

Grandfather Charles Bowen stories

This oral interview takes place in Rockland, Maine at the home of Charles and Beatrice Bowen in the late 1960's. Interviewees include:

- Charles L. Bowen (14 Jul 1882 – 10 Oct 1967)
- Beatrice (Hamilton) Bowen [wife of Charles L. Bowen, 27 Feb 1883 – 21 Aug 1968, daughter of Solomon and Sarah (Harvey) Hamilton]
- Lewis (Lew) Bowen (20 May 1912 – 18 May 1982)
- Elmer Bowen (3 Feb 1917 - ~ 1993)
- Polly (wife of Elmer Bowen)
- Charles 'Johnny' Bowen (Mar 1928 – living still), son of Charles Delmar or Delton (?) Bowen and grandson of Charles L. Bowen)
- ? Basil Bowen (- 6 Jul 1988)
- Doris (Barter) Bowen (18 Jan 1917-20 Dec 1996), wife of Lewis A. Bowen
- Peggy (Bowen) Colby (5 May 1911 – 8 Apr 1990)
- Unknown: in instances where the speaker could not be identified, the speaker has been titled 'unknown'.

Written transcription by: Kristen Carlson-Lewis with the assistance of Kendra Chubbuck, Meghan Cooper.

NOTE: due to poor quality of cassette tape and significant background chatter during the interview, it was difficult to catch all details of conversation.

I would like to precede the start of this interview by thanking Billy Barter for telling the story of what was happening when the cassette started: Charlie went to set a fishing weir overnight with Guy Barter. He put a can of baked beans in the oven of the boat but forgot to put a hole in the can. After being in the hot oven, the can exploded blowing the door to the oven off. Apparently, they were picking up beans around the cabin for at least two weeks after the event.

Charles: I hadn't had no sleep for a []. I got up and his trembling legs alongside a mine. He says, "I guess they blowed us up." He said, "I guess them damned Germans, they blowed us up." By God, I got the kettle light lit and looked around. Them cupboard doors open, blowed every can out of that bean and it went right across there and part of it hit Guy in the face. My God, what a mess we had there. God, I'll never forget that.

Doris: What about the time he fell overboard? Tell us about that...

Charles: I feel Guy's leg trembling against mine, you know. We weren't scared both of us. Guy says, "Boy, I guess those Germans blowed us up". About the time of the German war there you know. Yeah.

Doris: What about the time Pa fell overboard, Guy fell overboard? Tell us about that.

Charles: I don't hear.

Lew: What about her father falling overboard that time down there off the smack?

Charles: We were setting there on the shore, there of [at] the shop talking. That Clarence Gray was there. He was about always there, both of them boats not having anything going in the harbor, you know. Guy come up out of the cabin and he stepped into the pea pod, into the punt...the dory it was there and when he stepped into that front. He stepped right into the nose of her and up she went in the air there, you know. And the next thing I see was them trying to fish Guy out of the water. That boat went right upside down.

They got to take along Guy and they heist [hoist] him up alongside. They had to heist him aboard. They got him down in the forward there and he stripped off his clothes to dry. And George Coombs was aboard there. They told George to stop at the house to get Guy some dry clothes. It went on and went on. Guy was up forward in the boat stripped naked there trying to dry his clothes.

Lewis went home and said to George, "thought you sending up some clothes for Guy." "Oh my God," he said. "I forgot all about him." He said, "Well, Guy's down the boat there now." So, they had to get some clothes and went down and get Guy. He's one good boy, Guy Barter was...yes sir. But they always had a good time when the smacks come in. The crowd of boys they will have it.

Lew: I can just about remember him when he come down.

Charles: It's funny, Clarence Gray never got aboard there, you know. Clarence he was a funny fellow, you know. But they never got him aboard there. They never got anything in him. Got...

[There] was another fellow from another smack started to row ashore in the dory. I looked and he was running out through the thoroughfare out through there. He didn't know which was shore. They had to go and fish him out and get him back. He was a coot. And about the time they was going down, this little Elsy I guess it was...St. Patrick's Day. Somebody stepped in the kittle [kettle] of chowder on the stove and upset that. Oh boy, what a day they had! God, what a day! Yes sir!

Those were the good old days, boy. I happened to be ashore out of that mess. I don't know how it happened. I happened to be ashore working. I saw the position. We don't have moving pictures in those days. Boy we had something.

Unknown: Wasn't there one of them guys they had to hoist out of the water there that fell overboard? Who was that?

Charles: Huh?

Unknown: Who was that they had to heist [hoist] out of the water to get him out?

