

Name of person Interviewed: Janice Marshall [JM]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known)

Sex Female

Occupation Crab picker / waterman's wife

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port

and Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same)

Residence (Town where lives) Smith Island, Maryland

Ethnic background (if known)

Interviewer: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel [JGF]

Sound technician: Jeff Sherman [JSh]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

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INDEX (minutes:seconds) / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: [00:00] Smith Island, Maryland; Chesapeake Bay; Crabbing; Oystering; Ewell; Rhodes Point; Tylerton; Watermen; Fishing; Soft shell crabs; Hard crabs; Government regulation; Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources; Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs; Peeler Crabs; Jimmy Crabs; Smith Island Crabmeat Coop, Inc.; Crab picking; Skipjacks; Cooking; Foodways; Smith Island layer cake; Oyster pie; Smith island fundraiser parody shows; Pollution; Legislative advocacy; School boat; Crisfield, Maryland

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[10:00] Summer homes and residents (cont'd.); Town/church council; Federally funded dyking project; Crabbing from the dock; as a child; Soft shell crabs; Hard crabs; Government regulations affecting fishing seasons;

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[20:00] Coop (cont'd.); Coop declining due to lack of government enforcement of other crab picking; Crab picking technique;

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[End of interview]

TRANSCRIPT

[00:00]

JGF: OK. Today is Sunday, September 28th, 2008. This is Janice Fleuriel at the Working Waterfront Festival in New Bedford. We're in the Harbormaster House. And I'll be interviewing Janice Marshall of Smith Island, Maryland. And also present is Jeff Sherman, our technical assistant from Dartmouth High School.

[Sound check]

JGF: So usually Janice we just like to have people start by telling us about when they were born, personal and family background, which, I gather from you will be pretty much Smith Island.

JM: Everything is Smith Island [laughs] with me when it comes to that. I'm Janice Marshall. And I was born and raised in a little island right in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. And it's called Smith Island. And... My grandfather, my great grandfather, my father—in fact my father died working the water.

JGF: Wow.

JM: He was oystering at the time when he died. And then my—my husband, my son, my son-in-law... You know, all our lives revolve around the water. And the water business because there is no other industry on Smith Island.

JGF: OK. It's still... And your mother was a Smith Island person too?

JM: My mother was... She was a Smith Islander that should have been a movie star. [Laughs] My mother was..., you know, was not the typical island woman. And it was so funny. You know, she was a character all her own. But, she was never into the crabbing and oystering thing. You know, although she lived there. And like, most women, if you marry a man that works the water, you sacrifice what you'd like to do for the most part. You know, and stay there while they work the water.

JGF: OK. OK. Interesting.

And that's what you did? It sounds like—on one level though you certainly have been very active yourself.

JM: Oh I've been very active all my life. You know... Even though I was born and raised on the island, lived there all my life. You know, I always had other interests. And I always recognized that we were an isolated, different area. And we were *different people*. Because we are not the mainstream. Just because of the isolation, you call it. We call it freedom. But, people looking in on us call it isolation. So I use that so I can relate to it. But, you know, the freedom that you have living in a place like that.

JGF: Yeah... Now would you ever get, what seems to be common from people looking in on an island, the sense that, you know, those are the dumb little, you know..., people thinking that... You did? Yeah. Yeah.

JM: Yeah. A lot of people come there expecting to see the women naked from the waist up. [Laughter] The men wearing...[laughs]. But it's not that way. For one thing, even though the island has been so isolated, and away from the mainland, we've always kept up with the modern things. You know? Like TV. I remember when TV come in. Electricity. You know, we have a sewer system. We have cable. We have computers. You know. We have what the mainland has.

JGF: Right. And how off the mainland is Smith Island?

JM: Smith Island, if you get a map, and look... The Chesapeake Bay is a long, kind of narrow bay. And, from north, south, east and west, look kind of in the middle of the bay and there's Smith Island. And that's where we are, we're about twelve miles on either side. And there's no bridges. No way to get there. No car ferries. Only passenger ferries. And boat, is the only way in.

JGF: Wow! So... If you have a car on Smith Island, if you go the mainland you rent a car.

JM: No. It's so funny. Years and years ago, your needs were met on the island through the stores. But *now*, with the modern conveniences, and the need to go to doctors, everybody has their car on the mainland. So.

I remember one year we bought a secondhand car but it was brand new to me. And I thought so much of that thing. But we bought it in the spring of the year and summertime is usually our busy season. So I didn't get in that car no more for about at least two months. I was... You know, I mean...

And I remember growing up as a girl. We didn't have cars. We very seldom went to the mainland. Because like I said all our needs were met on the island. And I would look at women, and say, "Wow! Some of them women can drive a car."

JGF: [Laughs]

JM: So... When I... You know, when my children got older and I started getting a little itch for different things, first thing I did, you know, was learn to drive a car and get my license.

JGF: Wow. And you did that on the mainland?

