the '70's, we started making our own cans and covers. Late '60's. No, it was before that--late '60's. I'm wrong. It was before that because the plant burned in '63. It was in the late '50's we started making our own cans--in the late '50's

KJL When did you actually start working at the cannery?

CS When I come home from Korea--I was over there. When I got home I took a month off and went back to work--back in 1953, somewhere around there--'54, I started working in the plant. My father told me I'd had a long enough vacation. "Time to go to work," he said

KJL And where did you start in the plant?

CS When did I start?

KJL Where. Did you start at the tables where they packed, or did you start in management?

CS Well, I started in the plant. I operated a plant in Belfast we had. My father bought out several sardine packer competitors. So I started a plant in Belfast where I run that plant for several years. And then we finally--I went on the road. I travelled to all the plants and supervised all of them. What we had at them time was four plants, and I used to supervise the four. I'd travel around to the plants about every day and made sure everything was going right; anybody was having any problems, sit down and correct them, discuss them.

So I developed ways that--for the last par of our involvement in it, the fish was getting short in supplies. And of course we were forced to go purse seining, which, of course is probably not the best type of fishing in the world because unless a guy was very careful the fish wasn't--you could waste a lot of fish. If you caught too many, the boat couldn't carry--what would they do with them? No plant would take them. They dumped them. They was dead. So there was a lot of waste in purse seining.

KJL I didn't quite understand that, I'm sorry. Some of the fish got wasted...?

CS radar and a sonar, and the sonar shoots under water and they can see the fish along with the fathometer. They had these new sonars out, and you could see how big the body of fish was. And you'd cast. The captain would say, "Well, it's a good sized body of fish, so I'll only take a certain bite. And you'd have when they call a [bug?] boat, a small board that held one end of the net, and the big boat would make a circle around.

If they made too big a circle and got too many fish--and the boat would only hold so many fish, and the plant only wanted so many, could handle only so many--what was left over was dead in the bottom of the net and they just opened the net up and let them go, and this was where there was a lot of waste, so it really took a good captain, you know to be very careful. He'd be better off to be a little bit short than he would to catch so many [so he wouldn't end up wasting them.

That was one of the troubles with fishing, or purse seining. We used to buy --for the last seven or eight years we had the business we bought a lot of the fish in Europe. I went over there and I used to spend a lot of time over there. I probably made six or seven trip a year over there in Europe, different places, and I'd buy fish over in East Germany. I bought for several years, and we'd have them all frozen and we'd bring them over here and thaw them out and pack them, put them through the cutting machines, the graders and all that. And then I finally got hooked up with a group of people over in Ireland. I went over there to Ireland and then I bought the rest of them. So we sold [] I bought all the fish we handled over in Ireland, all the small fish six to eight, ten to a can. And we had [] sell the small fish. And that's where you--the money was, in the small fish, not in the big fish.

KJL And when did this start--in the '90's?

CS We started buying fish over in Europe probably in the early '80's--probably late '70's, early '80's , we started buying over there. We bought quite a few.

KJL Now, originally, the fishermen used weirs, right?

CS yeah.

KJL Can you explain how those worked?

CS Explain what a weir is?

KJL Yeah, and how it worked?

CS Well [] they put them in a cove. There was sticks that was posted in a circle. There would be an opening, where the fish would come in and there would be a big wing went out--a wing went out from the weir. It was kind of a circle, and then a wing went out this way, and they put brush around it, so the fish couldn't get out, and then they'd have a net hung inside of the weir, the circle. They'd drop one end of it down, where the opening was, and let the fish come in. They'd hit that wing way out there, and they'd hit that and it would guide them into the weir [] in there, they'd pull the mouth of the net up so they--what they called "pursed" them up. They'd make a circle around them, they'd purse them up and they'd have a couple of doors inside. It was all done by hand. It was hard work.

And then they used to bail them out with a net, the boat did. They'd have a big boom in there, had a--oh, probably a eight foot handle on it, with a net that was probably three feet in diameter. And they would hit down into the fish, pick them up. It had a chain on it. The guy would pull the chain up and it would close the bottom of the net up. It was open at the bottom. And then when he got it over the hold of the boat, he let that handle go, and the net would open up, and the fish into the net in the weir. They'd heist it back out again, and that's how they did it--loaded the boat.

And I don't remember the exact year when they got rid of the--started using fish pumps. When they started using fish pumps, the quality wasn't quite as good, because they took all the scales off the fish. Before they had scales on them and everything and the quality was better. So they got started using fish pumps, and they started using fish pumps in the plant. Before we used these big tubs on a big heist cable, drop down in the fish [] boat--they hold of the boat where the fish were. We'd flood the hold of the boat with water so the fish would float, then get the tub down in there, heist it up and dump it into a big hopper thing.

[There'd be] a big water pipe, pumping water, push it and flume them into the fish tank [at the] plant, and then they wen into the fish tank, the guy's sitting there salting them. And they'd salt them in, and when they'd get them--get the boat unloaded, why they'd--had one man bail them out by hand, into the sluices, and they'd got upstairs. I was telling you earlier, they'd go upstairs on the flaker, they called it. And then this--when they'd go into the cookers on these flakes. They were these, what they call racks. I don't remember how many--flakes. We used to call them flakes, and we'd spread them on that.

Well, the drum would spread them. As it went around [] this drum would turn and the flakes that had the fish on them flakes evenly. and they had to make sure they didn't get the fish too heavy on the belt coming up the stairs to the second floor so they wouldn't get too many on the flak or they wouldn't cook goo, so you had to pay pretty close attention to that.