Charles: Guy, he went overboard on that. The bow of the dory went right up and tipped him right overboard. No use for such a small dory. Guy only weighed about 365...75 pounds, you know. When he got into the bow of that dory, she just couldn't stand it. He said something to somebody who happened

to be aside the boat and when he did, he jumped in there. Guy, I guess was coming ashore. He never got ashore until long after dark.

George Coombs out playin' with his 'yellins.' He forgot all about getting clothes for Guy, you know. "I thought you come home for clothes for Guy." "My God," he says, "I forgot all about him." Finally, they got around and got some clothes down aboard for Guy. One good boy that ever lived.

Unknown: I don't know. I can only remember him once there. I think it was the time that he come down over the barn in that pea pod you bought from him there.

Charles: He come down by...he traded an old engine here for that pea pod. Do you remember that little pea pod? That's the nicest little pea pod I ever had.

Unknown: The best one I ever saw.

Charles: When he rode down by, she was only about 4-5 inches out the gunnels, you know. I told him, I says, "You'd better get ashore." He says, "How much am I offered?" I says, "Ten dollars." He turned right around and rowed to shore. I pass him the ten dollars and he says, "You bought something." He traded for that... oh, there was some fella down from Stonington and they was trading [engines]. They bought all the old engines they could and that one they had of Guy's. So, I passed him the ten dollars. I think it was ten dollars. He rowed right straight to shore and stepped out of her. She was the nicest pea pod I ever had. Yes, sir!

Lew: She was a good pea pod.

Charles: I had her for years you know.

Lew: We carried it with us there when we was out there fishing in the winter time. We carried her.

Charles: Took her right aboard.

Lew: You timbered her out with oak lathes.

Charles: Yes, I put some outside guards on her.

Lew: Well, you timbered her out inside too with oak lathes, you and I together.

Charles: No, I don't remember ever having timbered her out.

Lew: Yeah, you timbered her out with oak lathes.

Charles: I did?

Lew: Yeah.

Unknown: I remember that too.

Charles: It was a long time ago.

Lew: Well, yes, 'twas a long time ago, that's fact.

Charles: I had that peapod a good many years.

Lew: Smokey [husband of Gladys] got the molds of them. He took the molds of what was left down there. But I don't know what he ever done with them.

Charles: Probably they're lost.

Lew: If he took them, he's got him. He's probably got 'em.

Charles: Take a good man to build a pea pod good as that nowadays. They don't build 'em that way. These 'case knives' they build nowadays, straight top, you know.

Unknown: I know it.

Charles: We come down from Castine one morning. I come down from Castine, 'thicka dungeon of hedge' and frost. When I come out of Castine with 75 or 80 bushels of herring and down by there and afore I [went] anywhere down by the Cape, I had to haul up and bail that pea pod out. I guess there were six inches of snow on the stern of the boat on that old pea pod, you know. ...You better shut this thing off (referring to tape recorder).

Charles: Who's that? Johnny? Well, hello me boy. How be ya?

Johnny: Good and you?

Charles: Now that's nice. I'm glad to see ya. You better shut this off. Lew, hadn't you? (referring to tape recorder) You want to shut this off?

Lew: No I don't want to shut it off.

Charles: How's the family, Johnny?

Johnny: Good.

Charles: That's nice.

Johnny: How are you getting along?

Charles: I am here and that's about all. I've had one or two attacks, a brain storm, I guess and something in my neck. My neck froze up on me...hell of job to get your neck thawed once it gets froze up. But I got so I turn my head a little mite. I guess I'm going to []. How's all the folks?

Johnny: Good, yeah.

Charles: Which way are you from? The Western or the...

Doris: You been down to the island?

Charles: You been down to the island. You have?

Johnny: Yeah.

Charles: How's everything done there?

Johnny: Good.

Charles: We been trying to get down there. I guess we ain't ever going to get our feet under us. A little bit later maybe. No rush, no lobsters anyway.

Lew: How's your father Johnny (referring to Dell)? Pretty good?

Johnny: Yup, he looks good.

Lew: I saw him last summer once. I think it was Memorial Day I saw him. The doctor was there.

Unknown: Oh yeah. There they are ready anytime.

Charles: Alright. This is way back when I was maybe 10, 12 years old. I was fishing with my Uncle Charlie down in the mussel dredges down where we harbored in Dick's Island. So, one day we came up from there. They heard the mackerel was abiting off of the back of the break water. So, I wriggled around and I got a couple of herring and cooked them at the [kiln/kill/ keelin]. We mashed them up and made some nice toll [trawl] bait.

