

**Interviewee:** Barna B Norton

**Project/Collection Title:** Jonesport Historical Society

**Interviewer(s) Name(s) and Affiliation:** Charlie Alley and Bill Plakson (Camera)

**Interview Location:** Jonesport, Washington County, Maine

**Date of Interview:** July 23, 2003

**Interview Description:** This interview is with Barna B Norton, a native of Jonesport, Maine. Norton discusses his life's work, sharing stories of his fishing adventures with his father, as well as his experiences working as a ferry service operator to Machias Seal Island.

**Keywords:** Acadia National Park, resource management, worm harvesters, white-nose syndrome, sweetgrass, traditional ecological knowledge, park visitation changes, ticks sustainability.

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**Transcribed by:** Adele Wise

CA: Charlie Alley

BP: Bill Plakson

BN: Barna B Norton

[Beginning of Track One]

[00:00:00.0]

Charlie Alley: Okay. Your parents' names?

Barna Norton: My parents' names? One's name was Herman Ellis Norton, and the other was Amanda Laura Norton.

CA: And your wife's name?

BN: Beatrice S. [inaudible]

S2: What was your father's nickname?

BN: His name was (Head?); that's all I ever knew him by.

Unknown: Yeah, everybody –

BN: That's the way Jonesport always was. Everybody had a nickname. We got a person in town that you gave it [inaudible] real name. You wouldn't even know who it was, but you'd call him "Bananas" and you know who it is.

CA: Bananas and cream.

[0:00:54.6]

Unknown: [inaudible]

BN: That was because he anticipated bananas and cream when his mother was in labor. Because every time the grandma came home to feed him, he had bananas and cream, and that was pretty special then. Then he started to eat his bananas and cream. He put down the fork or the spoon or whatever he had, and he said "Fried potato."

CA: "Fried potatoes, again." That's right. That's the story.

BN: That's where he got his name

CA: That's right. You told us, but I'd like to have it on video. What house were you born in?

BN: I was born in my grandmother's house. It was built by my grandfather Ferdinand. But he wasn't there then. He had moved to another house.

Unknown: That house was later (Wallace?) Norton's house.

BN: Yes.

Unknown: That's the house next to the town office.

BN: Yes, through the woods.

CA: Where did you grow up? What house did you grow up in?

BN: I grew up in the house, a portion of it, that's up opposite the firehouse. At the time, [inaudible] growing up purposes, I was in several houses on [inaudible]. I was in that one that was [inaudible] I was in that one for a while. Then I was in one, where [inaudible] where you come out of [inaudible] used to be (William Crowley's?) house [inaudible] there. Now the fellow that lives in it is – used to drive the truck, might still do it. Who [inaudible] think of [inaudible]? I was in there. The next one [inaudible] up on the hill in a very small part of a house that's [inaudible] fire engine. Not the [inaudible] part of it, but [inaudible] very small house. That's where I lived, brought up there. It was situated down on [inaudible] lobster place is.

Unknown: The co-op?

BN: Yes

CA: Oh, down there by the co-op?

BN: Yeah. It was right [inaudible]. I used to play around the [inaudible].

CA: Now, where did you go to school?

BN: Well, I went to the remedial school in West Jonesport; that's the first one I went to. And then later on to the grammar school that was alongside the graveyard. Then I went to the old schoolhouse that burnt [inaudible]

[0:04:55.3]

CA: (Harry Rodgers?) up in there?

BN: I graduated from there. [inaudible] graduated [inaudible] school.

CA: [laughter] Get rid of the evidence.

Unknown: Get rid of the evidence. One thing we didn't ask, and I know we have it, but what year he was born and his birthdate?

CA: Okay. I do have it.

Unknown: But just to get it on the tape.

CA: What year were you born?

BN: 1915, June 9<sup>th</sup>.

CA: Yeah. Just what I got.

Unknown: [inaudible]

CA: [inaudible] What did you do for your life's work [inaudible]?

BN: Well, I don't know. I am not done yet.

CA: [laughter] I know. But up to this point.

[0:06:00.2]

BN: A number of things. I went to [inaudible] when my father ran out of money. We couldn't get any money [inaudible]. Came home and my father said, "Go down to (Eddie Kelley?) and stay a year with him.

CA: Over in Lakeman Harbor?

BN: Yeah. So that's what I did. (Eddie?) was a good friend of my father, and he was awfully good to me. He taught me an awful lot about [inaudible] water, lobstering, and all that stuff. I followed it up, but my bones are so small – see, they're not real big – and I couldn't handle the big lobster trap. He filled them full of cement and made of wood. It was an awful job to get them out. But I went with him for a year. We went everywhere. I learned a lot of things from him. I learned that he could tell the weather better than any weatherman.

[0:07:24.2]

CA: Just with the barometer?

BN: Yeah. He thought he knew how to read the barometer, and I never have contradicted him. It wouldn't pay.

CA: No. [laughter]

BN: So whatever he said, I went along with it. I said, "I don't know how you [inaudible] figure the weather [inaudible]. Can you tell me about the barometer?" He said, "You know that works with the electricity in the air." I never said a word. [laughter] And another thing that was interesting to me was he didn't seem to pay much attention to his money. He had his cash [inaudible]

[0:08:20.1]

CA: Yeah, he did.

BN: His cash box was a smoked herring box. You know, a wooden smoked salmon –

CA: Yes, [inaudible].

BN: You used to put the smoked herring in?

CA: Yeah. I know what you mean.

BN: Little [inaudible] hanging out. It had some kind of a leather hinge on it. Well, he'd take that down and leave it on the lobster car, and he'd come up to the house and cook dinner or he might do something else. He'd leave that on the lobster car. And quite often, the wind would come up – a northwestern would blow right in there, and someone over in the cove over there would come over with his cash box with cash in it and bring over to him. You know he made a lot of money. A terrific weir fisherman.

CA: Yeah. He caught a lot of fish.