And they put them in these racks and the racks were probably six foot high--something like that, maybe seven foot. I don't remember how many flakes they had on a rack, but they put them in the cookers. I think thee were three went to a cooker, and you'd have something like six or seven cookers. That's how they'd cook them back in earlier days.

KJL Now, you said that the work was seasonal.

CS Yeah.

KJL How did the worker know when there was fish in the plant?

CS They wouldn't know until--before they come up with marine radios, they wouldn't know until they'd see it coming around the corner down there. Then what they'd do was, someone would say, "Here comes some fish." Well, then the guy in the boiler room, he'd blow the whistle so many time, and you could hear it from here to Winter Harbor. They had a big, huge whistle, steam whistle. It made a lout noise and they'd blow it so many time for fish, for packers, and they'd also blow it again if they wanted a different crew, like for the closing machines, so they'd blow the whistle. That's how people knew when we had fish. We didn't know it until they came around the corner down there, or come around that corner down here.

So after they got radios, years after that they got marine radios, and we'd have a receiver in the building, in the office, the plant manager would. And they'd hear the boat man talking on the radio, and he'd talk, or he'd call. Or sometimes he'd call to the boss [through the] marine operator, and he'd say, "I've got fish, I'm leaving with twine. I'll be there in two or three hours." And that would give you a better chance to get your crew there, and everything.

See, before you waited for the boat to show up. It took quite a while to get you crew in, so you lost a lot of packing time. Well, when they got radios, they could contact the plant ahead of time. They probably had a three or four hour--sometimes a two hour notice that you were going to get fish. And a lot of times, they'd say, "Well I'm half loaded, but [within an] hour I'll be loaded," and they'd tell the plat manager that. And then he'd get the crew there before the boat got there.

KJL So depending on the number of times they blew the whistle, they knew whether they needed packers or cookers...?

CS Well, you know, like they'd blow eight times for packers, so packers would all get ready. And we used to have busses and go pick them up. They used to drive around town, everywhere to pick them up, the busses.

KJL Now, did some of those busses go to Lubec and...?

CS We had busses go as far as Jonesport. We did for years. We had--we used to haul them up from Jonesport all the time, and down to Milbridge, and Steuben, around Winter Harbor, here--Sullivan. So we used to cover quite an area. We did that mostly before the war, until the war, because people couldn't get gas. It was rationed. Tires was rationed and all that. People couldn't get []. Couldn't get gas and stuff because it was rationed. So we could --We could get the tires, we could get the gas because we was food processor, and we processed at that time, during the war--World War II.

We did a lot of it for the military. And so once w packed for the military, we'd get tires and fuel. We had no trouble getting stuff. So this is why we really--the main reason why

we [did?] all the bussing, because it was hard back then, you know. Gas was rationed. Tires was rationed and all that []. We used to have stamps to go buy gas, and all that stuff, and they sent stamps to go buy tires, but once we had--the plant could get tires because they was employing and creating food for the military--wanted all the food they could get

KJL Some of the sardines went overseas to the troops?

CS Oh, yeah, we sold a shipload to the military. In fact we used to get letters from some of the soldiers that lived in Maine, says how nice it was to eat something from my home state of Maine--Beach Cliff Sardines, said they were some good! So we used to get letters from the once in a while, telling, you know, how they enjoyed getting some food from their home.

KJL Did you ever save some of those letters?

CS O we kept some of them, yeah. Yeah, except we lost a lot of stuff when the plant burned. We lost a lot of the pictures we used to have. We used to take pictures of the process and the old plant. I've got pictures of the old plant and everything, but the process, I don't have pictures of those. We lost those when we had the fire.

KJL Did a lot of families work in the canneries?

CS A lot of families?

KJL Yes, brothers, sisters, moms, dads.

CS Oh, yeah. Half the town worked in the plant. This town, most of the people who live in it back then worked in the plant--fathers, mother, some of the kids worked there. Back in the early days, why you didn't have to be 18-20 years old for you to work. You could work when you were 15, 16. So you didn't have all these so-called child labor laws back in those days, which I think was a mistake to have anyway, because it kept the kids busy, kept them off the street. Heck, I worked in that fish plant down here, where I lived, when I was 8, 9 years old, pumping out boats, baiting trawlers. I made four dollars a day. That was good money back in '35, '36, '38, so we thought we was rich. We made four bucks a day baiting trawlers.

KJL And that was when you were..

CS Yeah, that was my fist job, baiting trawlers. And when I got a little older, I went down and worked in the plant, worked down there. And when I went to high school, why grade school, I got to be a little older, why I went on the sardine boats. I spent all summer on the boats, there on the boats where they kept the fish [] and watch them do that and...

KJL What was it like on the sardine boats?

CS What was it like?

KJL Uh huh.

CS Well, I enjoyed it. In fact my father had to get after me to get off it when I got out of high school, because when the captain here--he'd ask my father when I was coming home from school, because I went to a private school up in [Charleston?] but it's closed now. And he'd want to know when I was coming home, and he'd say "Well, he'll be coming home late this afternoon." So he said, "Well, I'll wait." So I took my bag out of the car, and put it with the boat, took off on the boat. Went up to Castine for two weeks to get fish. In the Spring you go early and you wait for the fish to come in.