We left morning. Oh, we left before daylight. And I towed the old sloop out by the breakwater. We got up aways there and got a little there. "Uncle Charlie," he hollers, "Come in, come aboard." So, I got aboard and tied on. And he begins to throw the toll [trawl] bait, you know. We got up off of the Joneses Cove, they called it. I guess there's as much as 50 - 60 boats anchored at that time there. So the old man was puttin' the toll bait to 'im, you know. We was just drifting along in the sloop boat. We got up, way up on the lower part of it, on the upper part and hove to. We had our lines all baited and you talk about mackerel. My God, them mackerel was almost three feet long. The biggest mackerel I ever saw. By the time we got slowed down, we caught them mackerel just as fast as we could haul them and Uncle Charlie he got kind of excited.

He thought you know, we'd go up above, he said up off of the something there, above the Birches, he called them and we'd lay 'em. I told him I says, "We could do pretty neat all right where we are." I was snapping them mackerel in there two lines just as fast and they was as long as your arm. That mackerel, I never seen such mackerel. Uncle Charlie, he was slapping them you know and he gets excited. He says, "Give her the jumbo Charlie, give her the jumbo." I said, "To the devil with the jumbo." I yanking them mackerel out of there just as fast as two lines haul 'em. He got up somehow and he got a yard away. So that he got underway again. Away we went up above off the Birches, he call them. We got up there and we never got a darn bite. And I caught them mackerel 'til them lines skipped on the water. Them mackerel as long as your arm. We got up there and we never got a bite. And them fellows down below

never got that school of mackerel. They chased us clear up from the end of the breakwater, I guess on that toll [trawl] bait.

By God, we had to get back to the island. I peddled out mine to what I had there. By God, if we stayed there, we could've loaded that boat. I never see nothing like that for mackerel, not nowadays. I guess that's about all.

Lew (referring to the tape recorder): Lay it down in your lap there. Turn the volume up a little there. She'll pick it up just the same while we're talking.

Unknown: How long did you work them days? You was telling me there when we was down there to the town landing down there at the ferry slip that night about you pounding up that lime rock there.

Charles: Oh for the breakwater. That was for this breakwater [referring to breakwater in Rockland].

Unknown: How many hours did you have to work then?

Charles: I worked ten hours.

Unknown: Ten hours a day?

Charles: Yes, we had that lime rock on a big slab of granite just about high enough, you know, so we could use a heavy hammer. Joe [Pray/Prey], I think Joe Prey and I, we pounded up all the granite into walnut sizes for that cement to go on the new breakwater light there.

Lew: That must have been quite a job on it. That must have been quite a hard job on it.

Charles: No, not for me those days. God, I would snap right back. Ten hours weren't nothing in those days, you know.

Lew: You always been tough.

Charles: Oh, yes, I've been tough all right.

Lew: Do you remember the time down home there [Head Harbor on Isle au Haut] none of them guys could lift that railroad bar that you used to have for an anvil there? It was up the old barn there, you know the old barn down the camp that stood there and the boys was over there that day. You had a piece of railroad bar about that long that you used for an anvil. There wasn't nobody could hold that out there at arm's length. I guess Les [Grant] tried it, I don't know whether Gooden [Grant] tried it and Roscoe Rosquete or what. But when it come time for your turn to try it, you picked that right up and held it right out there.

Charles: I don't how long I did but I remember something about those days.

Lew: Those guys couldn't lift that out there. They couldn't hold that piece...you remember that piece of railroad bar Father used for an anvil. Father held it right out there just like that.

Charles: I remember something about that.

Lew: Those other fellows couldn't do it. They couldn't do it.

Charles: I was quite a lad in those days. Why I don't know, I couldn't have been more than 35 [years old], could I?

Lew: You must have been more than that. Cuz I was born when you was 30, I guess.

Charles: Was it down to Head Harbor?

Lew: Well, it was down there at Alfreida's camp.

Charles: I was about 35 or 36 [years old].

Lew: The barn was standing then. That was a work shop. [no longer there]

Charles: Well, those were the good old days then.

Lew: I guess they was.

Charles: Yes, sir. I don't know.

Unknown: We don't realize how good adays they was until we grow old and have to go on our own responsibility. When we have to get out and get our own responsibility then we understand.

Elmer: That's what I tell Carl.

Lew: In them days, we had no responsibility. We had somebody you know to look after us.

Charles: Used to tickle me to see, Lew and you and them other two 'yellins' there you know. When there was work to do, we was camping there. And Lew, he picked the cooking. He thought he'd do the cooking. So he got you younger fellas to saw the wood [Basil and Elmer]. I watched you fellas and I laughed. And Lew, you, know, he always start with a nice comical story and get you fellas sawing wood. I could hear Lew laughing now, you know. How he laughed you know, at you fellows' stories you was tellin. And then he'd tell you another one. He kept you sawing wood right along. It wasn't long before the wood pile got big enough, Lew's stories running shy. By gory! I was out where I could take it all in. Played you boys, that was fun days for me. Watch you...

