Q: [00:00] Great, thank you so much. And now we are recording officially. And I would just like to start with how do you like to introduce yourself?

A: [00:06] So I'm Holly Masterson from Southwest Harbor and I'm from there. So I grew up right in Southwest. I was born in Ellsworth. I grew up right on the shore in Southwest Harbor. Literally my bedroom looks over the harbor.

So I would wake up as a small child to clammers, and to the worm diggers, and everyone just – I mean that was my morning. The sun shining through my window and then these guys down on the flats. And you can't actually harvest anything in the harbor anymore. So it seems like eons ago at this point. But, yeah. And about to be 44 so that was a while ago and yeah, that's where I grew up.

So that's sort of the basis for who I am. And what I've been doing is that I grew up right there on the harbor and did a few things in between, but found myself working on the boat when I was 14. Yeah.

Q: [00:58] Wow.

A: [00:59] Yeah. And my parents had a fish market. So when I was in seventh grade, sixth grade they started that. And my stepfather had two boats, so he would go out fishing and he'd be gone for seven days at a time.

He'd come into the marina in Southwest, and we'd get the fish. We'd bring them up to the fish market which was only about a half mile away. And my great Aunt Connie would show up. And she was sort of the skilled elder of the area. So she would come and teach everybody how to fillet the fish, and she's been gone for a long time.

So I have pictures of that, and it was really great to have her – those memories of her in the fish market, filleting the fish, talking about the corn hake, and how they used to drive fish back in the day, and how important that was to everybody. You know, that was a huge source of protein for them.

So that's sort of what started my life into the fishing world is that I was about 12 when my mom got together with my – he's been my dad. I've been fishing with him for 20 years but – so I was young.

And then I would – when I got my license I would go down to the boat for him and I'd clean up the boat. He, you know, come in, unload the fish. The boat would be a disaster. I'd go down. I'd clean up what I could. I'd – they'd leave me a grocery list. And then I'd come over here to Bar Harbor, and I'd go to Hannaford, and I think it was Shop and Save at that point.

But I'd get whatever they wanted on the boat. I'd restock for them. I'd just kind of spruce it up, because they were usually only in port for like a day or two and then they turn around and go back right back out and do that.

So that was their opportunity to go play golf, and take a real shower, and relax and do a little laundry and just sort of reconnect. And then that – I was sort of that piece of helping put the boat back out to sea.

So I started that when I was 15 – 14, 15 of doing that.

Q: [02:52] Wow. And we've sort of talked about where you grew up, but where are your parents from? You mentioned the fish market. But (inaudible; overlapping dialogue).

A: [03:00] Yeah, so my mom is from here. She's worked in boat yards her whole life. And then when we had the fish market she obviously did that for many years.

My father is actually from Salem, Massachusetts, my biological father. And I have a great, great, great grandfather that is on the wall in Gloucester for being lost at sea.

So really kind of strong heritage for me because I've now been fishing out of Gloucester. I've been to that port. I've gone through that breakwater. I've been on those same banks that he was fishing on.

So that was a huge moment for me many years ago when I did that because, not only was I the only woman out there – I mean I'm out there. You're literally – you're looking back. You can see Boston in the distance. You can – you know where Gloucester is because there's the lighthouse, and you know where that is.

But you're looking around. And you literally see – there's whales breaching right next to us. There are maybe 35, 40 boats and I knew I was the only woman out there.

So I had this like really weird just realization of life of, like what the hell am I doing out here. Like is this really like what I should be doing?

But it almost came easy to me, and I feel like that's – I'm not trying to like be egotistical about that, but it's like, I think women being on the boat in that sort of situation, like – it's not even that we have something to prove, it's just I had built up such an endurance to be on the boat, and like there was – I didn't – I wasn't into drugs. I wasn't into like this partying lifestyle. I was just really focused on being there and making money.

And it was just such a spiritual experience for me to be doing that and being able to be like here in an interview right now, knowing that I sort of helped pave the way,

because I know there are now more women out there, and I'm friends with them on Facebook. I see their post and their Instagram like stories and stuff, and I'm just like, good for you. Like there you go.

Like there are women that have been out there and that's something that's been – like knowing that my dad was from the area and that I had that connection was huge. But Dave, who is my captain and my stepfather, is actually from Atlantic City. So he came up here when he was 11 to fish, and then my mom and him got together when I was, yeah, in junior high.

So I kind of have the three part trifecta of all of them, which was pretty important. My mom the boat builder. You know, Dave, the guy from Atlantic City that was very business oriented and was very inspired by the fishing community in Atlantic City, so when he came here that's immediately what he started doing when he was 11 and 12. And then my dad's connection to the area of Gloucester, which is so incredible and in very spiritual to be part of that. Yeah

Q: [05:45] Yeah. And what year were you born in?

A: [05:47] So 1980.

Q: [05:49] 1980. Great. And do you have any siblings?

A: [05:51] I do not. Yeah. I'm an only child, so sort of got to be an only child until my mom and Dave got together. And then he had older daughter, so she was a senior when I was a freshman that was fun. (laughter) Got to have sort of a little bit of a sibling for a short period of time in my life. But yeah. I'm an only child.

Q: [06:10] Great and you talked a little bit about your heritage and their relationship with fishing, but do you have anyone else in your family, the extended family who fish?

A: [06:18] Yeah, so my boyfriend actually – we've been together for nine years – and he's a clam harvester which is really cool. So – and he's one of the most passionate clammers you'll ever meet. So – and he actually just did a show with David Moscow called Taste – or From Scratch, and it's on Tastemade. And that just aired in December. And he is just such a huge – like he's so passionate about conservation and clamming, and the fact that there's like virtually no impact to clamming. And that clam – we always laughed over the years that like nobody cares about clams.

Like clams are there but they're not being – you don't have to bait them. You don't have to – I mean other than crossing people's property to get to them, there's very – like nobody – they're not as like sanctioned as a lobster or these other things that clearly are much more political and have a lot more kind of issues with them.

So, yeah, he's a clammer, but, yeah, everyone in my family immediately – my daughter's father is a lobster man. He actually goes to Alaska and works on a huge black cod boat out there. So I'm – I mean I've got people all around me. All my friends, I mean growing up.

But now you know it's weird because there's a less of a stern person community, and it's really hard for fishermen to find sternmen.

And so like back in the you know 12, 15, 20 years ago everyone wanted to be on the lobster boat. That was the thing. Like if you could get on a boat, great. If you get on a good boat, like you're something. You know? Like you're cool. And now it's – the fishermen are really struggling to keep good crew, and I totally get that.

It's a hard job. It's not paying as well as it used to. You're the grunt worker. You know? It's like, shit rolls downhill is absolutely a thing. And, you know, when you're on the boat there are some captains that really try to like be normal and be civil on the boat, but there's – it's just hard.

It's – I mean, I got beat up on the boat like mentally, because I'm – you know, I'm – if I'm a little bit sluggish or if I'm not keeping up. It wasn't so much that as it was like in my head I was telling myself I'm not good enough. And so I went through years of, you know, you're on a boat with one maybe, two other people, and you're in your head a lot. So there's a lot of like mental kind of conditioning that happens, and that's where, I think, a lot of the endurance comes in.

And so the worst part for me actually working on the boat was when another woman came and worked on our boat with us. And that was really a hard situation, because you're kind of both struggling at that point mentally to be out there. And as great as like the sun rises are, and the wildlife, and seeing everybody. It's – it's a – you get into this kind of – it's a competitive, but also you want to be supportive. So it's really hard. It's interesting. And I have a lot of friends that have done it and then they don't do it anymore.

So I think your question was (laughter) if there's anyone else in my immediate family or around, and definitely. Yeah.

F: [09:35] I was going to ask we have also a question of like see we've addressed a lot of different roles of members of your family. Seems like almost everyone you're (inaudible; overlapping dialogue).

A: [09:47] A lot. (inaudible; overlapping dialogue) Yeah, a lot.

F: [09:48] (inaudible; overlapping dialogue) story. And we also were – have a followup question about, do you have any family history of other folks working, you know not directly as harvesters, but in other kind of roles in the fishing sector like bookkeeping, bait, gear.

A: [09:59] Yeah.

F: [10:00] And you – I was just curious about great aunt Connie –

A: [10:02] Yeah.