So every Spring there used to be a guy named [Orton Marick]--used to go up there--up to Castine and them places. We used to go up there--always got fish up there early in the Spring, so we used to to up there and wait 'til we caught fish. And I used to go up at night and watch them catch fish.

We used to go up in his boat and [] They got a piece of twine with a lead weight on it, and they would use it as a feeler and see how thick the fish were, []. That's how they'd tell how many fish there were. They'd feel that hit, and they'd judge the fish. Sometimes, you know, during this time of year they'd get what they called "fire water." You could see them flying in the water. They'd boil the water. You'd see "fire in the water." They'd do that late at night, and we'd watch them, and it was interesting, but it was hard work. You'd pull those nets all by hand. All of them.

KJL There would be a crew of people pulling the nets?

CS Yeah, they'd have a crew, probably. For the stop seiners there'd probably be, oh, probably six--at least six, not eight people--crew, pull the nets in. A lot of work to it. It was the same in the weir. A weir didn't take quite as many people because in later years they were [drying?] and cooking. We used to go chase the fish, and somebody'd do paddle the boat. They rowed it, went out--used to be they could see the fish before they come in, and they'd to out with those feelers and they'd [roll around] and the guy up in the bow who did the feeling, he'd say, "Over this way!" and he'd feel a little more and he'd say, "Ah, [] some fish." So they'd keep going and they'd follow the fish around . So the guy sitting in the boat [] put the net across the cove .They'd watch him going, so they'd know when to put the net across. So the guy says, "Well, I had a good bunch of fish going, now I feel less." He'd motion for them to run their net across the cove. So there'd be another guy with a row boat, pul the net from across this cove, here. They'd row across with a boat, pulling that net clear across there--maybe eight, ten fathoms deep.

KJL These were herring?

CS Yes, sardines, small, small fish.

[KJL checks the mic and recorder]

CS So it was interesting. Then they finally come up with--after that they come up with outboard motors. So that made the jobs easier. It took less people.

KJL Did it scare the fish?

CS No, they had those--no, it didn't scare them too badly. They was careful of it--how they did it. They just made sure they'd go around--out around them. They'd have a guy out in a rowboat checking them, see where they were. They'd go out around--kinda like chasing a cow, a cow in the pasture. They'd go out around with an outboard motor--kinda circle a little bit, and kinda push the fish into shore quicker.

KJL You say you liked being on the sardine boats. What did you like about it?

CS Oh, I guess I liked--just liked being on the water. Of course then we didn't have radars back when I was a kid going out there. It was years before we had radar, you know. We used to go--There was real captains back then. You had to look at your map and every [so many minutes?] you'd blow your whistle, made sure somebody that was on the boat coming, they could hear you. And when you come running didn't forget how long it would take you to get from this buoy to that buoy over there, and call the old man over at the office. [].

You figure your time, your course on your chart. You mark it off, and you figure how fast your boat went and []the tide there, the flood tide, consider that , take that into consideration, calculate that in and say, "Well, I should be at that buoy at a certain time." So he set his clock and when he set down, when he though the time was running out, he'd tell the second mate []. He'd tell them, he says "Get on the bow." He'd get on the old bow, and he'd shut the engines down so they could hear the bell ringing. They could hear the bell ringing [Clock chimes] 'Oh, we're on target."

Then they'd take their course to the next buoy, across Frenchman's Bay, which is a long run, and you'd have to figure the tides in, you know, the flood tides [] put you off course , so you always adjust for the tide and all that stuff.

KJL What happened after you'd hear the bell ringing?

CS You hear the bell ringing, you'd just sit down and say, "Well, good, I'm on course. Now I gotta go from this bell to the next bell." So then he had a mark on his chart, what

course to take [] say, "Well, I gotta go west [] across Frenchman's bay, and you head west. So he'd mark on his chart [] which would be the next buoy--can't remember the name of the place, now, so long ago, somewhere over by Southwest Harbor, or Cranberry Island--there'd be another buoy. And he'd mark from this buoy to that buoy. He'd figure his course and he'd have to figure in, well is it flood tide or ebb tide? [] the tide could set you off, so you could be off quite a bit. You've got no radar, you've gotta go by the course. They say, "Well, so many degrees from here to that next buoy. so now, the tide's running so many knots, so that means I gotta adjust a degree or two or three degrees for just the tide to set me off course." So you had to be pretty good. And they were good. They were good captains. Then they got radar after that and that spoiled them. Today they're really good, you know, the electronic []. They're really good.

KJL When was the peak activity in the canneries?

CS Beg pardon?

KJL When was the peak of activity in the canneries?

CS The peak, at one time--I think it was back in the '20's--the sardine industry was the biggest employer in the state of Maine. I think it was somewhere around twelve thousand people they employed, the industry did. And during my lifetime, probably, I think there were somewhere around 60 plants up and down the coast, that I can remember. Below the whole coast. From Robbinston, clear down to South Portland, probably 60 plants. At one time they had--I don't know how many down in Eastport and Lubec. Probably 30 or 40 plants down there back then.

KJL So how many were employed at the peak here at Prospect Harbor?

CS How many was here? Just this one sardine plant.

KJL Pardon me?

CS There was just this one here in Prospect Harbor.

KJL How many wee employed there at the peak?

CS Oh, probably we employed back years ago [] Oh, gosh, I don't know, probably a hundred and eighty people.

KJL Eighty?

CS A hundred and eighty, maybe two hundred, but the time you figure your packers, your hourly workers, probably at least a hundred and eighty people.