Elmer[?]: He never ended up making the biscuits though.

Lew: He talked me into making the biscuits afterwards.

Charles: The first biscuits Lew made, you know. He set them on the table there and we set down in the old house then. And he set them on the table. They just about as big as them old fashioned round crackers, you know. Lew says with not even a smile on his face, he says, "Well, they ain't so awful good," he says. "They maybe need a little butter." They pretty tough you know but I never says nothing. By God, those were the good old days.

Lew: I got so I could make them afterward though, didn't I?

Charles: Yes, sir, Lew got so the next job...

Lew: They'd rise up that far.

Charles: Yes sir, Lew got so he could do 'em. What tickled me to see Lew take the cooking, you know and you boys had to get the wood. It took considerable wood, you know to get hot enough to make them biscuits. Boy, them was the days. I be darned. I'll never forget how Lew used to watch you fellows, you know and tell you a damn funny story. Well, he settle back and you done the work. That was fun for me.

I always liked taking Lew in the boat too cuz he was always fun for me. He kinda seasick but I didn't care whether he done anything or not, you know. I liked to have him with me. I used to take him out there and of course I'd run way into under the Western Head to smooth it down. So, I coax him out so he would eat. I liked to have him go so well. I didn't care if he done anything or not. But, those was the days.

Lew: I guess I never done much of that.

Charles: I didn't look after you, didn't do anything. I only wanted having you with me. You was just as good as a spare man. I didn't need no spare man in those days. No sir. We went off shore there and I come clear in from [heading ground]. We were on the lea so Lew would come up and coax him to eat a little something.

Lew: That night, Father, that we was off there on the 'hanging ground' there when we was pumping the boat out there by the engine. We left a plank up there down in the cabin and either one or the other of us went down there and stepped and broke a sea cock off there. The water came up there as high as your hat. There we was off there on the 'hanging ground.' Well, Father held his hand over the hole there and he said "Get me some rags.'

Charles: No, no, she holed the side shaft right out through the stuffing boards.

Lew: No, not this time, you broke the seacock off.

Charles: I don't remember that time... wasn't no seacock.

Lew: You told me get some rags for a plug. I took my handkerchief and I busted the tail end off the buoy there and we drove that in there to keep the water from coming in. Then, I decided we better go back home because it was getting late. [There] was no water coming in. So, far as what we done was she pumped the water off the boat but we let some more in. There wasn't anything we could do.

Charles: I guess I was alone at the time that side shaft went out through. I had the engine on the side and one in the middle.

Lew: But we had the Red Wing then. We had the 3240 Red Wing.

Charles: This was when I had them one lungers. I had two motors, one on the side and that side shaft. It didn't have no collar on it, you know. It got loose in the coupling and went right out through...stalled it out. I got down there and stuck something in there.

Lew: But, that night off there on the 'hanging ground.' Boy, that hole and we broke that seacock off. That didn't look good to me.

Charles: I don't remember then, so many cussed things happened to me. I've forgotten the most of them now.

Lew?: Another thing that happened to us... both tanks got plugged up and the engine wouldn't go. I got down there and she got into the proper sea. I unhooked them tanks and blowback into the tanks. I was down there in the cabin there unhooking those tanks. We finally got one going. It just about made me seasick down in the cabin down there. All the gasoline down there, the fumes and everything. We got her going after awhile.

Charles: Those things are so far away now I've forgotten.

Lew: We drove in one night there that. I don't know if you remember or not. We was running in off shore there and we was running for the Whistler. But we run a time out and then we listened. We shut the engine off and listened but we could hear the Whistler but you thought it was in another direction. "Well," I said, "It's up this way." "Well, no," you said, "I think it's on that way." It started snowing, you know, that was bad and we had to be right. We had to be right. We couldn't be wrong. I said, "I think you better go where I hear the sound." So, we started up again and kept running. And finally, we made that Whistler. I was some happy when we made that.

Charles: Did she?

Lew: We could take our departure from there see. We knew where we was at. We made that night when we come in. We made down around Nettie's there somewhere. That's a landfall we made that night coming in snowing. We come in from offshore there. We made down there below Bungee Head there just down below Bungee Head a little mite.

Charles: That was when we was living down in Head Harbor.

Lew: Yeah, you and I was fishing and living down there in the middle winter and going back Saturdays. Going back Rockland here Saturdays.