[0:09:17.8]

BN: He knew them, and he knew where they would go and what would cause it. He got this safe. Someone talked him into getting a safe. He wanted me to know the combination. I didn't want to

know the combination; I didn't want any part of it. Well, he kept at it. I said, "Alright." So he had it locked up. He couldn't remember the combination. He went along [inaudible]. He said, "It's on the back of this calendar." He had a calendar hanging up. He got his glasses. He got the calendar [inaudible] so many turns this way, so many turns that way. Finally, he got it open. I wish you could see how much money fell out. Make a guess.

CA: I couldn't.

BN: Guess.

CA: Five thousand dollars?

BN: [inaudible]

CA: I don't know.

BN: There wasn't a dollar in it. It was a quart whiskey bottle.

CA: [laughter]

[0:10:38.4]

BN: He says, "There's [inaudible] every goddamn time I take it out." He said, "Now, I might get sick. You make sure to remember the combination."

Unknown: More valuable than the money.

CA: Well, that's what he figured. Now did you help him in the weirs, too?

BN: Yeah. In the wintertime, we'd pull the last stakes out of the woods on Roque Island. That was heavy work, too.

CA: We interviewed Roger Beal, and he said (Eddie's Long Cove?) weir was one of the best ones around.

[0:11:24.5]

BN: [inaudible]

CA: He said that was one of the best ones.

BN: We'd go up in the morning [inaudible] outside, and they would fill one and fill another. Might take him over to another weir. He had four weirs [inaudible].

CA: Yeah, several. I don't know how many he had, but he had several.

BN: Boy, the herring – they were everywhere.

CA: Now, when you started taking people around, did you take them fishing first before you ever started going to Seal Island [inaudible] hand lining or what?

BN: No, the first boat that I had myself was an old boat my father had, and it was called *The Winifred*, and it was built in 1905. It had deteriorated by the time I was – it was about 1928, and we didn't have any money, so he helped me, and we resurrected it. It was a speedboat, is what it was, a little half-inch ply.

[0:12:53.5]

CA: That's thin.

BN: Yeah. Twenty-eight feet long. We got that boat with a [inaudible] and a four-cylinder Chevrolet engine that John (Chester?) had wanted out of his automobile. And John and his automobile couldn't make Hall's Hill then. Just could about make it if we had a lot of kids in it. Aunt Rose used to be with us going up over the hill. And when he'd start slowing down, he'd tell the kids – she says, "Now, everybody hunch. Everybody hunch, so we can get up over the hill." That engine John (Chester?) gave to my father. We fixed it put and put it in the boat. I had that [inaudible] carry the crews up to [inaudible] Island, and it ran the quarry up there.

CA: You ran the crews up there?

BN: Yep, the crews that worked on the quarry. The people that owned the island – they had a big house up there. He was [inaudible]. Frank [inaudible]. Well, anyway, I guess I won't get into that. I won't [inaudible] that up. [inaudible] get repeated. Not many people are alive. I guess I won't [inaudible] too bad. I remember I went up there one summer, a summer day, pretty day, and they had the [inaudible]. That was a pretty thirty-eight-foot boat that's built for summer people. Frank had bought it, and the lawyer [inaudible] famous lawyer who worked at Machias – Oscar Dunbar.

CA: Oscar Dunbar.

BN: He and Charles [inaudible], and Frank – they came up to visit Mr. (Bernardo?), his name was, but [who] Frank was calling Mr. (Bernardini?). They got out of the boat; the engine running [inaudible] in idle. They never tied up, got out of the boat, and went up to see Mr. (Bernardini?). I don't know if Mr. (Bernardini?) was really happy to see him. [inaudible] tied up. [laughter]

CA: Were they feeling okay? [laughter]

BN: Well, I can tell you they didn't bother to tie the boat, I'll tell you that. [inaudible] that boat. I ran that boat for Frank. She was a nice boat. She was pretty big. She was [inaudible]

CA: Yes.

[0:16:13.8]

BN: I remember when they decided to go cranberrying down to Browney Island. I mistrusted this [inaudible] trouble because Fred (McCall?) was mixed up in it and Charles (Wescott?) and Frank. So we got down [inaudible] cranberries and so forth. God knows what else they did. But when they come back, I was a little nervous about them getting back and forth, but they seemed to do it alright as far as they were concerned. We got back home, got them ashore. [inaudible] started [inaudible] with his cranberries. I wish you could see the cranberries they picked. [inaudible] Fred – when he got to Marie's [inaudible] store and Marie saw what condition he was in. She said, "You stay right here. (Harvey?) is coming back off the road, and he'll take you home." Fred says to Marie, "I can't wait. The cranberries will spoil." So [inaudible] on the road. (Harvey?) comes just in time [inaudible]. [Telephone rings. Recording paused.]

[0:17:44.0]

BN: You ready?

CA: Yes.

BN: Alright. Now we'll get back to the boat that I was running passengers with.

CA: Right

BN: So in order to get a passengers license, I had to go to Bangor and take an exam. I had (Eddie Kelley's?) recommendation. I took the exam, and I ended up with a license to carry passengers for a sixty-five-foot, something like that. [inaudible] But anyway, I still had my boat. My father, when he'd get done [inaudible] Sundays, he'd go fishing. I never really liked to go fishing. If there was fish biting, that was okay. But I never liked the idea of trying to make the fish on the

line. My father could do that. Nobody else would catch a fish. He'd go in with it [inaudible] eventually make a fish. [inaudible] or something. I don't know how he did it. Anyway, Sundays he always went fishing.

[0:19:22.5]

So this Sunday, we were going to go fishing. But I didn't know what was going on this Sunday. This Sunday, Franklin Roosevelt was going to sail through the reach. I didn't know [inaudible], but I think my father knew something about it. Anyway, we went out then, and I was bitching because I was having to go fishing. I didn't want to bother. I wanted to go picnic in the summertime – go to [inaudible] and go in the sand beach. He didn't say anything. We got things ready and getting it ready. All of a sudden, all hell broke loose up to West Jonesport in the reach. What had happened was people had seen these ships – naval ships and things, destroyers and escorts up to the western end of the reach.