KJL How big was Prospect Harbor then ?

CS How big was it? The plant?

KJL The town.

CS Oh, how many people? Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't have no idea. I think probably it was less than it was today, than there is today. I think probably there's probably a lot more people here today than there was back then. A lot more people. But there's less work here today. All we've got now is this lobster business.

KJL what was the town like?

CS Oh, there was less houses and a lot of houses back years ago were sea captain's houses. You had more farms, people had cows, horses. When I was a kid growing up, that's what you lived on. You had pigs and chickens. People did a lot of farming, gardening. And back during the Depression, when I was born. [I was born in 1930] that's how people got by. They saved a lot of money on their own cows, their own pigs, chickens, garden. People lived on a heck of a lot less than they do today. We had a lot less.

KJL Did the cannery and the local businesses do a lot of business back and forth?

CS Oh, year, because there was nothing here. It was just these three plants, was all there was here when I was a youngster. Of course we had the store here [down on the corner] was the store and we had the deli up here across from the library, that used to be a big store. And up there where that real estate place is, where you turned off, where the flagpole was? That used to be a post office, and it used to be a country store, too, so we had three stores here. They sold a lot of grain, corn and stuff for chickens, horses and cattle. There was a lot of farming done around here back then. People lived on that, and during the winter time, people did noting. Didn't lobster, didn't do anything.

KJL One of the things I noticed when I read about the industry was there seemed to be a lot of fires.

CS A lot of fires?

KJL Yeah, in the plants. A lot of the plants burned down at one point or another.

CS Yeah, some of them did, yeah. Downeast had a lot of them burn.

KJL Was there a particular reason for that?

CS I really can't say. I really don't know. It could be anything. It could be wiring. Back in those days, wiring wasn't all that great. There was quite a few places that burned. But our burned [] May, 1963. They were sanding the floors. We had hardwood floors in the plant so we sanded to floors down. We'd varnish them. And these big sanders, with the bag that catches the residue. It gets hot. Well, the guy that was doing it didn't think. He put the thing in the paint locker where the paint was. I just got home, and I was in the shower, and my wife came in and [] says "The plant's afire." By the time I got my clothes on it had gone from that end of the plant, the whole length of the plant in a matter of about ten or fifteen minutes.

KJL That was in the '60's?

CS 1963. It burned. A guy took a picture of it, coming from--down here on vacation from New York--come down and took a picture of it. One day, it was two or three years later, he dropped into the office one day, and he says, "Maybe you'd like to have a picture of this." He showed me a picture of the fire. He happened to be driving through the town that night and caught a nice, beautiful color picture, and he gave it to me. And he says, "I happened to be driving through town, and this is the first time I've been here since then," he said, "And I thought you might like to have a picture, so he sit down and talked to me for a while. It's a great picture. It shows the whole thing, lit the whole sky up. Yep, in May '63 he took the thing and we had--December that same year we had this building up, and we put fish through this plant before the end of the year.

KJL So the plant burned in September?

CS In May. And we put fish through it in December.

KJL Wow.

CS They rebuilt it. Like it is now. It's a little bit bigger now than it was then. We put fish through it before December that year.

KJL That's a fast building job.

CS It was. We had to do a lot of blasting. We blasted all that rock wall you see over there. That was all water--that was the plant above the water, there. See, the plant was built out over the water. We blasted nine thousand square yards of ledge and rock, and we filled that whole cove in with it. Of course, today, they'd never allow you to do it. Then they didn't have those laws--all those laws they got today. We filled that whole cove in. We put that plant on par of it so we'd have enough room to add on to it.

KJL Were there any characters in the plant that you remember?

CS Characters?

KJL People who could can faster than anybody else, people who were stronger than anybody else?

CS Oh, yeah, there were a lot of women that were faster, yeah. Some were real fast. Of course Lela Anderson, over to Corea. She worked here. She was in her late '70's . In fact she stayed there as long as the plant--until they closed it, she was there.

KJL What was her name?

CS Lela Anderson

KJL Lela Anderson?

CS Uh huh.

KJL Is she still here in Prospect Harbor?

CS She lives in Corea.

KJL She lives at...

CS Yeah, she must be in her late '70's. She worked there many years. and we had another lady who worked there when I was a youngster in there, used to go up around and pick up fish [around] the packers. Four trays is a hundred cans. There were a hundred cans per case, so when they got four of those trays, they'd punch a card. So I used to go around, picking up fish. She was a [Crowley]. She lived over in Corea, over in Crowley's island []. She worked there. She was in her 80's , packing fish there.

KJL What was her name?

CS Last name was Crowley. I can't remember if her name was [Adelaide] Crowley-- what her first name was or her number. That was years ago. I was a youngster, sixteen, seventeen years old, and she worked there for many years. I think she probably retired when she was 84, 85. She stopped packing and--and we had a lot of--we had a lot of good workers. In a small town like this, this is like a family. You knew everybody. You went to school with their kids, and you them all your life, so you're like a family when you stop and think about it, because you knew everybody. Most of them [] in down, so you always had a good working crew, always a good crew.

KJL Was there ever any union activity at the plant?

CS Any what?

KJL Any union activity?

CS Union? No, we never had any trouble with unions. It was mostly seasonal work, but then after a while, you get packing year round when they started purse seining. [It got] to the point where people, if they couldn't go to work at least by June, they'd go somewhere else, because there were a lot of tourists around, and they'd go around to these motels, and some of these summer people's homes, and all that, so we were kind of forced in to doing purse seining, not that we liked the idea, but [] year round work.