Charles: Oh, yes. That's a long time ago.

Lew: Ain't too long ago, I mean not so far back. It was well 1931 or '32 probably '33.

Charles: My God, you know, that's around 30, 40 years.

Lew: But we had some hard trips off there. I'm telling you. We get off shore there and start snowing.

Charles: Oh yes. I didn't care about the weather then. It didn't bother me none.

Lew: As long as the engine run...that's all we cared about.

Charles: That's all I wanted...that motor running. Boy, those was the days. I don't think I'd like that just as well now.

Lew: I don't believe there was any boat off shore except us sometimes.

Charles: That's all, that winter that we fished there. I guess we was the only one fished there.

Lew: Wasn't nobody else.

Charles: Nope.

Lew: Well, you see, anybody in Head Harbor. If we didn't show up at night, why they wouldn't be looking for us because they didn't know whether we went to Rockland or not.

Charles: They didn't know where we went. No, of course not.

Lew: We might not go home and go to Rockland. They wouldn't be concerned about us if we got lost. When you stop and think back...

Charles: Were you with me the time we had the two cows?

Lew: No, Del was with you.

Charles: Yeah, Del. We never got out of Head Harbor there 'til after dark.

Lew: I know you didn't.

Charles: Dark, all you could see when we went out by the Western Head was the light of Saddleback Light and the lights above Vinalhaven in the sky. We went across there with them two cows. I started going into Vinalhaven. But, I thought I was out looking the other [day]. It was long after dark before we got the cows aboard there in the harbor. Del was with me. We went up through Vinalhaven, went right up through that rock pile after dark. God sakes! You couldn't see hardly your hand before you before we got into Rockland Bay. Seemed to be a little jump ahead that was all coming across the bay. But I guess it didn't amount to anything. But, we got in by the breakwater and got in by the lime shed there. No, it was a wood shed, I guess. We grounded out. We got there in time to ground out so she didn't heel over. I drove first one of them cows out the boat and then the other one. And Del was up along the wharf with a great long line leading the cows up the roadway. When we went up through the old kiln shed that Nancy Ray was sitting there on the lime carts, you know, eating his night lunch. "Jesus," he hollered when he sees those black heifer's heads gone by him you know. "By God, I guess the devils got me," he says. We went up through there. About 12 o'clock that night, they was [the cows] in the barn tied up. Boy, oh boy! You couldn't make me take one cow across the harbor now.

Lew: You used to make one trip for the cows and the next trip for the furnishings for the house.

Charles: I used to take the cows in one trip, and then I had the family the next.

Lew: Trucks and barrels and boxes.

Charles: Oh boy! Beds and bedsteads and mattresses and stuff. God sakes, that was the life...that was, to make a dollar.

Lew: I guess that's what's made a man out of a fella.

Charles: I guess so, made something out of us. A darn fool, I guess.

Lew: You don't make a man out of a guy that sits behind a desk and pushes a pencil. He don't make a man out of him.

Charles: I didn't fear nothing in those days.

Lew: I didn't either.

Charles: No, I didn't fear nothing. Yeah. It was a hard life to make a dollar with a time in those years, you now. A family over here and a man down there. You try to run a few traps, you know, pick up a few lobsters and they were cheap. They weren't none that landed over 25 or 30 cents a pound, ya know. There's some difference between a dollar and a dollar and 10, 15 cents. There weren't any more lobsters then than there are now dragging 'em up from way off shore. That's my time. Well it's been a good life anyway.

Lew: Been an exciting one anyway.

Charles: Yes, it has been pretty exciting at times. But now, we got so we can take it easy. I hope we can live a few of these lives more.

Lew: Want to talk? You can talk anytime you want to.

Charles: You want to talk Elmer. Elmer, you say something here. All you got to do is talk right in there.

Lew: Well, Elmer goin' to say something now. All's he got to do is put it in his lap or something.

Elmer: All I need to ask you a question. What's you want me to talk about? There's not too much I can say except I am here.

Unknown: Can't you tell them about your rabbits? Can't you talk about them some?

Elmer: I got rabbits to supply the whole state of Maine.

Unknown: They will multiply too and fast.

Elmer: Can I bring you down some?

Unknown: No, no...

Elmer: I'll try to do that. I got a dozen that I'm going to have to dress cuz I got oh, I must have 35 or 40 more that I gotta make room for.

Unknown: Never have too many rabbits...

Elmer: I got a dozen ready to be dressed. I'll throw them in the freezer. So, I have room for the young ones. I need to take them away from their mothers. I got too many right now but I like 'em better than chicken.

Unknown: Well, I never had too many rabbits to eat but uh...