[0:20:12.8]

They all needed to rush up there to see the President. Whether they came anywhere near the President – my lord, the sirens went off, and the whistles and the fast patrol boat went right in front of them, stopped them, and pushed them aside. They were way over on the shores. Of course, I didn't pay much attention until all the noise went off, and I said, "Well, what's that?" My father says, "I think it's the president" I said, "Well, let's get this thing going." He says, "We'll go fishing." I said, "My lord. There's the President of the United States up there," and I put up an awful [inaudible], and of course, I was seventeen or sixteen and a half, something like that. I knew my father didn't know much.

[0:21:14.8]

Then I knew absolutely he had known [inaudible] to it. Well, he's getting his things ready and so forth, and he says, "Cast the line off," and I cast the line off. He steered that [inaudible] right down the reach. I said, "The president is up that way." He said, [inaudible] went down the reach, and he said, "I think I'll anchor in the [inaudible]." Well, he goes down there to the east end reach, where [inaudible]. He threw the anchor over. Good fishing [inaudible] started fishing. I was so disgusted, I got some lifejackets and went to bed. Didn't know a thing until all hell was beating right on top of me. I had fallen asleep, and here was [inaudible] armada that was coming right at us. Well, [inaudible] and here was this pretty little schooner yacht coming right at us – the President of the United States. He came right as close by as it could hit that camera, and he hollered over to my father. He says, "How are they biting?" My father says, "I just caught a big one." [laughter] The fish [inaudible].

[0:22:53.0]

[inaudible] went by [inaudible] day, and the tide was coming. He went off to [inaudible]. My father hauled [inaudible] in. I went up and pulled on the anchor, and he helped me, started it up, we come home. About halfway home, I [inaudible]. [laughter]

Unknown: He knew something after all.

[0:23:41.8]

BN: Yeah. [inaudible]. Yeah, he did. That's not the end of the story because Franklin Roosevelt was a navigator, he was. He went over to [inaudible] Harbor and tied up. That night, he come in for me. Don't you think he [inaudible] thing over there that couldn't move, except this [inaudible]. Stayed there for ten days. That was the [inaudible] of the United States – ten days – Lakeman Harbor. Well, Ethel Kelley over there – they had [inaudible] back in Lakeman Harbor. There was several – a lot of fishermen over there. They came up on weekends, but they stayed over there during the week because gasoline was six gallons to a dollar, and they couldn't afford to buy it. So they'd get enough to come home for the weekend. The rest of the time, they'd fish with (pods?).

[0:25:28.1]

So Ethel came home one day on the weekend, and Russell Rogers down here was a great democrat. So Ethel [inaudible]. He says, "Hey, I thought I heard the President of the United States is in your harbor. And Ethel says, "Ethel, I hear the President of the United States is in your harbor." Ethel says, "Yeah, he is." He says, "Now, just what do you think of him?" Ethel says, "Well, Russell, I'll tell you. I don't think he's going to amount to a darn. I baked him a nice apple pie, and he hasn't brought my pie plate back." Now, the next part of this whole story that goes with it was there's a solid democrat on Beals Island and a solid republican on this side.

Now the next part of this whole story was that a solid democrat on Beals Island and a solid republican on this side. Jerome Alley on Beals Island side, and (Ulysses?) S. Norton on this side. They were opposite politically, but they were great friends. That can happen ... once. And Jerome had a brand-new boat built [inaudible], and he named it *The Franklin Delano*. He comes over to (Les Norton's?) wharf. He says, "The president is in Lakeman Harbor." He says, "We ought to go and visit him." (Les?) says, "Alright." So Jerome says, "It's pretty near dinner time. I'm going back up to get my dinner. You get yours, and then we'll go right after dinner."

[0:27:20.0]

So (Les?) went home to dinner. He went over to Jim [inaudible] with a box and got some lobsters and put them in a box. They come back, and away they went for Lakeman Harbor. Of course, they got out in front of Lakeman Harbor, and the pair of them got stopped. Jerome figured it was alright to stop Les, he told them, but he says, "I've been a democrat on Beals Island for fourteen years. I've been chairman of the Democratic Committee over there for ten." The fellow tending the patrol says, "Well, you got a paper or something that shows me that you have some authority, that you've been invited." No, he didn't. The fellow says something to Les. Les says, "Here, give this to the president." The fellow looked at the box. He says, "You wait a minute. You stay right here." So he went out and handed that to the President, I guess, or someone who has authority [inaudible]. I guess he told him to look in the box to see what's in the box, and he looked in it, and then he went back. Then he came back. He says, "Yes, we'll take the lobsters. And the fellow that brought the lobsters, the President would like to see him, too." So here's a republican, climbs out of the *Franklin Delano* [inaudible] boat, goes in, and chats with the President. Here's poor old J.P. Alley sitting [inaudible] round and round and round.

[0:29:17.9]

CA: Yes, sir. That's the way it goes sometimes.

BN: So that's some of the things. Going to school – we were speaking about that schoolhouse. We had no flush toilets.

CA: Outhouses.

BN: We had outhouses. The boys had to [inaudible]. And the rest of them, I guess [inaudible]. I don't know. I think we had two holes [inaudible]. But getting back to that too – I'm getting back to my grandmothers. She had –

[00:30:12.10]

[End of Track One]

[Beginning of Track Two]

[00:00:00]

BN: – [inaudible] had a building; it was in two parts. One end of it, [inaudible] nicely built. It had fancy jigsaw trim all around it. It had windows – I don't [inaudible] windows in it, but it did windows [inaudible] lace curtains in the windows. And then, the other end, it was just blocked off. That end was where the wood was stored. You went in that [inaudible] wood and always

went out that way. You always took a load of wood with you when you went [inaudible]. It had two halls. That's what everybody had except a few places that had a bathroom – toilets.