People just couldn't live--you couldn't live on seasonal work any more because you had to work year 'round. So we had to find a way to supply fish year 'round. The ideal way to have done it would have been--because the did have freezers back in those days--would have been to try to get small fish and freeze them 'til the summer months, which you could pack [] Say, "We'll, I can't use that many today.", or, "I only want half of them; I'll take them all" but freeze what you don't use. Of course you didn't have freezing capacity adequate enough to freeze fish back then. But that would have been the way to do it. That's the way they did it in Europe and Norway.

They used to take when the fishing season was at it's peak, they'd take the surplus fish they didn't can--they would freeze them. They'd store them in the freezer, and they'd pack them in the winter. Over here you don't get the small fish during the winter. They just some in in the summer. So the only way you could do was take what you didn't use during the day, can ,freeze the surplus, and you could have don't that and get by. But we didn't have the freezing capacity.

KJL I want to stop and make sure I'm not wearing you out with all my questions. How are you doing?

CS OK

KJL Am I wearing you out?

CS No, I'm doing all right.

KJL When did you start seeing the cannery business decline?

CS When did we start seeing it decline? Oh, it's hard to say, probably for the good sized sardines, probably i the--probably '70's

KJL The '70's?

CS Yeah, in the late '70's

KJL Why did it decline, do you think?

CS I think different ways of fishing, purse seining, kept the fish broke up. Of course they had that--a lot of our fish came out of Canada, some of it. They migrate back and forth, and I guess kept the fish broke up and drove off, I guess the purse seiners did.

KJL There were fewer fish?

CS Yeah, less and less fish. Good fish. That's why we were forced back in the late '60's and '70's--going over to Europe, buying small fish. First we'd buy them out of Norway all canned, but e stopped doing that because that didn't give our employees any work. I had these people I knew. I used to go to Europe quite a bit. I went to this food show, and I happened to meet these people in Sweden. That's what they dealt in, buying and selling fish all over the world. So I got hooked up with them

They had an office in Gloucester, so I started buying through them, buying out of East Germany. And it was surprising that a lot of those fish I bought out of East Germany was caught off Georges Bank. so I used to buy them and over there, I bought out of there probably about four or five years

Then I found--I got hooked up with this bunch of people from Ireland I met in a seafood show over there. And they wanted to know what I did in the fishing business, so I told them. They wanted to know why I was over there, and I says, "Just looking around to see what I can do, looking at new machinery." And they says, "Do you want to buy frozen fish? And I says, "Yeah, I buy quite a lot of it." He says, "Well, we have a lot in Ireland. but we have nothing to do with it. We don't have any plants in Ireland." I says, "Well," I says, "Give me some names, some people I can contact." I says, "I'll go visit them." So I did. We spent a month in Ireland and hooked up to buy fish from over there, frozen fish

I know I bought thousand of tons over there every years. I'd probably buy three, four thousand dons, metric tons, put in a big freezer ship and go to Winterport with it. They had a big cold storage freezer up there, where we kept them. I don't know if the place is going any more now or not. I don't believe so. And that's what we did. We did that 'til we sold out. We bough 'em over there.

KJL Do you think the fish will ever come back?

CS Will they every come back? Well, they got to do a better job than they're doing know of managing them.

KJL Pardon me?

CS They got to do a better job of managing them than they're doing now. I guess from what I understand, talking to one of the managers, it was quite a hard job the last year they ran to get the fish they wanted. They frankly, even had trouble getting enough for lobster bait. That was a--what caused it, I don't know. I don't follow it that close, so I really don't know if they [] off shore, or what the trouble was, I don't know, but it's pretty obvious that it's being overfished.

I don't know what the new rules are this year, whether they're going to put a shorter season on them this year, or put quotas on them, or what they're going to do. We had quotas, and this is why Bumble Bee said they had to get done, because the quota was too small, and they couldn't get enough fish, so they closed the doors.

KJL What kind of labels did you use on the cans?

CS What kind of labels? We had lithograph. Colors. It was painted lithograph.

KJL Pardon?

CS It was painted lithograph. What they called lithographing.

KJL What did it look like?

CS Oh, we had, when Beach Cliff was our main brand, it would have a lighthouse on it, and a picture of a--some of them would have a picture of sardines on it, and some of them would have a picture of a lighthouse, like this one over here, or something to indicate the state of Maine and the shore, and show a picture of the seashore, a picture of the water--[]--designs, different things. But you know you might--If you're rally interested in going further with this thing, you might be interested in going down to Lubec, or down to Jonesport to that museum they have down there.

KJL I heard about that, yeah.

CS Well, they got one they started, that [Lonnie] Peabody's got that one in Jonesport. It's a lot closer than Lubec is, but one of the best ones that I've seen was--I don't know if he's living anymore--[Danny Royer], he used to have a museum. Of course he had the old sealing machine and the equipment he used years ago--the flakes and all that stuff.

KJL And where is that?

CS Down in Lubec.

KJL Lubec?

CS Yeah, he had a good one. I don't know if it's still there or not. I imagine his kids, probably his boy's running it. Of course he had--I doubt if he's alive today. I doubt it, but Lonnie Peabody, down in Jonesport, he's got a place he build three, four years ago. So he has a small museum down there, and he may have some of these old covers.