Elmer: You can't beat a tame raised rabbit. You raise them yourself.

Basil (?): I never had a tame one to eat myself. All I had was wild ones.

Elmer: Some day and some time. You ever get up there again I'm going to let you try a package of those. I put about one rabbit and he will go in about 6 or 8 parts. They're big. Lot of meat on them, not all bones like the wild ones.

Lew: You got a glass there, Father? You got a glass of 7-up there.

Elmer?: You didn't have it. (some whispering)

Unknown: Telling Johnny here, you know. He just left here for the island or for Portland that is rather.

Unknown: Well, you ask me some questions.

Lew: He can't think much about anything to say here at all. I don't know the matter with him. When he thinks nobody is listening to him, why he can talk to beat hell. Of course he can. He says he is afraid that this evidence is going to be used against him he says. Now, he don't like that at all.

Johnny: I don't want my wife to know everything I've done down here.

Unknown: No, he don't want his wife to know everything he has done. She might not like it.

Unknown: He ain't doin' nothing. He's pretty maudlin today. All he is doing is sitting down there that I can see. I'll have to see if I can get him to go there.

Lew: I guess you better think up something. Right now...it seems to be a stalemate here. We ain't doing much of anything. Pappy sitting there smoking a cigarette and Mom, she's sitting on the couch there. Ain't nobody doing anything at all. I don't understand that. And Elmer he won't talk nothing. Let's call intermission...

Charles: Now I'll sing them a little song. Tell them that Uncle Charlie will sing 'em a little song. Well ,folks, this is your Uncle Charlie again. These fellows don't seem like to talk here. This is Uncle Charlie going to try to sing a little old song. I hope you like it.

I am a jolly old farmer, Charlie Hoskins is my name.

I live way down in Skowhegan, Maine.
I took forty acres of my wealth in land
A little billy goat and a bag full of sand.
I went to the beach and there I stayed.
I ate steamed clams and I drank lemonade
Got onto the boat to go back to the house
I got so god darned sick I lost my gut
A fella came [along from] ? the city
Say 'ay no sir, no sirree.'
My stomach's not weak and I'll betcha the beer
I can heave up more than any man here.
Well, I got to go home to feed the sheep and cattle
I got to go home to see my old woman
I got to go home for chores to do
But I'd darn sight rather stay and talk with you.
I got a little something in my breath there. Well, that's all, good night boys. Have a good time!

Lew: Pappy got through singing that song and it was a pretty good song I thought.

Charles: Well, talking over after I got in. My wife was in the house there. There's a young fellow come along writing for the 'Youth Companion.' He says, "The old man, he's been told that he knows a lot of stories to tell." The old man sat there with me but he didn't feel like telling many stories. Finally, the young fella went off. Well, the old man and I went into the house to eat dinner.

The women folk had dinner pretty near ready. The older man he looked at me and I looked at him. He says, "Well, I don't suppose there's anything wet around here, is there?" I says, "Well, I guess there is always something for you and I, Father." So, I got out the bottle and we had a hooker. Just as we were going to take this hooker, you know, we tapped our glasses together and the old man says to me, "By God, Charles, you know, if we'd a had a hooker or two of us before that fella come, we'd a told him more of the goddamdest lies. I thought that was pretty good.

I don't have no stories to tell today...seem to have run dry.

Unknown: If someone could jog your memory, you could...

Charles: If somebody jogged my memory a little, I could think of something. I don't know what 'twould be. I guess I could tell you about the time that we was going to have a band down there at the island [Isle au Haut]. A fellow come on there, Ingraham, I think his name is...Ross Ingraham, it was. He sold instruments in Rockland. At that time, the steam boat touched there morning and night. So, he came on the night boat. He brought a whole pile of instruments with him. Walter Prescott, I guess was the instigator of it. So, we brought those old instruments down. We had the old red school house to practice in. We brought the instruments down and they went in a pile. We all picked out our instruments out of that pile. I happened to pick out a slide trombone which looked pretty good to me.

I thought perhaps I might play that slide trombone. I don't know these other fellas, none of us could read a note of music. Christ, that was the biggest broad fish. We got down to the school house and got separated out and started on rehearsal. And Frank Barton, I remember Frank had a great big horn, you couldn't see Frank Barton behind that horn. He'd fetch a toot and then we'd toot toot, you know. It didn't sound much like a band. We got along there pretty good. They all picked out there, I don't know. They were all us boys there. We all selected the horn. Freeman and Walter Prescott, they went together there at the time, they sit there playing two coronets, God sakes, their cheeks puffed out like balloons with that damn thing coming along. Oh boy! What a time that was.

Lew?: That must have been a time in them days.