F: [10:03] – and just kind of which side of the family was she on?

A: [10:05] So she's amazing. Yeah.

F: [10:06] And sort of how did you learn this skill? Like from her own parents, or did she work in a fish factory?

A: [10:10] Yeah. So my grandmother, my nana, worked at Addison Packing Company. And I don't know if it was Stinson's when she was there. She was there in the late – she was there in the '60s and the '70s. And so they all worked in the fish factories. And that's one thing that we've been, really – I've been trying to find out more information about. Because it sounds like in the late '70s, when that fish factory at man – at Dysart's down there. When that actually closed their doors it just closed.

And those people – like, you know. They use to have a bell. I don't know if you've heard these stories, but there was the bell in town in Southwest Harbor, and it would ring a certain number of chimes depending on if it was packers, or if it was the unloaders, or depending on what your role was at the fish factory. So that bell would go off and that would call to the docks who needed to be there.

So my grandmother was part of that. Aunt Connie was part of that. And I believe her husband Kelsey was, and I wish I knew more of anyone there. But those were always the people that stuck out to me in my childhood as being like the fish people. And they were the women, which is my aunt Connie and my grandmother. Those were the ones living – that worked that. And Connie was just well known in our community back then as just being this like fish filleter. (laughter)

You know? And she was good at it. And very particular. Very particular. Every bone was – they had this like handling machine that was just like a light, and they would put the fillets on it, and she would make sure the worms, the bones – anything she could get out was like – it was a perfect fillet when she was done with it.

And now you just don't have that skill. People don't do that anymore. You go the grocery store. You go somewhere else. You don't get fresh fish like that off the boat anymore. But to them that was how they grew up. And then they'd skin it just right so they could fillet it, and then have it in the drying racks, and that was a huge thing.

I mean, I remember walking into my grandmother's apartment, because she lived – as I got – when I was young, she lived over in Southwest Harbor in this little apartment. And you walk in, and you could tell whenever the fish was there. It just smelled. It made me want to gag. I was like that is the grossest thing I've ever smelled. But they loved it. And then when we had the fish market that was a huge product. Like people would call from all over to get that. And we'd have these drying racks, and it was just – didn't seem that appetizing, but it was really popular.

So yeah, Connie was – Connie was great. And then my grandmother too. But by the time I got old enough, the canary obviously was closed and she was retired at that point.

Q: [12:56] Can you tell me a little more about the fish market?

A: [12:59] Yeah. So it was in Manset and it was called Fan Dave's. And it was converted old sea captains house, actually Captain Clark. And the house is still there but it's in desperate need of repairs now. Small little fish market, we had everything that the boats caught. We had had haddock. Pollock. All the souls. Flounders. Halibut when we could get it. We'd actually purchase salmon from one of the farms over off Indian Point. We had crab meat, we had clams, muscles. We had everything that we could get. Lobsters.

And actually having the fish market is what got Dave back to getting his lobster license, because that – in 1996 is when the fisheries licensing changed. So it was pretty much wide open until '96, and then '96 is when they started implementing trap reduction and licensing, and that's when all those rules kind of came into play.

So that's when he went back and got his lobster license. He had had it when he was a kid but he had turned into a dragger, so he was shrimping, scalloping, whiting fishing, herring fishing. Folks who just scalloping obviously.

And then got back into lobstering when we had the market, which is huge, because now, I mean, that's what – when I went – started fishing with him is when he was just couldn't keep a crew. You know? He'd have everybody would work out for a few months, and then they'd make enough money. They'd get distracted. They wouldn't show up. Whatever. It wasn't working out.

So I helped him one fall pick up all his traps, and I was miserable. It was like I hate this. It's cold. And you know this was when – October.

So this was October of, oh, geez, 2003 2004. And it was freezing. I mean, it was October. Now our Octobers are 70 degrees, which is really – this year we looked back on that as like wow, do you remember what 20 years look like, because that was when I got my job, was because his crew had slipped on the ice and fallen. We've never saw ice in October. I don't know if we ever will.

I mean, it was beautiful in October. There was no – I mean people were getting suntanned still and it was like beautiful. But that was 20 years ago, what we were faced with. And it was freezing cold. And I went fishing with him and said I'll never do that again. But then when I got up to the dock he's like well do you want know how much you made today. And I'm just like freezing. I'm in my truck trying to warm up, and he's like, you made like $275. And I was like, what?

And I mean, to me I was young. I didn't have any money. I mean, to make 200-plus dollars for – really it wasn't that long of a day either. I mean it was still light out when we got in. So it wasn't that long. But I was just like, oh my gosh that's a lot of money. That's how much my car payment is. Like I could do a lot with us. So that got me hooked almost immediately. So good old money. (laughter)

Q: [16:02] Yeah and then you mentioned your boyfriend. Do you have any children?

A: [16:06] I do. I have a daughter who is 14 and a half. She's a freshman. So she's come out.

I actually fished with her when I was pregnant until January. And I was about six months pregnant. And we were heading out scalloping. And, oh my gosh, this was – this is actually a funny story.

So, you know, I was here. I was ready to go. Like, I knew I was pregnant. I was very pregnant. But I definitely was still really into fishing every day.

I mean, you build up that adrenaline to get up every morning and just go on the boat. What else do you do if you're not doing that? I've been doing that for so long, like I didn't have any – I didn't have a life. I mean, that was what I did.

So, I called Dave and was just like, "OK. What time does the boat leaving in the morning. He's like, I don't know if we're going go. It's going to be windy. So, I'm like, OK. Well, just call me in the morning and let me know. I need like 45 minutes notice to like get there on time and everything.

So, he texted me in the morning, he's like, Yeah, we're not going to go. He's like, I'll call you later this morning. So, I'm like, OK, cool. I'm going back to bed. I wake up, I go down to the dock, boat's gone.

So like, what? What happened? Where's the boat? And he's like, We went fishing. He's like, Holly, you are almost six months pregnant. You are staying home. Like, I'm making the call. You're done.

And it was winter. It was January. I was very pregnant and he was just like, Nope. We're making the call for you. You're not going do this until you actually give birth. Like, You're not having a baby out here and you need to take care of yourself.

So, Eden has been on the boat, yeah, since the beginning. And then I went back fishing as soon as the doctor gave me clearance. I think I was like two-and-a-half weeks after I gave birth, I went back fishing just part time. But I couldn't be kept away. I needed the money and I needed sanity.

I found very quickly that, I think, as a young mother – I was a single mother too. So, her father and I were friends, but he was working on a boat in Portland at the time. So, he came back when she was a couple months old at that point.

So, in those first few months of having her, I didn't know what I was doing. And I actually thanked everybody to be on that boat, because it gave me some sanity. It was only like, we'd only go out for about six hours. So, it gave me some time to process like, oh my God, I have a small human at home. And my mom was thrilled to be able to be like, "Grammy." Like, oh my gosh, I'll take the baby. And, you know, you go do what you need to do.

And so, I did that for the first three or four years that she was in her early years. And it was really great. And she'd come out with us. Like she'd get rejected sometimes for daycare. If she had a fever or anything like that, we'd bring her shrimping.

I mean, she's been right out here shrimping when she was two-and-a-half-years old, which is crazy. Because she's not a huge fan of fishing right at the moment, because she doesn't like the smell of the bait. But she loves being on the boat. And she can – I mean, I've got pictures of her holding huge lobsters like nothing.

I mean, it's just – it's so natural for her to be out there. But she doesn't love it. (laughter) It's not – I don't see her doing that forever. (laughter)

Q: [19:12] Would you want her to? Would you like her to go on fishing?

A: [19:14] There's a – I want her to be connected to it. Do I want her to be out every day going through the grind, and the rules, and the regulations, and the cost and the BS that goes with it? Not so much.

I think I'm definitely seeing the industry for kind of what it is. And as great as it was from my years of being there, I don't necessarily think that that's going to be a great career choice for young people.

I mean, yes, definitely some people are just so driven. They get up every day like I was. You get up every day. You don't know anything different. You're going on the boat. You know where your bait is. This, that – it's so routine.

I mean, the things that we do every day, we laugh about it. It's like, I just did that 700 times. I mean, there are things that are just very routine about it. And there's a

huge aspect of the mental physical ability that when you're working through like a mental problem, if you can be physically active while you're trying to figure it out.