You know, people used to have brands. They had different ones in the state. I'm not sure. I haven't been down there. He may even have a video that people could watch. I don't know what he's got down there. So either there or Lubec, either place, you could get a lot of information. But they have quite a bit I guess, up here to Searsport. They have that little place they open up in the summer time, where you can go in there . I've never been in there, but people send me cards and pictures once in a while a friend of mine goes [] in there, see a picture of a sardine plant, or some boat or something, they'll send it to me, write the name on it, and I file it away, keep it.

KJL Are most of the people around here Scots Irish? Where did most of the people around here come from?

CS Where most of them come from/

KJL Uh huh.

CS Well, when I was a kid, most of them come from Downeast, down in the Jonesport area, down Beal's Island, down in those areas. [When] my father first started coming here, living here, very few people in this down, and like I say, mostly a few sea captains went in and out of here, had a few houses here, but most of them was people they--but he brought a lot of people in from down--when he started his fish plant here, he started bringing people in from down Beal's Island and Jonesport. In fact he build several houses, my father did, back then, for them to live in. And they used to have camps down here, cottages []. He had eight, ten, fifteen of those things down the []. Where those building down [] there [] where those camps all set.

KJL What were the camps like?

CS Oh, they were little wooden cottages. People lived in them, stayed there year 'round, worked at the plant. And they come down from Downeast somewhere, most of them did from Beal's Island or Jonesport. And they worked--The wives worked in the factory and their husbands went fishing, and they's the way it was back in those days, just a small little town.

KJL What was the town like on a Saturday night?

CS Oh, we always had our share of people drinking too much at night. Saturday night, that was always a riot. Some of them started drinking Friday night and they wouldn't sober up until Sunday (laughs). We always had a few of them around.

KJL Was it pretty wild?

CS Oh, no, not bad. It was wilder than it is today. Today it's much quieter and calmer than it was back in those days.

KJL You know, something just occurs to me to ask about. Please don't be offended by this, but I used to hear stories around Milbridge during the '30's there was a certain amount of bootlegging.

CS Oh, yeah.

KJL ...boats from Canada bringing it in.

CS Yeah, the old rumrunners.

KJL Did that go on around here?

CS Yeah, they had it not so much here as they did down in Milbridge. [] a little bit, not much, mostly the Milbridge area, they had a bunch of those guys down there. I can't remember what their name was now. Oh, that was years ago. They used to do a little bit of that []. They used to run rum up from Canada up here. I remember one of the fastest boats they had and I was trying to think of--King--One of them was King, his name was. And his brother was---had that little building there, now they're buying lobsters in. Over on the shore there.

They used to have a store there. There used to be a store and his father was one of the rumrunners. I think the name was Phil--Phil King, I think it was. He had that store there, and he had a little snack bar in there, and the girls from the factory, the plant would come in there and eat and get lunch, and he stayed there for quite a few years, and he was part of that family in the rumrunning business. The Kings, they were big at it.

I remember telling about the *Redwing*, she was one of the fastest boats around here. They couldn't catch her. They run that rum back and forth out of Canada to the United States. Those were exciting days, I guess back in those days. But the town's quieter than it used to be. A different clientele here than back in the days when I was growing up. Much different.

KJL What was the town like during World War II?

CS World War II? No much, it was quieter, because a lot of the younger fellas had gone to the war, and I think people was a little more serious, and paid more attention to their work. They knew we was fighting a war and whatever we did was helping the soldiers out, so they kind of had the attitude of, you know, the more we can do , the more we can help out the soldiers, the better. I think people was a little bit more serious back in those days. Of course everybody had rations, you know. Food was rationed, gasoline was, tires was. People didn't go that much back in those days.

KJL What happened to the work force when the soldier came back from World War II? Were some of the women displaced?

CS Were they misplaced?

KJL Were some of the women displaced? Did some of the men come back from the war and take jobs that had been done by some of the women before?

CS No, not really. I don't think the work force changed that much. We had--we used to employ some of the veterans when they come home. In fact, some of them worked here before they left. When they come back, they'd come back and they'd go to work, and it was a little tough after the war.

KJL In what way?

CS Well, people finding jobs, and you know it's--all of the sudden the war gets over and you've got a whole military getting out of service, and so it was a little bit hard. You know, they had the big shipyard in Portland, and that slowed down quite a bit after the war got over, so it was kind of a lull after the war was over for a while, but our business kept going. We never slowed down at all. We just kept plugging away, and expanding and building.

KJL What kind of jobs did the men coming back from the war take?

CS Oh, they'd go to work in the plant, there, some of the would drive trucks, work in the machinery [] the machines and different things--jobs around the plant. Some of them we'd hire for maintenance. A lot of them had mechanical experience from the military, different things, and --I don't think things changed too much here, in Prospect Harbor too much. I think the biggest change is when they closed this plant down. The first time it's been closed down since 1927.

KJL Tell me about that day.

CS Pardon?

KJL Tell me about that day.

CS Well, they had a--before they closed--two days before they closed--two or three, I can't remember which--they had a--kind of a get together down here, in the back warehouse, and they invited me and my wife to come down, so I went down. It was kind of a nice get together. Kind of a sad day, you know. It's something that--a business that you grew up in yourself, and kind of grew up with it and all of the sudden you see the end come. Of course a lot of the girls who were packers that were there when I was there when we had the plant going--they all come up and give me a big hug and all that, and...