Charles: Time, I guess it was a time. Ingraham got up there and he could toot, of course his horn. He started to play this music and all I could see was pruning hooks, you know and zeros and one thing or the other. God, I had this old slide and I yank her out and haul her back. What a noise she could make! That noise kinda tickled me. Yes sir that noise! We started in playing that music. He used to come every week and give us a lesson. He might just as well be talking to lobsters as talking to us fellas. I had to get up behind the haystack to do the practicing on that slide trombone. My wife drove me out back there. That was because she had a kid going to sleep. I'd get out there and get in that old haystack [and it] sometimes rise right up. What a time we had!

Unknown: I believe that...a slide trombone.

Charles: That trombone looked pretty good to me, you know. I could make quite a noise on that. When I yanked her out and hauled her back. Ooh, she goes...

Lew: Well, in your younger days, you used to play banjo, didn't ya?

Charles: No, I never played the banjo.

Lew: You played the banjo and harmonica too.

Charles: I was practicing I guess I didn't know how to play nothing.

Lew: Mother's story is that you played banjo and the harmonica.

Charles: I played the harmonica pretty good.

Lew: Yes but you had a banjo too.

Unknown: You played a banjo.

Charles: I had a banjo but I wouldn't call it playing that I done on it.

Unknown: You were babysitting for Gladys and Del for mother.

Charles: You 'yellins' were small, you didn't know what I...

Unknown: You put the children on the floor and got the kids dancing in it.

Charles: Wouldn't call what I did on it.

Unknown: When mother come home, you had us dancing on the floor.

Charles: My God I remember that. I got you kids dancing on that.

Unknown: It was Del and Gladys you got dancing ... on the floor.

Charles: Weren't them good old days, God sakes.

Unknown Female: Days are gone but not forgotten.

Charles: I used to like to play the harmonica pretty well. But I never could play anything else.

Lew: You played the banjo too.

Charles: I wouldn't call it banjo plunking on that darn thing. God...

Lew: You gave it to Basil when he had pneumonia there and he wrecked it. Basil had pneumonia there on Turner Street there. He wanted your banjo to play with and you give it to him. He pulled the strings off of it and he wrecked it.

Charles: That didn't amount to much in those days. What musical instruments I played didn't amount to much.

Unknown: When you lived over on the thoroughfare, anything exciting happen over there?

Charles: Nothing happened when I lived in the thoroughfare. That band that was a corker.

Unknown: What'd you say?

Charles: There was just one boy in that whole band that learned to play anything. That was Ivan Dodge – he was one of those musical fellas. Bill Mank he lived there then. He only had one hand he could use, you know. I think he played the bass drums. He could pump and pound that old bass drum.

Lew: Ivan was musical anyway. He could play the violin. He was quite a violinist.

Charles: I guess he could. Them Dodges was musical. His sister was musical. There wasn't nobody musical in my family. I used to sing a little once in awhile; howl.

Unknown: Margie [last name?] used to play the banjo and the mandolin.

Charles: They was musical, them Dodges. They was musical.

Lew: They are all the way through. Young Stanley Dodge is musical. He can play the banjo, the guitar and sing. He'd oughta be on TV. For a guy who was down there lobster fishing, he oughta be on TV.

Charles: He was a smart boy, Ivan was.

Lew: These towns don't run that far you know. He don't want to leave the island and go nowhere. But he's a good guy on guitar and banjo.

Charles: Who?

Unknown: Young Stanley Dodge.

Charles: Is that so?

Lew: Yeah.

Charles: I didn't know it. I never heard him play anything. He's one of the them Dodges who is musical.

Lew: He could make his way on TV but he don't want to leave the island. He wants to stay there and go lobstering.

Charles: He's a funny boy anyway.

Lew: He's happy there.

Charles: I suppose he'll stay there.

Lew: And if he's happy that makes a difference.

Charles: That's right, he's happy.

Lew: He might go to the big city and he'd be unhappy.

Charles: Ivan he went away. He done pretty well, I guess.

Lew: He went to the Conservatory of Music, I believe.

Charles: Some of them boys are smart. But them old lobster fishermen they don't much difference between one place and another. I don't know what they can do now.

Unknown Female: Do you remember anything about Uncle Till? You know her grandfather Uncle Till?

Unknown: Do you remember anything about him?

Charles: I don't remember much about him.

Unknown: Did you ever see him?

Charles: Oh yes, I was with him right there at the shore.

Unknown: Where did he live? Uncle Barter? Till?

Charles: He lived where Doris lives now.