And so I think for me, as I've stepped away from the boat now, I've really looked back on that time with a lot of gratitude of, wow, I was going through some really deep things. And I do think my time on the boat actually helped me figure out some really good choices.

And so that's something that is not really part of the fishing world, though. That's like the more personal side of it. And as far as the industry is concerned, though, things are changing huge. And I don't know what it's going to look like.

It's always been here, though. I mean, that's one thing that we've always talked about. It's one of the most sustainable fisheries. It's been around for 100 years. And I don't necessarily think it's going away. It's just changing. Technology is going to change everything in the next 20 years. And that's something that I think that all – anyone that's interested in it, there's an avenue somewhere.

She came with me last year, two years ago. We met with a couple of ropeless fishing guys, and they had their buoys. We went down the shore here a little ways and actually tested some stuff and she came with me, because I wanted her just to be aware that things are changing. But at 12, 13, that kind of went right over her head. She's – I want her to be more involved than she really wants to be. (laughter) But there's a lot of –

I mean, when you're talking about the bookkeepers and all the different people that are involved, it's just the web. I mean, it spreads.

And so I do think things are changing on the island as far as – it's been – like, Southwest Harbor has been a fishing community since the beginning. I mean, we had that cannery. It was one of the first canneries on the coast. But things are changing. And if those things go away, then the connections are getting lost and the skills.

Like, my great aunt Connie, I mean, I don't know anyone that really fillets fish like that. Other than they're chefs, but they're not in a fish market situation or providing.

Q: [22:09] Yeah, I think that's a good segue. Can you describe just the roles you've had in the – fishing?

A: [22:14] Yeah. So started off at the fish market when I was young. And actually, prior to that, my uncle Gary just clammed for fun. So we'd always take his little whaler out to one of the islands and go find hen clams or dig up clams with him.

And then I worked at the fish market. And then stayed on helping Dave with the cleaning of the boat and getting the boat ready. And I mean, it was a disaster. (laughter) You know, it's like three or four sweaty men fishing. It's in rough shape. So I did what I could.

And then after that era of my life, I – I mean, I moved away. I went to New York City. I kind of did my own thing for a few years. But what got me back was when his crew had slipped on the ice in October and he needed someone to go pick up traps with him. And I was like, I can do that, whatever.

So I did that. But then I never left. And that was – that was the beginning of my last 20 years of my life of being on the boat. But I've done a lot of things in the last 20 years.

As far as fishing, I mean, I go down to Portland and I pick up bait. I do bait runs. I try to attend as many meetings as I could. I've got my lobster license, which took forever to – I was on the list for 13 years.

So I was extremely vocal in that era of my life trying to talk to Augusta, and meeting the commissioner and meeting representatives. I mean, why are you keeping us out? Because I honestly think that if I had got my license back when I first wanted it, I would have my own boat and I would be out there on my own. But it just took too long.

So I ended up getting my real estate license. I now have this mini golf business. I've now like – you've made me choose other paths because I couldn't be my own boss. And that's what I really wanted to be.

And, oh, geez, what else have I done? I've helped a lot of girls. Like young girls get their apprentice, taking them out on the boat with us, sign papers. Just trying to inspire them, however, just to try it. You might not love it.

I've taken girls out. We get out three or four miles, and they're like, so when do we go back? (laughter) And I'm like, we haven't even got started yet. So there's – I like to show them that. And there's other women that I know on the island that have done that too, which is really great.

So Lindsay McDaniels, I don't know if she's on your list or not, but she's incredible. And she has her own boat. And she also takes out the young teenage girls to show them. They all want to try it. OK, come try it. (laughter) And I guess that's it.

I mean, I've done a lot of publications and stuff, like the *Pretty Rugged* book. I don't if you've seen that. But that is something that Ali Farrell out of Rockland produced. And there's, I believe, 26 women in that book, which is really great. And that was a fun project to be part of.

And the Southwest Harbor Public Library and the Southwest Harbor Historical Society has reached out. And we've tried to do as many kind of partnerships – just trying to leave the legacy of what I've contributed and just trying to get people to know that it does exist for young girls.

Q: [25:33] Yeah, you've mentioned shrimping and scalloping. What is your interaction with those guys?

A: [25:36] So shrimping's been shut down for 10 years. So that was great. I love that fishery. That was all right out here, too, for the most part.

That I would sell – so it was the same thing. We'd get the product and we'd always go through this marketing issue of, like, OK, if we put it on the truck, if we sell it to a dock, do we sell it locally? Do we sell it to restaurants? I mean, we kind of – on the boat, that's the conversation that happens daily all the time. And it's always about producing a high-quality product and getting it back to the people.

And so, right from the beginning, that was my main conversation with Dave when I first started with him is that we're here to feed the people. So a good product. Like, we're not going to give them several day-old fish. We're not going to give them bones. We're not going to give them dead lobsters. We're going to produce a high quality product. And we get a better price for that. Grade A is obviously a lot better than anything else.

So the shrimping – that's, I think, we shrimped before we scalloped. There was one winter where we did all three, like, insane. So we'd go lobstering one day, go haul our traps, come back, convert the boat. We had everything right on the dock. We just, like – it took us, like, 45 minutes to convert from one fishery to the next, because it was, like, dual purpose boat.

And I think now I'm looking back on it, it's like, did he do that just so we could say that years from now that we actually did that? Because it was insane. I mean, there was – and this was pre-Eden.

So I mean, this was a part of my life where I did nothing but be on the boat. I mean, if I got home to sleep, I was doing good.

So yeah, we'd convert the boat. We'd go out lobstering. We'd come in. We'd sell the lobsters, get the traps off the boat, if we were, like, shifting gear or anything.

And then we'd put – get the winches going again. Get the doors back on the boat. Get the net reel – it was usually already on there. And then we'd convert the next day, because everything is so regulated. So you can only go shrimping certain days. You can only go scalloping certain days. And then in between, you can go lobstering.

So those were my –what I'd like to call insanity years. I had – I mean, that was crazy. I mean, I can't believe that we did that.

And on top of that, we then hired a packer. She was a crab picker. So we would just bring her our products. We'd bring the shrimp to her. She'd peel them. She'd package them. And then I'd go around and sell them to the different restaurants. I mean, many of these restaurants, I've sold my product to.

So that was part of that. It was always trying to get the product back to the people, not always putting it on the truck and sending it to an auction or down to Portland or something like that. I mean, our first choice is always to give back if we can.

Q: [28:24] Yeah, you'd mention that you hold the lobster license. Do you still hold that?

A: [28:27] I do. Yep. And I'll keep that. So let me just quick to over what I've done.

So when I knew – so like, three years – during COVID, however many years ago that was, whatever that was. During those years, obviously, we didn't know what we were doing. We were trying to figure out, where's this going? Is this my chance to get out of fishing? Is this like, what are we going to do here?

At the same time, my captain, his health started to decline. He really needs a new hip. He still hasn't gotten this new hip. That's another story.

So it was really this crossing for me. What do I do? Do I try to make fishing work? Do I not? My daughter at this point was becoming a teenager.

So I decided to keep my lobster license, but not get a boat. And so we started developing the concept of creating this mini golf course in Southwest Harbor called Golf of Maine. And that was my opportunity to give back this legacy of like – I mean, sharing our fishing heritage and what we've done in stories has always been pretty important. And so we thought mini golf would be really fun.

And then as we started researching more about mini golf – so I'm a huge mini golf fan. Dave is a regular golf guy. And we just started brainstorming these ideas on the boat that got out of control. And now we have a mini golf course.

So holding the lobster license is really important. But I'm in this little speed bump of trying to get this business off the ground and everything.

So last year was our first year. Not to say I won't go back to lobstering, because if he gets his new hip, then I might go out fishing with him a little bit this coming summer, just to get back out. Because summer lobstering, you really can't beat it. If it's 85 degrees out, you can be out on the ocean. And it's just such – that is a really – I miss that part of it. Yeah.

Q: [30:27] Great.

A: [30:28] I do hold the license.

Q: [30:29] Yeah. Do you hold any other licenses?

A: [30:30] I have a seaweed harvesting license. And then I – I mean, as far as fishing, that's all I do. But I have my – I'm an associate broker, too, for real estate. So I do that. I took my pilot's license. So kind of diversified.