I enjoyed the business. It was a tough business, but like I said earlier, it was kind of a family thing. You knew every--you kind of--it was like most businesses. You knew everybody personally. It was kind of a personal set up. You knew everybody there individually by person and like I said, it was more like a family affair situation. A lot of the kids grew up in the families, and--But I never thought I'd see the day when it closed, to be honest about it. I thought it'd probably keep going, but just the way things was going, the way things was operated, the way the fish was managed, it hasn't helped any. Made it tough.

KJL Now, when did you leave the plant?

CS I left in 1990.

KJL You left in 1990?

CS Yeah,

KJL OK, and you were the owner?

CS I was an owner, right.

KJL You sold it, then in 1990?

CS Yeah, yeah, It was a family business. I had a brother, older than I am and two brother in laws in it, so everybody decided they wanted to--time to sell out, so we sold it in 1990. January of 1990k we sold it, and now she's no longer, so it's quieter. It seems odd not to look across the harbor and see no lights, no activity going on.

KJL I imagine that does seem odd, doesn't it.

CS It is odd, very much so, seeing boats. In fact on my computer screen I've got a big thirty inch screen. I've got a picture of a boat I got coming across here. That's what I've got on my screen, on my computer. It reminds me of back in the days when--the good old days.

KJL Do you remember some of the names of some of the boats that carried the sardines?

CS That had sardines in them?

KJL Do you remember the names of some of the boats?

CS Oh, yeah.

KJL What were they?

CS Oh, we had the Ardie Mae, the Joyce Marie. We usually had two carriers to each plant, and they got into purse seining, and the purse seiners would haul fish, too, as well as the carriers. so we had four or five purse seiners, and we had two carriers to each plant. When we sold out we probably had ten, twelve boats we had operating at that time.

KJL You were operating ten or twelve boats at one time?

CS Oh, yeah, in the four plants, yeah.

KJL That's a lot of fish.

CS Yeah, we used to haul a lot of fish out of Gloucester by truck. We got into the herring [] business for a year. [] worked in the herring business. We had frozen, what they called cured herring. They cured them in barrels. We did a lot of that down here, and two or three other plants, and over in Germany they'd--of course they're great [] herring eaters, and the supply of fish was over fished and they didn't have fish for several years and so I produced a lot of fish and sent them to Germany. A lot of them I shipped to Finland, different places.

So they used to have cured herring. I'd cure them down here, put them in plastic barrels, and every do many days, they'd roll them, so they--keep them mixed up. So they'd mix it. They'd put some kind of vinegar, something else in there. And you had to roll them every so many days to keep--make sure they kept mixed up. And then we'd ship them out on a container, truckload, put them on a ship and ship them over to Finland. And they they did, they'd eat those pickled herring during the potato harvest in Finland every year. So we used to ship a lot of stuff over there to Finland for the potato harvest. They was great, Denmark was great. We'd ship a lot to Denmark, Germany. We'd freeze them and ship them over in a frozen box over to Denmark and Germany and places. Finland, they put them in barrels, cured them. They wanted them all cured.

It was a big market. [] We did that for several years, and we was in the shrimp business for quire a few years, we did a lot of shrimp, frozen shrimp--three other plants. We did frozen shrimp for years. We'd freeze them and ship them all over the country, different places.

KJL Do you remember your peak output, what year you packed the most fish?

CS Oh, probably back when we had--probably when I was first home from Korea--probably back in the mid-'50's. Probably--we owned at one time--I think it was ten plants we owned at one time. We had one in Robbinston, two in Lubec, one in Machiasport, one here, Southwest Harbor, Bass Harbor, Belfast, Bath, Portland, South Portland we had plants.

So we used to pack a lot of fish at one time. And it seems time--like everything, time went on and you got modernized, and you have more efficient ways of doing things and so then you eliminated plants gradually, one at a time and that's where we did a lot of trucking. The reason they had so many plants along the coast, they used to have boats that didn't have much much speed, no power. They couldn't go very fast. [Then they got] faster boats, and then they got trucking fish with ice in them, different things, and so that way you didn't need as many plants to get the same amount of production. Then when you started backing year 'round, why that added to your production as well.

KJL Things got more consolidated?

CS Yeah, yeah. Yeah, when we automated, we could have done--this one plant--back before we sold it, one or two years there we packed two shifts. We had two shifts going. When we sold, the guy didn't keep the second shift going. We had over a hundred people, packers. I said, "Why let them go, let them work at night," so they volunteered, some of them to work at night and we was doing almost as good--We turned out almost as many cases at night as the day shift would. And if we'd gone another year, I think the night shift would have done as well as the day shift, and we could have probably packed in this one plant, probably three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand cases.

KJL Wow. In one plant.

CS Yeah, that's wheat we could have done. And that was automated--around the clock. So we had two shifts going. We did pretty well with it. [] pack a hundred, a hundred fifty thousand; pack three, four hundred thousand. Because it was faster, quicker. Everything was all cut by hand, was all machine cut. [] put it in the can, and it could do it fast. It was an endless operation, nobody touched them . Once they put them in the can, nobody touched them after that. It was all automatic. It was a good set up. And the big fish was a better quality fish, much better. People would come down and sample them. They said, "What a difference in the quality." It was.