That's was his house. Yes, he was Guy's father. Nice old fella too he was! He used to work in that shop there alongside of mine. About where Stanley's house is now or pretty near there. When I moved down there, the old fella went in the peapod. No, Earl was a young fella and his father bought him a power boat, you know, one of them boats off of the Vinalhaven. One of them lifeboats and put a motor in it. He used to tow the old man Till out and drop him on the end of the string and he'd go on the other end and haul. One day they went out on a foggy day about like today, you know. Earl towed Till out the harbor and dropped him off on one end of the string. Till hauled the whole gang [pops] and he never saw Earl at all. Along that afternoon, Earl come in when it cleared up and he got in, he was hoppin' mad. He was jumping up and down. He'd seen Saddleback Light and he'd seen every place but Isle au Haut before he got back. He had an old compass there. He was so mad about that compass that run him out that he pounded it all to pieces in the boat there. Oh what days they was...

Doris: Why don't you tell him about the time you used go down to Duck Harbor Saturday mornings and take Gladys and Del in the baby carriage?

Charles: Weren't them days. I run you yellins' down the Duck Harbor road there in that baby carriage. What a time that was, downhill and uphill. By golly, the sand was deep. I sweat some pushing that old baby carriage. Weren't that something!

Unknown: Those was nothing but trails in those days, Pa.

Lew: There was nothing but trails in them days.

Charles: That was all it was. They were pretty good roads, sand roads, sand. I remember how hard that goddamned carriage was pushed up them hills. It had fairly good wheels on them but they sunk into that sand, you know. By God, what a push that was. I brung you fellas down there though.

Is that pretty near open now?

Who?: A lot more tape to go yet there.

Charles: Can't somebody else say something here? Some of these other babies might say something to interest a fella. How about the old woman I been talking about might say something.

Beatrice: Hello. I am afraid not.

Female?: Who was Sabriny? Who was Aunt Sabriny?

Beatrice: What?

Female?: Who was Aunt Sabriny?

Beatrice: Aunt Sabriny Barter, weren't she? She was Uncle Till's first wife.

Unknown: And then he married who? He had another wife.

Beatrice: He married a woman from Boston I think but I don't know who she was.

Unknown: Ethel was...

Beatrice: But I think Aunt Sabriny was his first wife.

Doris: Tell us about Uncle Till walking up and down the road. You were telling us about Uncle Till? How he used to walk up with his hands behind him. Everyone's been talking about that.

Beatrice: I'm ain't no good for that.

Lew: You can't tell a yarn, can you Ma?

Beatrice: I am no good for that Lew.

Unknown: You can tell them about Uncle Till coming up the road with his hands behind his back.

Beatrice: I can't do that. You can tell them about Uncle Tell coming up the road. I can't do it...

Background conversation: 'There isn't much sugar in it.' 'I like that Fresca.' 'I like 7-up best.'

Peggy: Can you tell them about me running away from home? To go see Doris when she was born. Don't you remember when we lived at the village when Doris was born?

Beatrice: I can't remember.

Peggy: Irville come down to tell me that he had a baby sister. You told me I couldn't go up there and see Katty Barter [grandmother of Billy Barter] and that baby. And I run away to go. I could hear you hollerin' at me all the way but I didn't pay no attention to you. I went just the same.

Beatrice: She was bound to see the baby just the same.

Doris or Peggy: I got my rear end paddled when I got back too.

Unknown: There's some refreshments.

Beatrice: Oh Dot thanks. I don't know. I'm full now.

Unknown: Well that's good. That 7-up.

Peggy: Don't you have any funny stories to tell? When you lived with Colby out on Andrews Island?

Beatrice: I don't know of anything.

Lew: It ain't going to hurt ya. You talk just like you was talking to anybody.

Unknown: It's not going to hurt you.

Peggy?: You can't remember anything funny happening out there on Andrews Island all those years.

Unknown: Just like when I go to play the saxophone. I can't think of a darn nothing to play about.

Beatrice: Well, that's the idea.

Lew: I can't think of nothing to play.

Beatrice: No I don't know...really. Go ahead Lewis, sing us a song. I don't know.

Lew: We got a stalemate here now we can't think of nothing to do at all here. We passed it around here and nobody seemed to know nothing about talking about nothing. So, I guess we'll sign with you for the present time. We'll play it back and see what we got.

This is Lew Bowen signing off here for the present time cuz we can't think of anything else to say. We've run out of conversation. That's about it I guess as far as I know. We'll get in touch with you at a later date. We appreciate everything that's been said today. We appreciate everyone that's talked and so forth and so on. We'll resume this conversation at some other time when the time is right and so forth and so on. We are signing off again. We'll hear from you at some other time. We thank all for your participation in this project. Thank you.