[00:01:07]

Harry Cummings, I guess, put those in. There was a few of them. The way they flushed stuff, they had a pump in the basement that they pumped water up into a tank. The tank had a float on it. And, as the chain went down through, they could tell when they got the tank full and when they could stop. That same chain that went down through, somehow hooked onto it, so when you flushed the toilet, you pulled on the chain. That lasted for quite a while. I remember I used to [inaudible] flush them, but people had to pump that up, and that's quite a job to pump [inaudible] top. We never had no toilet [inaudible]. We had one with the automatic flushers. They don't allow that now. The toilet was built out over the (lawn?). As the tide come in, it would flush it, and then come out. We figured it was much more sanitary than those other ones. But I guess it turned out that we were wrong.

[00:02:33]

CA: I guess so. What year did you start taking [inaudible]? Do you remember?

BN: That must have been – must be twenty-eight or –

CA: That would take a long time.

BN: When it closed, for quite a few years, I was the oldest [inaudible] boat. Finally, two, three years ago – I can't remember what year it was. So, this is [inaudible]. I guess it must have been [inaudible]. They requested that I take [inaudible] special test in order to take – it just about killed me [inaudible] danger of you getting killed [inaudible]. So I didn't take the test. So [inaudible] 1990 to 2000. '85 I was [inaudible] because I know some of the people that came down and did the inspection and the test and so forth. [inaudible]

[00:04:09]

CA: Now, when you started taking out people, did you start taking them out to go handlining or just go [inaudible] take them to Seal Island [inaudible]?

BN: No. First thing I did – I only had that old boat. I was taking those passengers back and forth [inaudible]. Then I started taking them out in that old boat. Of course, I saved my money [inaudible]. I ran that old boat until almost (1938?), I guess it was. I had enough money, so that I went around and asked different boat shops if they'd be able to build me a boat. The first one I went to was Smith Boats up here –

[00:05:15]

CA: (Don?) Smith?

BN: Frank. Two Franks. There was "Black Frank" and "White Frank." One was black-headed, and one was white-headed. They'd been awful good to me as a young one. In fact, [inaudible] we go down there [inaudible]. Anyway, I went up there to see him. They said yeah, they'd build me a boat. They talked it over. They said – I had to tell them about [inaudible] it wasn't doing anybody any good. They'd build about [inaudible]. I asked them how much [inaudible]. They said [inaudible] the money [inaudible] they'd build it for three hundred and fifty dollars.

[00:06:23]

CA: Tell [inaudible] what the name of the boat was that Frank built you.

BN: The boat that Frank built me was the I.F. That was if I could get this, if I could get that. I called it "If." That boat made the first trip to Machias Seal Island.

CA: You remember what year it was?

BN: 1940. [inaudible] might have people from [inaudible] fellow. [inaudible] everything I had in that boat [inaudible] longlines. I had an airplane [inaudible] that was secondhand that a friend of mine that was in the service – I don't know how he got ahold of it, but that's what I had in it for comfort. He gave it to me. What else did I have? [inaudible] I had adjusted that [inaudible] I knew how to adjust it because I had, during these different [inaudible] different things, I [inaudible] navigation [inaudible].

[00:08:07]

CA: You used to adjust it for [inaudible] sometimes, didn't you?

BN: Yeah, [inaudible] Coast Guard. So I knew what I was doing. I had gone on – in the meantime, I'd gone on a year and a half on the [inaudible]. I've been all over the place because that summer business also [inaudible].

CA: Now, you must have had to interrupt going to Seal Island because you was in the service during the war, weren't you?

BN: Yeah.

CA: So what did you do? Just give up the business until you got back?

BN: Of course you do.

CA: I mean, no one took it over for you.

[00:08:58]

BN: No, I [inaudible] being in the service – I really didn't plan on getting in the service. I thought I was [inaudible] it. My uncle had flat feet [inaudible], and I had flat feet. I knew I could get out of it [inaudible]. So I went right up and volunteered because I knew that person – a man by name of Jones down here that was a customer. He saw me. He said, "What are you up here for?" I said, "Well, I got to volunteer, I guess." He says, "That's right. [inaudible]" He went in, and he introduced me to different people. He told about being in the customs office. He had [inaudible] sardine – or not [inaudible] lobster [inaudible] for me, going over to Nova Scotia. They said, "We can't give you a test now, a physical. We'll come back tomorrow."

[00:10:32]

So I went down to Cape Ann, New Gloucester, where my aunt lived. I went down, and I told her – I said, "[inaudible] flat feet, so they won't take me." So, she was feeling sorry [inaudible]. So I went back, got ready for my physical. Jones took me right through [inaudible] where the doctors were. They said to me – [inaudible] in a chair. They said to me, "Can you hear gunfire?" I said, "Yeah, [inaudible] gunfire." They said, "Can you see lightning?" I says, "Yes." They said, "Raise your right hand." I said, "Yeah, but I got flat feet." They said, "Raise your right hand." I said, "But I got flat feet." They said, "You're in."

[00:11:37]

CA: [inaudible] Coast Guard [inaudible]?

BN: Yeah.

CA: How long was your service? You were in the Reserves a long time; I know that. [inaudible] Coast Guard [inaudible].

BN: Yes, I was in that Ready Reserve during the Korean War. They put me in charge of setting up Coast Guard training bases for them [inaudible]. When the war got over, [inaudible] different [inaudible].

CA: What year did you get back into going to Seal Island?

[00:12:27]

BN: Well, I went to Machias Seal Island right after '47.

CA: Started right back, did you?

BN: [inaudible], and I've done it ever since.

CA: Now, you had the first chief who built the [inaudible]?

BN: No, Riley Beal.

CA: Riley Beal?

BN: Riley Beal [inaudible]. That was a beautiful boat.

CA: Yeah, I remember that boat.

BN: I had a [inaudible].

CA: Yeah, you cut your [inaudible] out [inaudible] up. I remember that.

BN: Now, that boat was named *Chief* [inaudible].

CA: Yeah, for the Indian.