Growing up around here, I mean, I know you guys are from other places, but I mean, everybody wants to learn as much as they can. So that's right out of high school. I was always pretty motivated. And I got my pilot's license when I was a senior. So yeah.

I had finished all my classes, and I couldn't – I didn't know what to do. So I started taking flying lessons in Trenton. It was great. And then all of a sudden, my teachers were like, where have you been? And I hadn't told them. And they're about – I mean, that was back in the day when you could sort of just not be in school and they didn't really follow up. But at the end of the year, they were like, where have you been? So I told my advisor, I said, I'm actually been flying. He's like, like, airplanes.

So he came to one of my pract – he came to one of my lessons, and met my instructor, and watched me do touch and goes and stuff. And was like, OK, you can graduate. You are good. (laughter). I showed him all my flying in for – like all the classes I had to take for that. So yeah.

Q: [31:46] Yeah, have you done much seaweed harvesting?

A: [31:48] A little bit. Not – so that was something that during COVID too was very important for me to learn about and get that license because I didn't know if they were going to shut that down. So that's another license I hold. But at this moment, not doing anything with that.

I really am interested in cultivating seaweed and scallops. In the future, I want to keep all those things close because I'm really passionate about that. But just with this new business and in this moment in time, it's not something I'm doing. But I have plans.

And so – I mean, even at the golf course, we talk about doing a little lobster hatchery, like a mini version, and stuff like that. So in the future, that's what I'm hoping that the golf course property is going to be sort of a platform to be able to showcase a lot of those different things.

And actually, I'm really interested in you at the University of Maine because we have these backboards that we're putting together to put around the course. And this will be our first official first season this coming year.

So we have all these backboards that we really want to obviously be factual. But we come up with them and we find like our own information that we want to share. But I would love to have somebody look them over and add input, or if you have students that are, like, want to help do anything like that, that would be very cool.

Q: [33:13] Do you have any experience in the industry that's beyond directly fishing? So maybe in bookkeeping, you talked about cleaning the boat, which I think sort of counts in that. Or post-harvesting. I think you also said you had a broker's license. Advocacy, that sort of stuff. Can you talk about that?

A: [33:28] Yeah. So bookkeeping is sort of a nightmare for anyone that's working 16 hours a day. Taxes definitely have gotten me by the throat many times. I've gotten better at it. But I do – I'm in huge fear of some of these young guys that get a huge paycheck. And then they just go blow the whole thing. And then tax season comes up and they've got no clue what they're doing. There's also very few accountants that have been helpful, and we've lost a lot of accountants in the area. And I'm hoping that more – we get more to the area.

So the bookkeeping side of things is pretty straightforward. It's just you've got to bank your money and know what you're doing. And it's not – it's again. If you don't take those classes in your senior – junior, senior year in high school, and you get right in the lobstering or you don't even finish high school, you really have no idea of how to maintain those practices or even how to start them. So that's been one thing that's been really important.

I actually have – there's a little – there's a girl that's one of my daughter's friends and she's fishing with her aunt and her aunt's husband. And she just told me the other day. She goes, geez, Holly, I've got to file my taxes. How do I do that? She's 13.

And I'm like, I love where your mind is at. Let's talk. Not at this moment – because you guys are here or whatever, but I'd love to talk to you about that.

And so and that's a young person who is aware, because it's been drilled into her head, you've got to pay your taxes. You've got to do this. And it's a big thing. I mean, it's huge.

I, for a few years, had Dave just keep my taxes out, but that's always been a thing. That's always something that hangs over your head. And – but it's the same thing for advocacy. For going out and talking to these girls – or anybody.

A lot of the guys don't want to really – they like to talk. They want to know what we're catching. It's funny because the women are always inspired by me and want to talk about what it's like to be on a boat. The men always want to know what we're catching and how much.

They always want to know where we're going. They're more like, why are you guys doing so well? And that type of thing. So those are different things.

I've given some talks at some schools, which is cool, and gone out and talked to them, and the library again in the historical society I've been pretty involved with. And the Southwest Harbor Public Library is amazing. They're great.

Q: [35:52] Yeah. And can you talk a little bit more about the ways that you feel like your back – your identity might shape your experience in the fishery and the way people treat or talk to you like you just mentioned?

A: [36:02] Yeah. So I've been a very large community member. I'm pretty – that's a huge passion of mine. And a big thing – when I look through my core values of my life and what I want, it's really to leave some sort of legacy to this area that – I mean, because I know that I was awesome. For those years that I was doing all that, like I know that that was pretty crazy, because I look back on it and think, how did I do that?

Like there are mornings now when I wake up, and I'm just like, I hear the wind blowing. It's still dark out. And I think to myself, how was I on the boat an hour ago? For days, weeks, months on ends. How did I do that? I kind of blow myself away. Like, wow. Where was that motivation from? Where did that come from? Because I don't have that all the time now. It's very different.

So that's something that I just feel like – I lost my train of thought. I'm sorry.

But being on the boat and what I've got going on now is really what I want. And so that's what all these years of working up to is like, what do I really want for myself, which is kind of calling my own shots. And being involved as I want to be.

Q: [37:28] Yeah. And what would an average day of work sort of look like? You've mentioned it a few times, but if you take me –

A: [37:34] Yeah. Oh my gosh. Yeah.

Q: [37:35] – through that whole day.

A: [37:36] So wake up – so fishing, obviously. So wake up by 4.35. It's like, grab a quick cup of coffee. If I can have my stuff together, I've got the coffee on an auto timer. So it just makes it. Didn't always do that.

Try to grab something to eat on the boat. I mean, that was one thing that was always a struggle for me was having enough food on the boat. I mean, I'd get off and just be rav – I'd eat anything in sight. I mean, I was just starving. I've burned 5,000 calories a day sometimes, just moving literally from five o'clock in the morning some – for 12 straight hours.

I mean, sometimes you don't even have time to go to the bathroom. You don't have anything. I mean, the traps are coming quick. There's so much to do. And so for one thing for me, I'd always laugh at it.

It was usually just Dave and I on the boat. And we would kill it. I mean, some days we'd have 2,400 pounds of lobsters, just him and I. And so – and then we'd come into the dock and we'd be in line to sell our lobsters. And I'll see a boat with a captain and two crew, two guys. And I'm just like, I got you. We just did the same thing, if not better. And it's just me.

So you have no time, though. Your hands are just ju-ju-ju-ju all the time. So that was always really stressful.

So get up in the morning, try to get that cup of coffee, try to get some food in a bag. And again, you're going non-stop. So you miss the grocery store. I mean, in Southwest, the grocery store closes at 6, sometimes 7 if you're lucky. You're getting gas station food. It's disgusting. You feel like crap. Going through the health cycles now of trying to eat better has been really good for me.

So you get on the boat and it's like getting bait. We usually got bait in the morning. Sometimes we put it on the night before. But if we had to get bait in the morning, so it's like going to the bait cooler, going and loading up the truck, bringing that to the dock, bringing the boat around, hoisting it down. Like the whole process would take anywhere from a half hour to an hour, depending on what we were doing. It would also dictate when we started our day, trying to get out there as early as possible.

So I have beautiful sunrise photos, which I do miss the sunrise more than anything on the ocean.

And then it was just like that first trap comes aboard. And sometimes it comes aboard five seconds leaving the dock. Sometimes it's an hour. We have to steam offshore, depending on what the tide's doing, what the weather's going to do for the day, depends on where we're going to start.

If we're going to shift traps, then that will decide are we going to go to this string first? Haul those, then go pick those up and move those over here. Are we going to start out off Duck Island and work our way back?

I mean, all those conversations are usually happening mostly with Dave in his head and then us together trying to figure out what we're going to do for the day, like what's our goal? Are we going to try to haul 200? Are we going to try to haul 300, 400? What's our plan for the day will sort of dictate what that's going to look like. And then get all the lobsters.

And in the minute we haul the last trap, it's start crating all the lobsters up, cleaning up the boat, putting – if there's any bait left, putting the bait away. Just kind of tidying up.

If you're scalloping, then it's usually a long steam. Like right now, depending on where the guys are going, this is closed. They're going over off Swan's Island and Marshall Island and over there. So that's a two, three-hour steam sometimes. So that's usually me. And that's a different boat. So we have two different boats. We have the Dragger and the Lobster Boat.