We used to bake them. We had two great big gas fired ovens. In fact, I had the third one just about half built when we sold out, and the guy didn't want it. So I had to pay him off. What we needed was three of them. Two wasn't enough. The guy says, "Well," he says, "I don't understand this," he says, "Four ounces is four ounces." I says, "My friend," I says, "Four ounces, or four fish in a can, versus four ounces, maybe ten fish in a can, you gotta cook that fish a lot longer. Cooking it with four fish, even though it's still four ounces." And they couldn't understand that.

So one of my trips to Norway--I used to do a lot of work in Norway. They had engineers over there, the government helped them a lot. So the guy--I had to go to a meeting over there. I was an advisor on that--government fisheries advisor. So I had to go to a meeting so I took a bunch of frozen fish over. Took some eight, ten fish over, some fours over. I said, "You pack those, and you tell me when you get done." and I said, "I'll be back in ten days and you do your research, and give me all the statistics on it, and you tell me if you think four ounces is four ounces." It is, but I said it takes a lot longer to cook four ounces of four fish in a can than it does eight fish in a can. They couldn't understand that. I said, "It's the mass you're talking about." Because when they put the big fish in the steam box years ago, when you had four fish-eight, ten, twelve fish that long, you had to cook them a lot longer on the pressure. They couldn't figure it out. "Well, four ounces is four ounces," I said, I understand what you're saying, but logically it isn't the ounces, it's the mass you're talking about"

And so anyway, after I got done with the meeting, I went back to [] Norway and had a meeting with a head scientist over there, doing all the research. "I got to admit," he said, "If I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't have believed it." And he said it takes a lot longer to cook that bigger fish, even though it's still four ounces in that can. I said, "Absolutely."

So when we did that, this is the same thing the Germans said when I had my cookers built in Germany. They said, "Well, you're still cooking four ounces." I said, "You know," I said, "They can put four fish in a can twice as fast as they can put eight in a can, so that means I need twice as much production capacity as i do for the eights." He says, "Those two cookers should handle it." I said, "I don't agree with you." I said, "No way it's going to happen.

And if I start doing--develop this steak business--cut 'em up in steaks." We started doing that back in--oh, when the heck was it-probably the 70's some time--late '70's--early--maybe mid 70's --we started making steaks and we'd take the fish and slice them up in steaks, and we'd put eight, ten in a can. I said, "You put them--You know how fast they put them in a can, and how fast they go through those cookers," I said, "We're going to need three cookers." The guy said, "Two is all you're gonna need," he says, "I'll guarantee it."

So we had quite a discussion about it. And I finally ended up-- They came over here one day and I said, "Now, I want you to come over, and we're going to have the size fish I want you to look at. Well, I'd already rigged up two or three steam boxes, and I had it rigged so I could take the surplus and automatically take them off the conveyor and put them on trays and [] and steam them, which I didn't want to do, but I had to do it to keep the line going. And they came over and looked at that can they couldn't believe it. I said, "See," I said, I need a third cooker." It was about half done when we sold it out. That third cooker almost half done. They were far superior quality than they were steamed. They had a much better taste to them. Much better.

KJL Baking them was better than steaming them?

CS Oh, yeah. Much better. That's what I was after, see. That way I could pick up more market, increase my market capacity, because of better quality, promote it. And we did it in some places. [I was surprised at] how the market picked up, just because of those baked ones. I said, "The best thing to do is make sure that we get,"--'cause we got only one plant doing them. I said, "Let's make sure that we only send them to certain markets so that we can supply them every shipment from the baker, from the cookers, instead of the steam boxes. [If we don't], you'll upset your marketing system." People will say, "Ah, they got those back again. [] Once you put them in there, you've gotta keep them there in those stores," I said, "You've gotta do it." And we did. And people liked it much better [than the] steamed fish.

So I don't know what Connors did when they bought the company. They took them out and took them to Black's Harbor. So I don't know what they ever done with them. [] what they did with them. They probably took them and put them together and built some more. So that's the only processors around now, [] Connors, Black's Harbor.

KJL Do you know other people around that I might want to talk to? [Clock chimes]

CS Oh, you could probably go down and talk to this plant manager down here, Peter Colson.

KJL Peter Colson?

CS Yeah, he run the plant for Bumblebee, those other people that bought it, for several years. In fact he [] his father used to run it--the plant at Southwest Harbor, so he's been with us since he's old enough to work, so he might [] outlook on it, give you some ideas.

KJL And you mentioned the woman at Corea. Are there other people who worked in the plant a long time that I might want to talk to?

CS He could tell you better than I could, Peter Colson could. He could tell you better. I can't--some of the older people, so he'd probably be better. I haven't been involved in it since 1990, so a lot of the people from here are gone. That's the way the world goes.

KJL Is there anything else you want to point out to me that I might be overlooking, or anything?

CS I think you pretty well covered it. It's pretty hard to explain, you know, a certain type of system. I mean, to me, you've almost got to see it, see pictures of it, you know. It's too bad. Some of those museums down there might be be a plus for you.

KJL Yeah, I'll check them out.

CS They've got some of the old equipment, and they've got some of the old covers and different companies packed different things, and they can give you a good idea of what it used to be like back years ago. It's too bad I didn't have the pictures, because they--we lost all the pictures we had of the old plant and stuff and how we used to operate inside and all the, but some of these museums--that place in Searsport has quite a lot of different information on the sardine industry.

KJL I'll check with them.

CS But I don't think they're open until summer time. I've never been in the place, but I've had a lot of my friends gone in and they said it's interesting. They've got pictures and difference things that you can see of the old sardine plants and different things

[INTERVIEW ENDS WITH PHOTOS.]