BN: Yeah, that's the name for the Indian [inaudible]. I don't know whether this ought to be in here. You probably can cut some of this stuff out that might not be just exactly right. So, can you do that?

Bill Plakson: When we make copies [inaudible] which part to cut out if you want.

[00:13:40]

BN: I'm telling you the truth about what happened. So, the name of that Indian, Chief [inaudible]. He lived on that point over there, but he was here when the white man came. They came down to Head Harbor. Then [inaudible] while he was in there, he heard – at nighttime, he heard this noise at the back end of the [inaudible] he drove aside, and there was a couple of

Indians there, and they were taking his rudder. So [inaudible] puts his over the side, and he asked them [inaudible] rudder – the stern and the rudder.

[00:14:41]

Later on, when the whites come here to settle, Manwarren Beal is the first settler of Beals Island. He came out, and Chief [inaudible] has his tent there. He wanted permission from Chief [inaudible] to settle. There was some controversy, but it was determined that they'd wrestle [inaudible]. Manwarren told him that he could stay. Chief [inaudible] father told me about. He said when it came time for the wrestling match – the day it was set [inaudible], there was quite a few Indians around and a bunch of old white men around. Chief [inaudible] in his tent. When he stepped out, he stepped out with not a rag of clothes on him and greased in seal's oil. [laughter]

[00:15:47]

They went to it. The first fall, Manwarren went down. They stopped to rest. Manwarren went over to the crowd. He couldn't hang on to him. He'd slip right out from his grip. Manwarren's an awful strong man, but he just couldn't [inaudible]. So they had council [inaudible]. When they come back, Manwarren didn't grab a hold so much. He more or less tried to get ahold of him, get [inaudible]. Finally, he got his middle finger up Manwarren's rectum. [inaudible] that Indian and Manwarren sticked him right up on his head. That was the end of it. Manwarren [inaudible], "You're welcome."

[00:16:53]

Now, when these people [inaudible], the Indians went around and so forth to see [inaudible]. They could always tell when Manwarren [inaudible]. [Telephone rings.] So when I put that big plug in the back end of my boat [inaudible]

BP: That's not too bad, right?

CA: [inaudible]

BN: Yeah.

CA: You used that boat until [inaudible] built you another one.

BN: Yeah.

CA: What year was that?

BN: 1955.

CA: That was the *Chief II*?

BN: No, that was *Chief I*.

CA: Oh, that was the *Chief I*?

BN: *Chief* [inaudible]. Then the next one was twelve years after that. That's the one Riley Beal built. Then, this one was '85.

[00:18:12]

CA: Now, who built this one?

BN: This one, the hull of it, was built by Young Brothers, and John built the rest of it.

CA: Okay, John fixed it up.

BN: He built it [inaudible] because the hull came aground [inaudible] he put the amount of [inaudible] stuck on it.

CA: Yes, he did a good job.

BN: I drew out the plans for it. [inaudible] and all that stuff. He built it. I [inaudible] much.

CA: Now, you had a couple camps down at Head Harbor at one time.

BN: Yeah.

CA: Did you used to take people down to those, too? Or just had their own personal use?

[00:19:05]

BN: No, those camps actually were – I owned them in a way, and in a way, I didn't. I [inaudible] picnic down there [inaudible] Island [inaudible]. I might get some camps to build right on that [inaudible] man and his wife and his little dog if he come back. He said, "We'll furnish the money for you to build the camp, and you won't have to pay us anything. But we will take [inaudible]." His name was George [inaudible]. So I went around to find out who owned the

land. Frank [inaudible] owned it [inaudible] get into a fight because Betty wrote to the captain up here. His daughter is in Indian River, she and her father. Betty wrote to the captain and said the daughter was [inaudible] got into a fight, and [inaudible] said, “You’re nobody from nowhere.” [laughter]

[00:20:59]

Anyway, getting back to the rest of the stuff on that camp down there, I go up to Betty, and I brought us out. The other fellows that [inaudible] French. He was down in [inaudible] Texas [inaudible] something down there. He said whatever Betty got for it [inaudible]. It’s a lot. It’s a neat piece of land. We built the camps down there as long as [inaudible] every time we got down there with [inaudible] to build the camp, [inaudible].

CA: [inaudible] it always seems to be.

BN: The tide was never out.

CA: No, [inaudible].

[00:22:02]

BN: We had to drag all that stuff [inaudible] over that bank, all kinds of stuff. Then, they went, I think, about five years. [inaudible] had her [inaudible], and I got to [inaudible] to go to take care of her. Stayed with her a couple years. Then the [inaudible] Corporation [inaudible] machinery cooperation took it over. They wiped the thing right out and said, we want to lease it to you – they gave a certain amount of money – so we can use it. So I ended up with it. I didn’t pay anything for it, but I worked some for it. Then this [inaudible] that was a wealthy outfit. They came down, and they split stock on the island down there. I can’t remember how many million dollars was split down there [inaudible]. They flew them down here. It was a DC-3 at least, or bigger. She was a [inaudible] plane. It belonged to the company; it was a company plane, [inaudible]. It was near as they could get with it. [inaudible] the pilot and the co-pilot. I don’t know [inaudible] the other fellow was.

[00:24:00]

That was when we – when my father took the first airplane ride. He said he never had an airplane ride. Well, when he said – that crowd was half-drunk. They decided he was to have an airplane ride. So we [inaudible] the boat, got going [inaudible]. It took the [inaudible] crowd. I don’t remember how much she had in them, but she was [inaudible]. So we got up to the field up there, started getting going. He started the engine running up, started to get going. My father wasn’t the

first one aboard. My father was at the back end. [inaudible] got up to the last [inaudible]. “Well,” he said, “John, I thought it all over. I’ve been all this many years not flying in one of those things. I guess [inaudible].” [inaudible] George [inaudible]. There was two fellows, one right outside – they picked him right up [inaudible]. [laughter]

[00:25:32]

They took off, and they flew us all around the islands, right [inaudible] and so forth [inaudible] take him. We [inaudible] landing. Father says, “Now, there’s one question I want to know.” He said, “What’s that?” He said, “I want to know how much gas you’ve burned.” [laughter] Fellow said, “Well, I think two or three gallons.” My father says, “I like [inaudible], but I couldn't afford to run her.” That was the end of that.