The Dragger – I'd make a pot of coffee if it wasn't frozen. It would be many times I'd get down to the boat and go, "Damn it." And the whole thing and everything is just frozen. So it takes a little bit to thaw everything out. Make coffee. Get ready for scalloping is pretty – it takes like 10 minutes to kind of get prepped. Because I usually leave it ready to go at the end of the day.

And then we go out and we'd set out our first toe for scalloping. You can't set out until sunrise. So you can have like – we usually would get right where we want to go. Because you want to claim that spot. You want to clean that territory. So you deploy your drag right off the corner of the boat. And you hold it there. And you just kind of circle around until you get the time call. And – which is sunrise at Augusta. It's not our sunrise or anything like that. It's always calculated by Augusta sunrise.

So the minute we'd get that, you know, be watching the clock. And if there's wardens out, they're all watching the clock too. So everyone's like waiting. And then it's just kind of like – and then it's go time.

And then you just – I mean, from that moment on, we deploy the drag. Hopefully we've got scallops in that first toe. And it's anywhere from – I mean, we did three minute toes in Gouldsboro. And we'd get eight, nine bushels of scallops in one three minute toe, which is crazy. I don't think they're seeing that anymore. But that was years ago.

I mean, that was a really quick toe. And you'd load up your scallops. And then you'd dump the bag. And then it would just start shelling them out and doing it again until you got your limit.

So you had to sort of – for scalloping, you had to decide what your bushel count was going to look like. So we're only allowed 15 gallons a day. So we're trying – or 135 pounds. So we're trying to figure out like, what are these going to cut out to?

So sometimes they're really big, sometimes they're really small. And that will decide like how many bushels we're going to take for the day. And then as soon as we think we've gotten about the rough amount that we need to fulfill that limit, then we start heading home, and we shell them out the whole way, and clean up the boat, package them up. We have a scale on the boat. So we usually just weigh everything there and then I'll deliver.

So some days we'd be done by noon. You know, we'd leave early, but we'd be done by noon. And then I'd spend my afternoon bringing scallops to everybody. So that's a little different this year because it's taking longer to get the scallops and they're going further distance, so they're not getting back until like six at night. So we just get them first thing in the morning.

Q: [43:34] And can you talk a little bit more about how these roles in fishing sort of interacted with your family or caregiving responsibilities?

A: [43:41] Oh my gosh, yeah, that caused so much trouble. You know, there's – it's one thing when you're a single person with no child, you know? My responsibilities are my own and whatever. When you have a small human, you're then very responsible, obviously. And I had to depend on other people to help me get through that period of my life. So there is a lot of stress there. A lot of guilt. You know? If I miss something.

The other thing with fishing is that Dave has his own kids. And so he knew, you know, like this is important, this is important. I got to be in for this. I got to be in for that. And yeah, we didn't make as much money, but whatever. It was, nothing we were willing to sacrifice.

So there was a lot of pressure, like my mom helped me a lot. Eden's other grandmother, unfortunately, passed away when she was young. But in those first two years she was very available.

And you just – you know, I missed weddings. I missed things with friends that they didn't understand the lifestyle. So they don't – they're not as forgiving when you miss an important event for them because you're gone, and you can't be there. So I had some relationships kind of – you know? It just happens. But they fizzled away.

And I had to call on a lot of people to help me. I mean, my mom got me through. I mean, there was days where I'd come and there'd be food in my fridge because she know I couldn't make it to the grocery store. That I was starving, and, you know, there's only so many restaurants in the winter time, or anything like that. You eat out a lot. I mean, that became a huge thing because I just didn't have the energy to

want to cook, or prep, or anything – or shop. Didn't have the ability to do that so we ate a lot.

And – yeah. And then once – as Eden got older though, that's when I really started to like, I've got to take a step off this boat more. I got to not be here as much. And that's where I am today.

Q: [45:39] And how do you think that will change as you look towards the future?

A: [45:43] I think that I've just built a very good foundation for showing Eden what work ethic is all about. I mean, she saw me get up many mornings and go to work. And I think that's important.

And as I get older, I do – I mean, I've only been out of fishing now for about a year. So as I look back on that lifestyle, I look back on things that I wish I had done differently. And, you know, I wish I had asked for a little bit more time off in certain areas. But again, I made a lot of money. And I – you know, I bought real estate. I got myself to where I am today.

So I think going forward, it's really more about self-care and taking care of myself, and being there for Eden, and those moments that are really important to her and me. And so that's sort of what my life is now.

Q: [46:34] Yeah, absolutely. And then sort of switching gears, can you describe any changes in the marine environment you've noticed in your time in the water?

A: [46:42] Oh my gosh. Well, starting with October 20 years ago, snow and ice. We don't see that anymore. That's huge.

The lobsters definitely go through cycles. They like cold water, obviously. So we're seeing that trend of them going into deeper holes in the ocean. And we're seeing them go further offshore, not coming back as soon.

There's, you know, obviously the weather events that we've just experienced over the last couple of weeks, like what the heck was that? Like Holy cow. I mean, I've lived here for 40 – almost 44 years. I've never seen Beale's underwater ever. And I live right down the street from there.

So that's scary. I mean, honestly, it's terrifying. I don't know what's going to happen. And I didn't think – I mean, you always hear about climate change. You hear about the warming ocean. You hear about all these changes. And you just – until you see it, it's really hard to grasp that Holy cow, this is actually probably happening.

And so you do kind of start changing your mindset a little bit of like, OK, maybe I'm not so focused on this one thing. Maybe there are other things happening here, but until you witness it and see it.

And the bait situation is changing huge. So the guys are out pogie fishing now during the summer months. And that's providing most of the bait fish for local fishermen around here. So they'll go out fishing. They'll – pogie fishing. They'll get the fish. They come in. They'll sell it directly to the fishermen or to a wharf.

That's different because we've usually gotten herring. I mean, I used to go down to Portland and get, you know, redfish racks or, you know, any of the better bait – lobster candy, we used to call it, because we'd put that on the lobster – we put those in traps like, oh my gosh – certain types of redfish or depending on the quality of the fish, if it was really fresh or if it was, you know, like a really salted bait or something. Just it reac – lobsters react differently.

And we spent my entire like 20 years figuring out, like we'd bait one trap with old stinky, nasty like bait that you think of. And then we'd bait it with like really fresh, fresh, fresh, and see the difference. And depending on what cycle the lobsters were in, if they were shedding or if they were hard, you know, depending on what they were, we saw those changes.

And so over the years, we really developed a kind of a bait master plan to be like, OK, this type of year you use this, this type of year you use that. And whatever we can get better quality, we will.

Well, what's happened over the last 10 years, those prices have gone through the roof. And so the marine fisheries has opened up this pogie fishing, which has just really been a savior. Huge. Because it's a fish that is not food quality, but it's also right here. I mean, we see – for the few years leading up to them being able to pogie fish, the schools of porgies was insane.

I mean, I have videos of like pan shots of like 12 huge, massive, you know, just obviously things chasing them to the surface. And incredible, Nature. Incredible. I mean, a really fun thing to experience.

Whales, sharks, I mean, you name it, everything, just going at them. Seals like, oh my gosh. Tuna, we – like everything. Was really fun. Yeah.

Q: [50:12] Yeah. And how the aside from bait, like how do you think those environmental changes have affected your work in the sector?

A: [50:18] We – well, the bait has been a big one for the financial side of everything because obviously you go from spending 50,000 a year on herring and whatever to whatever you can get for barrels of porgies off a local boat is a lot different.

We actually have – my little brother is almost 20 and he actually goes pogie fish – He goes lobster and – but he also goes pogie fishing. So he's basically our guy. He's our bait guy. And he uses his dad's boat. So it's like we can get that a lot cheaper.

But those were – that's changing. I mean, the one thing too is people shifted from this fresh bait right off the boats and barrels to this frozen bait, which I don't know if you've aware of all that, but the plastic and the cardboard used for that is disgraceful. It's pathetic. And it's really sad that we even went through a transition period of a couple of years of using so much of that, because the waste that came out of that was – it was really sad to see that.