CA: Barna, how's it changed down at the island since you first started? Did you use to have the [inaudible] just about the same and everything? And getting to shore, is it any different?

BN: You mean down to Seal Island.

CA: Machias Seal Island, yeah.

[00:26:38]

BN: When we first [inaudible] Machias Seal Island, of course, we landed ashore with our boat then. We [inaudible] keepers on there. So I got to know the keepers. When I’d come back with people, the light keepers, they were tending the light then – fellows would [inaudible]. They had a boat that they had on a railroad car that would go a little [inaudible] down into the water, and then they’d go out on the boat. Then they’d [inaudible] on the car. It had stakes on, so the boat went in between. They’d then hoist it right up. That’s all they did was lifted it up. Didn’t have to tow anything. Then they started using a helicopter, and they stopped [inaudible] going, but they’re still running [inaudible] finally, it ended [inaudible] getting so that they didn’t have any line on it and so forth.

[00:28:05]

So then they – what they did – they ran it themselves for quite a long time. Then something happened to the engine, so they couldn't run it anymore. Oh, yes. Then they got a boat that they put on a slip – they pushed down, and they got it to lobster. In [inaudible] season, they would lobster. Canada’s [inaudible] season. They’d lobster some, and I’d take them lobsters over here and sell them. Then, of course, I’d bring all the stuff they wanted in Canada; I’d bring it right into them. They smuggled it in. [inaudible] biggest [inaudible] job. I did good with that. The

money in Canadian and American – at that time, Canadian money was [inaudible]. So we got the difference in the money, and I sold the stuff cheaper than they could [inaudible]. So I was smuggling according to some people. So they went to a Canadian – I can't think of the word now.

CA: [inaudible]?

BN: Yeah. And they said it's perfectly alright. But when they [inaudible], they had to declare it, and they would declare it as used merchandise. Now, what does that tell you? [inaudible] Canada or the United States?

CA: You got to tell us the basis of your claim to the island. Tell us about your claiming the island [inaudible].

BN: [inaudible]

[00:30:19]

[End of Track 2]

[00:00:00]

BN: – I'm getting tired. [inaudible] wore out.

BP: Okay. We're ready.

BN: Alright. We started with Machias Seal Island episode. I went down there as soon as I got a boat that went up there – built so that I can get there. I went there because I had been told by my mother that I had inherited the island, and it was given to me by my great grandfather in his directions to John A., his son, who was an administrator.

CA: Do you want to say who your great grandfather was that gave it to you?

[00:01:10]

BN: My great grandfather was Tall Barney Beal. Tall Barney Beal's reason for giving it to me was that in 1865, he was down there, and the British tried to [inaudible] all the American fishing vessels down there. They made a mistake, and they boarded his. You must remember that the men then were five-footers. He was seven feet. As fast as they came aboard [inaudible], they were either thrown overboard or thrown on the deck. Some of them got broken arms, and they

scrambled back and got aboard the British vessel. I don't know whether it was a vessel or – I guess it wasn't a vessel [inaudible] on the water. So they hurried back to Grand Manan. Barney was very kind to children and a lot of people, but when he got angry, he was insane.

[00:02:32]

I can understand when I get angry, but everybody says, "Just sit down. Don't hurt yourself." But he got angry, things went [inaudible] pieces. [Telephone rings. Recording paused] – overboard, and they're going back to Grand Manan. He went crazy and injured a lot of them. Then he declares – he goes to Machias Seal Island and declares it belongs to the United States and all of the territory around there. If they doubted it, send that damn vessel back here again, and we'll determine it some more. The vessel never came back until 1971. Then it came back. I was there.

[00:03:39]

I met all the lobster fishermen that fished around there coming with their traps. It was August 5, 1971. Ken Wood was coming over toward me, and I said, "You're right in the height of the lobster season. Have you all gone crazy?" He said, "You see that SOB [son of a bitch] out there?" I looked out there, and it looked like a destroyer, but I later found out it's the (Camelia?). It was a Canadian coastal – I don't know what they call them but enforces the fisheries and so forth. He said, "They told us that we were fishing in Canadian waters and that he'd give us twenty hours to get them out. Tomorrow they'd have to be out, or they'd be all cut-off."

[00:04:46]

He says, "What are we going to do?" We can't leave our traps down there because they're new." I said, "Ken, if you don't put your traps back, you're going to lose it; you're going to lose the whole area." [inaudible] was gathering around and so forth. I told what had happened, that they had to put their traps back. We talked it over, and I said, "Well, if we can't put our traps back there, we won't have anything anyway, so we might just as well just not have any traps." [laughter] I said, "Don't feel like that at all. The area was [inaudible] in 1865 by Barney Beal. Nobody came back. He threatened them [inaudible] and so forth. This is the first attempt they've made that I know of. So they put the traps back, and I'll see what I could do."

[00:05:53]

So I got back here, and I had mistrusted that some of these things might happen. So I [inaudible] the State Department just before then, I guess about 1970 down in Washington. I had mistrusted the way they were acting on Machias Seal Island. So I asked them about it – what would happen and so forth – and they said, "Well, you'd have to get in touch with us if anything happens." I

said, "Well, by that time, I'll be in jail." [inaudible] I said, "They threatened me once." They said, "Well, we've got to write you a letter." So they wrote me a letter, and I'll show it to you, in 1983 that was. But the original [inaudible], but that was back up for when I lost the other one.

[00:07:02]

Unknown: Weren't the conditions on your inheriting the island based upon your mother naming you for Tall Barney that she named you Barna Beal was part of the condition.

BN: Yeah. Well, Tall Barney said that the first male that was named for him would inherit Machias Seal Island.

Unknown: That's what I wanted to get in there.