But a very easy product. You see the trucks going by with it just hay racked, and they can transport it that way. And one person can pick those boxes up. They weigh anywhere from 40 to 80 pounds. So one person can pick up one of those boxes of fish that's anywhere – it's like this. You pick it up and you just sling it on the boat and you leave it there and then by the next morning, depending on what the weather is doing, it's thawed out and ready to go the next day.

So it was very practical but not from a conservative side at all. So I was really happy when that sort of has started to kind of go away a little bit. I mean people clearly still use that stuff, but it's nice to see a better product.

So that's a big change because that affects price, you know, your bottom dollar. I mean, that just affects everything.

Q: [52:11] Yeah, and are there any other ways that you sort of coped with those changes or addressed them?

A: [52:16] Yeah, changing to porgies. That's the big one. The other thing is the boats, just going back to climate change and just different things that have changed.

So weather patterns as they get – I mean we're getting better obviously, and we have over the last 20, 30 years of like predicting weather, knowing what's coming and all that.

But these boats are getting faster, the boats are getting bigger, the men are getting more egotistical and a little bit more daring. So they're going out in some pretty wacky weather that – I don't know how that changes, because in their mindset they're like I can do this. You know this boat can handle it. The boat can handle it. That's – I've heard that so many times. Like the boat – whatever. I got this boat. I just spent a million dollars on this boat. This boat is going to go fishing because it needs to.

So as the weather patterns change I do see the guys getting a little bit – they're still fearless and they're still going out. And that scares me. That's one thing.

I mean we've lost guys. We know people that we've lost. And it's – that's something that's really scary.

Q: [53:20] Yeah and you had mentioned also just the temperature change for the lobsters. Can you describe a little bit more about that?

Q: [53:24] Well one big thing for lobsters on the boat too is that if you have holding tanks, they need to be in obviously ocean water until you sell them. There are some guys that don't do that. They'll just leave them in crates on the deck of the boat, and they come in, and it's warm out. And the lobsters are already in a weak state. And then you put them on a deck of a boat with no water for however many hours, and then the heat – you're selling a dead product at that point.

So fishermen have gotten better from the – I mean we got good at it because we had like a sprinkler system and we had all this. So if we're catching a thousand, two thousand pounds a day, we had a tank that was keeping ocean water on them and then we had the sprinkler system that we could put 15 crates with this like hose water to keep them cool.

But if it was going to be really hot or anything like that in the summertime, we just go in and unload. Sometimes we'd unload twice a day just to keep that product alive and to maintain that.

But the – but not everyone does that, so you know, that comes back to the industry because that affects the bottom dollar on everybody. If they're buying dead lobsters that's going to drive the price down. So that's huge.

And then as fishermen, when we go to meetings which unfortunately through COVID the meetings on the fishermen for the different – what am I trying to say? The different zones. So there's always zone meetings. So there's like eight or nine zones.

There's – we use to have really good zone meetings and I would go to them and I would learn something. Wouldn't really say much. I did a couple times and was just like it's very intimidating situation, but they haven't – they don't really do those anymore.

But that was a chance to go and talk to guys. I mean, obviously everyone talks at the dock. You pull down to a dock anywhere in Maine, there's a fisherman there. If he's in a decent mood he could chat with you for hours. If he's in a bad mood, doesn't want to talk to you, you know, it's clearly obvious.

But one thing we always talk about is product quality and making sure that the lobsters are not dead. And if you're leaving them in the traps too long they get weaker. I mean, there's a lot of things that factor the quality of the lobster.

Q: [55:33] Yeah, and with these recent storms, do you find a lot of people are talking about that now too?

A: [55:39] It's – so yes. Actually I'm going to say not so much, because right now I think people are really just trying to figure out how to get through the winter and dealing with storm damage. And then – I mean, there's people that have lost their boats so I mean that goes back to square one for them.

I mean, depending on what their insurance is, not only that, to get a new boat, you'd either got to go buy an existing boat. Repair your boat. Those things are huge because you can't find people to work on them. I mean, it goes down to supply chain issues of like all the gear that's needed, the lost traps is insane.

I mean, I don't know if you've heard anything about that but I mean people – that's hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars worth a gear that gets destroyed in big storms like that, and I know this one wiped a lot out. And people weren't expecting that. I think they were expecting big tides and like, you know, big weather. But nothing as destructive as what we just saw.

So now you've got to build yourself back up. And the banks – I know a lot of banks aren't loaning to fishermen right now. High interest rates, all that just comes right back down to the fishermen. Because now they're basically wiped out, and they need to start over, and they've got nothing to sell because you've just lost your product. And insurance companies don't necessarily cover lost gear.

Q: [57:05] Yeah, and in terms of just thinking about like the porgies for instance. Do you think that that's really helped especially looking towards the future.

A: [57:13] Huge. Huge. That's huge. Not only that, it's given fishermen during the lull of making money in the summertime, income. And for us – so Luke will take his buddies out who are also lobster men, and he needs the hands on deck. He needs a couple of guys to help him pogie fish, so he just – he pays them in barrels of bait. So that works for everybody.

And so those are things that are hugely affecting the industry in a really positive way.

Q: [57:43] And do you think there's anything else like the pogie fishing that is really working to like sort of approach these environmental changes?

A: [57:50] I can't think of anything right off the top on my head, because that's the biggest one. It's really, the storm damage is what I'm most concerned about, like for our harbor. Beals is officially closed until April so that means no fishermen are going in there right now. We've got some issues with like MDI Lobster has gone

out of business. We don't know what's going on there. There's damage repairs that need to happen.

So, I mean, some of these fishermen do fish year-round. Lobstering, we're talking. So they're fishing year-round and they have nowhere to go necessarily. Or they have to have a truck meet them.

Rich's Wharf over in Bass Harbor completely demolished. Like you can't even step foot on that dock. I mean, that's a year-round dock for many people. Same thing with Thurston's. I mean, these are established infrastructures for the industry that, right now, are wiped out.

So how that's going to affect everybody this spring will be huge because there'll be a lot of changes that need to happen. And what caused that? This very large storm.

So, I mean, that's one thing that's that's – it does – there's multi layers of that.

Q: [59:04] How do you think – how do you think people are going to sort of address that going forward?

A: [59:10] That is a good one. I don't know. I think there's a lot of fishermen that are really scared. They don't know. I mean, there's – well-established. They'll get through anything. They've been doing this for 50 years. They'll figure it out.

Some of the newer guys, I think they've just been given this gravy season over the last 10 years that they've been involved. They don't know how bad it can be. And if you haven't been through despair like that. I mean, I don't know. I'm not sure.

But there is a very good generation of like the young 20-year-olds, but they've – excuse me – they've just been given – you know, they've worked really hard. They deserve it, they've been out. There they've done that. But they don't know what it's like to really struggle because they've their parents – you know, everyone's helped them get to where they are. They've worked their asses off for it and they deserve it, but they haven't actually seen what it's like when things go the other way.

F: [1:00:12] I was going to ask, you mentioned about the issue of like heat and kind of the product degradation, or like dying of the lobsters on – on the boats. And that you guys have the better system of like holding tanks and sprinklers. I was just wondering, was that something you built in response to kind of changing weather patterns. Like you invested in a ecological change.

A: [1:00:28] Yeah, completely. Yeah. That, and, oh, if I could remember the year. I want to say it was like 2005 is when we started getting over a thousand pounds regularly, and our holding tank couldn't hold that.

So we noticed when we got to the docks sluggish lobsters. And then, the guys buying lobsters would be like, OK, you're not – we haven't lost any of yours but we're losing other people, so like what's going to happen here? So we installed another Pacer pump on the boat and then added this whole new – it's very simple.

I mean, my captain put the whole thing together for like $300 or $400 other than the Pacer pump. And it worked like a champ. It was great. I got sprayed in the face a trillion times, but it was really – it worked.

But that was definitely in response to a higher level of catch – increased huge – almost – not – I'm not going to say overnight, but it was almost like from one season to the next, it was a significant uptick in what we were catching. And then, yeah, the warm weather in the summertime.

And even in the winter, I mean, sometimes it'd be too cold, so you'd like, you kind of had to regulate that depending on what season it was and what was going on.

A: [1:01:42] Yeah. And you sort of talked about this already, but are – do you feel that there are any particular resources, relationships, knowledge, training organizations, like those sort of things, that you really drawn on to adapt to these things?

Q: [1:01:54] So I was a huge fan of these zone council meetings and going to those. They don't exist anymore. From what I've gathered too, they've gotten very political and there are more just information sessions for from what I've gathered.

Augusta just shows up and kind of just says what's happening with very limited – public comment is available but it doesn't do anything, so that's too bad. But more so just, I think, through Facebook groups. You know? You connect with people that you don't know about. Like this Ali Farrell that wrote this book "Pretty Rugged."

She contacted me via a Facebook post and we became really good friends. You know? And she did this great book so – and then we ended up doing – we wanted to go on tour. We made a joke we wanted to go on tour. But like seven or eight of the women, we all got together. And then we did like a public talk for the library. We did a few different public engagements. And it was really fun to be able to like connect with them, and meet them, and then know that like, oh my, gosh, you guys, we're all going through the same struggles of parenting, and the guilt of not always being their first thing in the morning, or I'd get home so late at night my daughter was already sleeping. I missed her the whole day. And so there was some really dark days for me of feeling really guilty, so it was really nice to have that resource of like, wow, there are other people out there.

So Facebook not that I love Facebook, but it exists and it has been a really good way to network and connect with others. I do try to attend anything that I can that

interests me. At the Penobscot Museum I know they did like a women's fishing thing, that was really cool.

Rockland for the lobster association big meeting, the convention that they do down there. It's good during the day. The evening there is not so much fun. To many people it is, but it's more of a way to get together and get drunk and – but the information there is really cool.

And other resources – really just my community. I mean, I feel like I've been a really good resource for people. I've had you know women – or young girls approaching me with their application for their apprenticeship, and I think that's really kind of when I decided that I'm there. I'm at a point in my life where I feel like I am a good resource and I do have enough information to offer back to these people now. So like I feel good about that. I feel very secure in what I am. So I try to be a resource. But, yeah.

And then the restaurant, the chefs actually have been really great. I mean, I have connected – when I was 15 and delivering seafood from the fish market, that's where I started off was, you know, going to restaurants and bringing them to these chefs directly. And they'd be like, wow, this is an amazing product, because they you know they're used to Maine Shellfish, or they're used to these other delivery trucks. And then, so I'm bringing it literally from the boat to them. And, you know, the mileage on that is like sometimes less than five miles. So that's pretty incredible. But, yeah

They would give me more information as far as like protein and just the quality of the product, so that's something that really got nailed home to me when I was young is knowing just how good of a product seafood is, and the protein, and the nutrients. Like it's incredible. So.

Q: [1:05:23] Yeah, and you mentioned with like the holding tank, just being able to do that. Do you feel like you've been able to make a lot of the – like adapt to a lot of the changes in the way you wanted to.

A: [1:05:32] Definitely. I mean, we've always said you have to roll with the punches. And so – and one thing. And here when we started weighing the pros and cons versus fishing versus minigolf, minigolf there are zero regulations. And we just like – as we get like emails or texts about like, oh, regulation change, or you know rule change. Like how many times do we see rule change come up on an email or some – oh, roll your eyes and think like now what? What do we got to do now? Like, oh, the measure's got to be changed now. Or you know, the vents have to be changed out now. Or, oh, these links don't work. Or the marine patrol come on the boat and they want to like measure all your circles for your – your drag and make sure those aren't stretched out, or you know.

So all these things are like constantly changing. And then we get minigolf, like zero regulation, and you can make up your own rules. It's so great.

So really, like it's been funny for us but also like eye opening to the amount of things that we've had to adapt to and change over the years to appease these different regulations and, yeah, some of them are great. Some of them are pain-in-the-you-know-what and – but, I mean, it's part of the industry. So you – I mean, as much as you can go to meetings and try to say your peace, it's happening.

Q: [1:06:47] Yeah, and are there kinds of adaptations you wish you would have been able to make to like access different things that you haven't been able to.

A: [1:06:54] So when the ropeless trap guy approached me four or five years ago, I wish I would have – I did give him a lot of my time. I wish we would have tried his gear a couple years ago. Because now I'm not on the boat, it's harder for me to like be part of that. And I think he was on to something. But we talked heavily about like – he brought that up – up here. It's called Lobster Lift is the name of the company. And he was great. And I loved his products, but there were so many things that I saw wrong with it like that.

So I worked with him for about a year back and forth, and that's one regret I have is that I'm not working with him now to bring that more to frutation (sic) because it's a really good product.

And it's – the technology is there and I believe it's going to work. The problem is the current state of fishing is not that. Like if we – if this was a brand new fishery, and you were trying to like, oh, this is how you do it. OK. Unfortunately you have a very ancient way of doing things with ancient mindsets. So to change all that is almost impossible. And so where they meet in the middle is what the problem is. And that I don't know. And I don't know how to bring that together.

There was a lot of rumors going around about boats getting sunk for helping these guys, about traps getting cut off and all that. So we sort of had to – unfortunately, we had to kind of make a social call, that if we help this guy or be part of this, like we don't want to be part of the negative effects of that right now, because he still has a long way to go to figure that out. But I met with him kind of as much as I could.

Q: [1:08:44] Yeah, and this is kind of a long question, so I'll read the whole thing. What is your biggest concern about the marine environment for the future for Maine's coastal fisheries. And if you could tell policymakers in Maine what their biggest priority should be to help people adapt to these changes, what would you tell them?

A: [1:09:01] So policy is something that without knowing what the new policies are, it's very hard to make a statement or to know which way to go. Because for me, I

know – I mean, I consider myself a fairly intelligent person. But when I read a new rule or a new policy, I've no idea what it means. No clue. And so – and the, you know, and the kind of conversation is always like, oh, they do that to confuse you. Like that's just a throw it off to get you to vote one way or another way when really this is what they're what they're trying to achieve.

So one thing that I think would be really important would be – and we had observers for a long time. And observers are not the answer. I don't I'm not saying that that's what we need, but we need people that will come out on the boat and see what's really happening and learn more about what the day-to-day fishery looks like, not necessarily what it looks like in an office somewhere. Because, I mean, you can get a report, and you can think you know what's going on, but unless you're actually on the water, you've got no idea.

And so, Kathleen Reardon. Do you know Kathleen? She worked for DMR. She's out of Damariscotta. She's amazing and I like – have a true friend in her.

So she would come out and sample lobsters with us several times over the last 20 years. She was one of the most like neutral people I ever dealt with, which is great. She'd come on the boat. She would be miked. And she would measure every single lobster that came aboard the boat. Sometimes it was 4,000 pounds worth of lobsters. I mean, every lobster – even if it was dead, she – and no matter the size she would mic – and she would give just the data report. And so she – that information was so important.

And so she would be really great at informing us on like new policies, talking to us like real people, not through an email with like 800 different bullet points. It was like, this is what's going on. And she'd be real.

So if you could get more people like her that could come and talk to us and be on the boat with us, because you have a level of respect for someone that comes and is meeting you at the boat at four o'clock in the morning, and staying with you all day, and she kicked butt. Like she was great.

So more people like that that actually have a passion for the future of the fishery would be huge. And the fishermen lose respect quickly when they you, you know, when they're being told what to do by someone that's never even been on a boat before. And that's just the way it is.

Q: [1:11:45] Yeah, and sort of switching gears again, and thinking about climate and resilience and strategies for that, have you participated in any climate resilience or adaptation programs for bans for fishing.

A: [1:11:57] Other than the LobsterLift, that's about it.

Q: [1:12:01] And to the point of the LobsterLift, do you think attending that was helpful for your thinking about (inaudible; overlapping dialogue).

A: [1:12:07] Totally. A hundred percent. Oh my gosh. Like I still think – so Cormac, and I could give you his information. He would be happy. He loved them. I mean, this is his passion. He went to Malaysia and won a huge technology award. So he was actually sponsored by NOAA, which is when we had to stop kind of working with him, was when we found where his funding was coming from. That was just like a huge no-no for fishermen at the time.

Now, it's been a couple years. It's like the mindset, I still think is kind of not there yet. Well, I know it's not. But he has a really good idea. And that was – it's something that I hope that he is continuing with because he wanted us to deploy all this.

The other thing is these big storms, your traps would be safe. I mean, they might tumble around a little bit, and like, yeah, there's stuff down there.