BN: So, of course, I wasn't born while he was alive. I was born in 1915. I think he died in 1900, something like that. Anyway, my mother said that –

CA: [inaudible] so you could read it.

BP: Just hold it up to the camera. Just hold it like this. Yeah, that's good.

CA: We'd like to get a copy of that on that video.

BN: Well, of course, if I were younger, I could hold that better.

CA: You're doing fine.

BP: Okay, that's good.

[00:08:25]

CA: Your hand's pretty steady, Barna.

Unknown: Yes, good enough.

CA: Your hands are pretty steady for someone your age. Just as steady as I could be.

Unknown: Probably more so than I could be.

CA: [inaudible] There's your paper back.

[00:08:40]

BN: I figure that we should have something on Machias Seal Island since that was United States. North Rock was a shoal that was off of Machias Seal Island, and I figured I'll get the United States to put a buoy on that, and we'll have a buoy. So I talked with [Edmund] Muskie, and of course, that was [inaudible] because that's [inaudible].

BP: Hold that up to the camera.

Unknown: This is [inaudible].

BP: You can hold it.

BN: He said you've got to get some fishermen to request it. So I went all over Cutler, and I went here and East Machias. I did a lot of work, and I got all the names. I gave it to Muskie and went through the channels. He said, "We'll put that buoy down this summer." You know what they did? [inaudible] State Department told Canada we won't put the buoy down there. Do you know what happened?

[00:10:04]

CA: They didn't put it down.

BN: What?

CA: They didn't put it there

BN: Before they could get the words out of their mouth, Canada slammed a buoy down there.

CA: Oh, okay.

BN: Then I asked Muskie – I said, "[inaudible], ain't it?"

CA: No, this was [inaudible].

BN: Yeah, alright. [inaudible] but Muskie was the one that was involved in it, and this was after it's been down.

CA: This don't say anything about the buoy. It just says, "Canadian government [inaudible] responded by the strong protests by the United States."

BN: That was about the buoy.

CA: Okay, [inaudible].

BN: They protested that they put the buoy down.

CA: And to monitor the situation closely.

[00:10:44]

BN: That's [inaudible]. They still got the buoy there. He never got it.

CA: [laughter] Yeah.

BN: That was [inaudible]. Where it is right now, we don't have a thing on that Island. Nothing. Canada's got a lighthouse. We do have a – I'll take that back, but there's no buildings. We've got U.S Fish and Wildlife up there.

S1: Do they have a person on that?

BN: No. They don't have anybody there. But they issue permits for us to go.

S1: Oh, they're the ones who issue the permits?

BN: Yeah. Now, I should tell you about that.

S1: How many is allowed to go on there a day, each cruise boat?

[00:11:38]

BN: I set that up before anybody was going out there. I was going out there in 1940, and the Canadian Wildlife people came in 1971. His name was [inaudible] – I've forgot it now. But anyway, he'd come up [inaudible] come down to help us. I was getting kind of nervous because there were people [inaudible] Grand Manan that were loading big boats. Sundays, a whole crowd of picnickers, like sixty or seventy going on that island, and it wasn't going to be long before [inaudible]. So I needed someone to keep them off because I couldn't do it. So he came down and said he'd come down and help us. I said, "Great." Then I told him what we ought to do, and

he says, "I agree with you." So I said, "We should set this up, and a fellow from Grand Manan has been coming down for the mail and has had some people go with him." I was taking most of them. So I said, "Let's set a limit on the island for twenty-five a day." That won't hurt the birds. He'd take twenty-five, and I'd take twenty-five. He thought that would be a great idea.

[00:13:22]

I said, "We'll issue a permit, a commercial permit for that." Then, after the birds leave, once the [inaudible] come off, when they come down [inaudible] should be two months while they're nesting [inaudible]." So that's what was done, and it worked well.

CA: Now, you've lowered the number now, haven't you?

BN: No.

CA: How do you work it? Did you divide it up more?

BN: What happened the next thing [was] he got transferred, and we had a fellow called (A.O.?) Smith. He was the head [inaudible], and he'd come down, and he said, "No, you can't divide that up just between you [inaudible] people." He said, "This is the public, and everybody's entitled to it. Legally, you can't do that." So we got the buoy taken care of. The Canadians got –

[00:14:32]

S1: The amount of people that was allowed to go – you said there was another fellow, (A.O.?) Smith or something had come down.

BN: That was Canadian [inaudible]. He said, "It's got to be first-come, first-serve." I said, "No, I own the island." I said, "It's just the same way." He reminded me that Canada owned the Island. I said, "Canada owns the lighthouse but don't own the island." So I got down there the next day. The Canadians found out the new regulations. So I got down there, and the fellow that was in charge of the island, [inaudible] I don't know whether the deputy – I guess you could call him. He said, "Barna, you could own the land, too." He says, "There's been twenty-three [inaudible] ahead of you." I said, "No, I've landed the same amount, the same number." Then one of the people got scared. They didn't [inaudible] land. We had a dory; they was landing with the dory. Well, I got the dory in, and I got to talking to them and telling them to get out and so forth. I kept pushing them with the oar across the [inaudible]. I kept pushing and pushing. They kept getting out of the dory and [inaudible] left them.

[00:16:18]

Well, they got kind of excited. The man fell on the island. He got really excited. He told them they were all going to [inaudible] Saint Johns, that (Rachel Carter?) would be down [inaudible], and they were going to take my boat; they were going to tow her back. He goes up to the light and the lighthouse keepers. Of course, the lighthouse keepers and I were great pals because they were smugglers, and I was furnishing the stuff to smuggle it to Canada. He didn't know that, of course, but he drives them out because this is very confidential [inaudible] what he's doing, you see. So he gets in there, and he turns on that radio that's connected to all the light stations, not only in Canada but the Atlantic seaboard, and puts on an emergency call. Every receiver, both nations – he starts to tell what's happening and what to do and to bring the Mounties [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] down and all this stuff that was supposed to be secret. It was worldwide. [inaudible] worldwide.