The problem is with these traps is that when they get tangled up with something else, or who knows what, they're gone. But this LobsterLift thing, I mean it's – there's – I definitely have done the pros and the cons for that too, and I can see where it's a really good product. It's just how do you how do you merge ancient theory with technology of the future. And so with anything that's where the problem lies.

But that's an organization that I – I definitely – I support him in figuring that out, and other people that are. And I know there's – I think he said – at the time this was – and I'm talking two years ago. I saw him last year, but two years ago when he was really heavy into this, there were seven companies at the time trying to develop that technology, and I think there's just more now. And it has advanced.

But that was one thing that's like, wow. If – you know, the storm – your traps would be safe. Or safer. We don't want to say totally safe. But they – better chance of getting them back, which would be huge.

Q: [1:14:00] And what strategies do you think would be effective in continuing to build resilience against climate related impacts.

A: [1:14:09] So the docks, I think are now, they're the ones that are really dealing with this the most because – like Justin Snyder at Beals, I don't know if you've talked to him. He's huge climate change. And so he is – and actually a really good person for you guys to talk to too because he's very open-minded to climate change.

He's from Florida. You know? He – his family bought Beals several years ago, many years ago now, but he's dealing with that right now. Like what do you do to your dock? I mean, it happened once when's the next time it's going to happen.

Like, if we have another high tide like that in six months from now, like crap, you're going to go repair everything and then it's going to happen again? You know, you've got to make some adjustments and, you know, where does the – how much money does that cost, and what does that look like? So that's a that's a big one.

But for us personally right now it's not affecting – it's not going to affect me because I'm not on the boat right now. But for my family, it will affect everything.

And even Devon clamming – I mean we haven't found – so he doesn't go clamming this time a year, but we've seen the photos of the clams being washed up on shore. Like wow. That hasn't happened yet in our lifetime, but now we're witnessing it. So when's the next cycle of that happening again? So if it hasn't happened for 40 years, but it happened once, if it happens again in the next couple years, like we know the pattern here. So if that continues to happen, that's crazy.

Q: [1:15:32] And are there any other types of changes, like maybe not environment. You talk to a little bit about social, that are impacting your work and you want to tell us about?

A: [1:15:41] Again, hard to be responding when I'm not on the boat so much, but really, I think – I mean for us for right now for Southwest Harbor anyway, I'll just focus on that, is we have one dock out of business. We have another one completely wrecked. And we've got a dry – we've got a – we have trucks that come and buy on the pier. Well right now they're saying our pier's not safe.

So those are huge, I mean. And those were all affected. Those storms kind of knocked out our infrastructure hopefully only for the short term, but something that people are going to be thinking more about.

I know the harbor committee in Southwest Harbor is – this is the – I mean, health and emergency meeting right after that all happened because it wiped out everything. And it destroyed our coastline. So, I mean, there's a lot of things that need to be figured out.

Q: [1:16:34] Do you have any thoughts on how people are going to sort of like cope or adapt with that towards the future?

A: [1:16:38] I don't know. Justin would be a good one to talk to because he's – right now, I know he's talking to Washington, and I know he's trying to figure out funding for himself and for others. He's donated all their products because the, like – I don't know if you've been in Beals, but there's hatches there, and all the water went through the hatches. And he said it was like a whale blow hole. It was insane, and they ended up losing all their products through the hatches. So they had like crab meat was floating around the harbor. I mean, they lost everything. So how they adapt now is huge – I have no idea.

Coast Guard too. The Coast Guard was underwater. I mean, all those places. It's huge amounts of damage. But how they go forward, I don't know. The boats – we thankfully were at the breakwater at Dystart's, so that didn't affect our boat. But everything is broken. I mean there's – it's just shackles. Everything falling apart.

Q: [1:17:36] Can you tell me about any opportunities or positive changes you've experienced during the time on the water?

A: [1:17:41] I definitely think interviews like this – I mean, when I get asked to talk or like say my piece about any of it, I think that's really cool and I'm happy to do that, and I think that that's something that I want to continue to do. The golf course is my platform from here on out as – you know, we're talking about doing like talks there, and doing different demonstrations there and different things.

So going forward from me that will be what I do. That will be my focus for the next five to 10 years is being able to provide a place for locals, for visitors, for groups, for everybody to come and learn about the fishing industry through my eyes and through Dave's eyes. So that's my that's my goal. (laughter)

Q: [1:18:28] Yeah, and what is sort of your hopeful vision for the future of Maine fisheries.

A: [1:18:32] I hope that honestly, that little kids know what it's like to be part of the fishing community, because I go into like Pemetic, I go into some of these elementary schools, and Eden just graduated from Pemetic as an eighth grader last year, and there are very few fishing families still part of that community. And it's sad.

So my hope is that we maintain a connection, and that the people moving here too that are not from here that don't have immediate connections to the fisheries and to the different – you know, just the ocean in general, that they learn about it.

And I have people that, you know, come up to me and ask me like oh, will you take my son out we don't ever anyone in the fish – we don't anyone in the family that fishes, could you take him out? And we've done that a couple times. But it would be really great to have more of a youth program for folks.

I mean, even here at the COA, I mean, talks. All that. Getting just the community connection and just making sure that it's really the youth that are learning about what the fisheries are all about.

Q: [1:19:38] Great. Thank you. And is there anything else you wanted to share with us before we end the interview?

A: [1:19:44] I don't know that it was a lot. (laughter). I don't know. Yeah, I don't think I do. I mean, I'm not trying to like totally plug my business, but it really is,

like, that was the whole vision for the Golf of Maine was to create a place that people could come and learn about it.

And when we've really started talking about that new business was when we were in jeopardy of, oh, my gosh, are we actually not fishing? Is that what's happening right now?

I mean, we have the commissioner telling us not to go, like what's happening? Like that – this is all new. This is a new, like what's going on. So we really did want to create a place where we could talk about these things, and showcase them, and have things on display that were not totally manufactured in a theme park thing, that there was real, like – this is like – I caught that. Like that's scallop shells, and those are different things that we – bottles. Like different things we actually found fishing, and then talk to that about people.

And so last year, our first year, being open, I can't even tell you how gratifying it was to have the people that showed up to play golf, that didn't know we were there first off, and then they're like, oh. we didn't know we were here. This wasn't here last year. And then to start the conversation about fishing is what it's all about. I mean, for me that's really going forward, is just giving back something that I know a little bit about that I think is really fascinating.

Yeah.

Q: [1:21:18] Great. Thank you so much. Do you have any other questions?

F: [1:21:20] I mean, there's just one clarifying question about you're saying like this morning you're delivering scallops, but so I wasn't sure if that's your –

Q: [1:21:28] So it's my step-dad.

F: [1:21:29] Your step-dad. It could be his scallops right now.

Q: [1:21:31] Yeah, so he's scalloping right now with his son, Luke. So they go out. They can catch 15 gallons a day. So he'll –

F: [1:21:37] And then he'll sell –

Q: [1:21:38] And then I sell them. Yeah.

F: [1:21:39] And you're going to both like direct to consumers and to restaurants?

A: [1:21:42] Totally. Yeah. Yeah. And myself. (laughter)

F: [1:21:44] Do you (inaudible)?

A: [1:21:45] I'm filling my own freezer, which is nice. (laughter) I've never – I actually – we always eat scallops when we're out fishing, because I always – like I have a fry pan and stuff on the boat, so we're always cooking them. But it's been really weird for me to like get home now and cook them, because I never did that. I just ate them on the boat.

Like I'd, you know, I'd bring food and you have a grill on the boat. I mean, we ate – well, like – scalloping – when you're – dragging is much different than lobstering. There's a lot more time like steaming-wise to like make food. But yeah, this is the first year that I've been like making scallops at home now. It's great. I love it.

Q: [1:22:20] I understand. An animal product (inaudible: overlapping dialogue).

A: [1:22:22] Yeah.

Q: [1:22:23] You knew so well, you're like free baking up a relationship and then you eat it.

F: [1:22:25] Yeah. Yeah. And when I'm cooking them and they're still moving it's like, that's amazing. Yeah.

Q: [1:22:31] Great. Well, thank you. I'm going to go and turn this off.

A: [1:22:33] Sure.

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