[00:17:47]

So I went out again, and this time the Mounties were down there. I put them right out just the same. Then, at that time, they had me and was going to take me, one each side of me – very big fellows, lifting me right along. I wasn't even having to touch the ground. I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. I've got something in my lunch box. Wait a minute." They thought I wanted something to eat, and they said, "Oh, we'll feed you. We'll feed you." I said, "Let me get the lunch box." I got the lunch box, and I pulled the paper out of it. I says, "You might want to read that." My god, they dropped me so quick I almost [inaudible] knees.

[00:18:40]

One fellow looked at the other, then looked at the other. They said, "Well, we got to get to the telephone." I said, "I've got to have my paper back." "Well," they said, "we want it." I said, "No, I can't let you have it. You can tell them what's on it." So I come back. Well, that didn't satisfy them. Now comes a helicopter, but we still counted the people out. I don't know. They mulled it over and so forth. The next thing, they came down in a helicopter and so forth, and they said we can go back to the old system. In the meantime, what John had done – he'd put me ashore, and he started taking people early in the morning because [inaudible] fifteen [inaudible] thirty. It was right next to Cutler and those Grand Manan boats. Sometimes, they could get halfway there [inaudible] be out there. Then we went ahead of him, so when they got there, they couldn't land. That happened for three days, and then all hell broke loose.

[0:20:19.3]

They come down in a helicopter, and they put stuff back the way it was, and it's been that way ever since. They let three – there were three of us, but only a fellow down to –

CA: Cutler?

BN: No, he just came later, but it was [inaudible] they let him have – I don't know – four days or something like that.

CA: How about (Percival Culbreath?)?

BN: (Percival Corbett?) was –

CA: (Corbett?), I mean.

BN: He was out of it.

CA: He wasn't taking [inaudible] out there?

BN: No, he was before that.

CA: Okay.

BN: Because I was [inaudible] Cutler then because I was taking his group because he lost his license.

CA: Father did for a living? His occupation? What'd he do?

BN: Well, my father was the chief engineer of the [inaudible] company.

CA: (Ted?) was a chief engineer, too

[00:21:33]

BN: Well, my grandfather was the chief engineer. Then my father had studied in Portland, and he was a licensed electrician. He came down, and he helped my grandfather. My grandfather didn't know anything about electricity. Nobody knew anything about it except my father. He went to work for him. He was assistant engineer. Then my grandfather retired, and my father was then chief.

CA: Okay. Now your wife's occupation?

BN: Well, my wife's occupation was – she was a public health nurse, and she held that job for twenty years. She was married all that [inaudible]. She had other qualifications. I don't know what they were. It was in New York some of the stuff that she was doing. But I don't know.

CA: Okay. That's [inaudible]. What about your appliance business? You had an appliance business at one time?

[0:22:42]

BN: Yes, we had an appliance business. I had it started. We [were] taking appliances out to Machias Seal Island, and we'd take it apart and sell the appliances here in Jonesport. We had a good business going. Plus, I was doing my bird trips, too. Every time I went to Machias Seal Island [inaudible]. Then I went and volunteered because I knew they wasn't going to take me because I had flat feet, but I was gone four years.

CA: Also, in addition to taking people to Seal Island, you took out birders around after the puffins left and the season opened up, didn't you?

BN: Yeah. We had a Labrador dog that saved three of us.

CA: Is that right?

BN: We were out on Machias [inaudible] Rock, and we had a boat, a rowboat [inaudible] excitement of the dog retrieving. We helped him in. We got ashore and forgot to tie the boat. The boat was drifting off the tide. I had that – do you want to shut this off, and I'll get a picture.

[0:24:01.2]

S1: Okay, there's one more thing we'd like you to tell us about. Tell us about the winters in Jonesport.

BN: I'll tell you about one winter.

S1: Okay.

BN: It was the winter that we came damn near starving to death and freezing to death. Very close.

Unknown: What year?

BN: [inaudible] five years to about 1921 or two because I was up at the primary school up there. We hadn't been able to get even to the locomotive up to [inaudible], and they were having a hard time running that. Snow started falling that year in August, I guess, and we had so much snow that there was no traffic except horses or by foot. Some people were getting out of their houses by chamber window. And it was so cold that the reach froze over before Christmas. The vessels that were heated by wood and coal – we had a lot of it on hand, but it was so cold that the lumber yard – they supplied us up there, most of it.

[0:25:41.2]

It was getting really low, and the temperature was still dropping down, and we were getting – the snow stopped, but then we got this clear cold day. It was just as clear as it could be but cold. We couldn't get food. Of course, a lot of them had potatoes and things like that. (Melvin Kelley?) came up to the store one night, and he said, "You know it's the coldest I've ever seen it." He said, "The potatoes I had in bed with me froze." Well, here we were, stuck. No fuel. No food. None of the vessels could get in because the place was – traffic was with – vessels and the train couldn't get up there, there was so much snow.

[26:56.9]

I remember on this cold day hearing this thundering roar. It was the *Ossipee*.

CA: Now, what was that?

BN: Icebreaker

CA: Oh, an icebreaker!

BN: It's a big one. The back of it – she was towing two schooners and a steamer [inaudible] she was in back of that. It was all over.

Unknown: That's great

BP: Okay. Want to tell about it?

BN: Well, I can tell you, but I can probably quote off of it better.

BP: Okay. Why don't you do that?

[0:27:52.0]

BN: Let me see if I can get to it. It says when the new \$175,000-dollar side-wheel steamer Frank Jones churned down the Kennebec River from Bath 1892 to begin service between Portland and Machiasport, she was something to behold. Two hundred seventy-three feet long, 1634 tons. She was bigger, fancier than the Boston [inaudible] of the day – *Cambridge* [inaudible]. She had 105 staterooms, electric lights, steam heat, horizontal engine, and without a walking beam – she had no walking beam in it. That was [inaudible] two hundred and sixty-two feet.

[0:29:04.6]

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

Reviewed by Molly A. Graham 6/7/2022