[04:50]

JM: I did that on the mainland. And I learned to drive. And, you know, my husband drove some in the army. And we had a car then. But that went away when we back to the island. So I told him, I said, "I'm going to buy a car this summer." "Noooo, we can't afford a car!" "I'm buying a car." [Laughs]

So we went to the mainland. My father was up—my stepfather. And he found a man had a car for sale for eight hundred dollars. And I thought that was the prettiest car I'd ever seen. It was a Ford Torino.

JGF: Wow...

JM: Red on the bottom White on the top. I loved that thing.

JGF: That's great.

JM: That was my first car.

JGF: Wow... And where would you keep them on the mainland?

JM: We have to keep our cars on the mainland. It's a different parking area. It's in Crisfield. Or if you're lucky enough to have a relative that lives in Crisfield, that's the mainland, that's the next town over from us. We park it there until we need them.

But... You know, you don't take your car home. When you go shopping, you know, it stops at the dock. You put everything on the boat. You put your car away and go home.

JGF: So there are no cars on Smith Island?

JM: There is a few cars. Ewell and Rhodes Point are the bigger islands. And—Smith Island is made of three island communities. Tylerton, where I live. Rhodes Point.

And Ewell. Rhodes Point and Ewell are connected to each other by a road, although it's not connected the mainland. Tylerton is isolated *more* because we're separated by water. There's no way to get to the other two islands except by boat. So Ewell and Rhodes Point has a few cars, you know, to get back and forth. Tylerton is mostly, maybe one truck to carry freight to the little general store. And mostly bicycles, golf carts.

JGF: That's amazing.

JM: I mean, that's great, golf carts. Everybody. You're rich if you got a golf cart on Smith Island. [Laughs]. That's nice. Mostly it's push carts.

JGF: How many people live there?

JM: My goodness. That's the sad part.

On all of Smith Island, when I was growing up, I would say at least seven hundred people on all three islands. And now, we're down to like—I don't know if it's even two hundred and fifty. And then the island *I* live on, Tylerton, that's down to like, fifty-four full-time residents.

JGF: Wow...

JM: Now we have *more* population in the summer when people come to summer homes. You know, because islanders had the need to sell their home and take mainland jobs. But, for the most part you've got about fifty-four full-time residents on Tylerton.

JGF: Wow... Wow... So are you finding, in a lot of places, like, is the younger people that are leaving to look for better opportunities?

JM: Well, the younger people that are born and raised on the island don't really want to leave. But they have to. Because..., you can't live on the island if you don't have a decent work boat. So to rig up a work boat is a lot of money.

JGF: OK.

JM: You've got to have a place to live. You've got to have a place to—like a dock, or a—we call them shanty or crab house, to store your crabs, or... You know, for crab shedding, what we do, soft shells.

And..., it's just—you know *so much money* for a *young person*, they just don't *have it* now. And then, if you've got a family, you've got to look out for the hospitalization and the benefits that come with a mainland job. Which a waterman doesn't have.

So, I think it's out of necessity more than anything that they have to leave. And that's the sad part. They just can't stay there.

JGF: Huh.

Well maybe we can talk about, some of the—I'm going to assume some of the happier parts might have been your childhood, and what you did as a child.

JM: [Laughs] Well we still have happy times.

JGF: I'm sure you do, yup. [Laughs]

JM: I call them the remnant, that's living there now. You know? Because years ago I used to work in the little one-room school we had on Tylerton. And, you know, I could see the dwindling population through the school. I would say twenty years before all this happened, you know, I could see it each year dwindling down. Because if you don't have another generation coming up, you know, you just dissolve as a place.

And... But we still have good times. You know, we have socials. And, living on the island, people find this so funny. We've never had elected officials. We've never had a mayor, or, we've never had..., police force. You know, living out in the middle of that bay, you know, we've all learned to get together—get together well. We get along really well with each other.

So... And then we have socials, church socials. And when the school closed in Tylerton, we all go to Ewell now to the little elementary school. Little school socials and...

And then we have, like, little picnics and things like that.

So, we still try to carry on.

JGF: Oh yeah. Yeah.

JM: And people that live on the island are still upbeat because they love the place they live so much.

JGF: That's great.

JM: Yeah.

JGF: And it sounds like the people that have left come back for the summer, at least.

JM: Oh yes. A lot of them come back if they can.

[10:00]

JGF: Right.

JM: Or they have family on the island. And especially the kids like to come back.

JGF: Right...

So it sounds like in your community most of the summer home development is more about people who had already had a connection to the place?

JM: Well..., no. Not really. A lot of the homes—I would say half and half now. Half are island homes. And the other half are homes owned by people that buy summer homes. And, *thank the Lord*, Tylerton for the most part—I don't live on the other two parts, I can't speak for them. But *Tylerton*, you know, we've had really good people move in there. And been concerned about the community. And that's what a community needs to get going. They're very helpful.

JGF: That's great.

Do you have even community meetings of any kind?

JM: Well, yes we do. About ten years ago—You know, there's so many issues, living in this century. You've got to have some kind of a..., what do you call it?

Organization. So..., it's a... We call it a town council, church council. Because we don't know what it is, separating church and state. Because if the church don't approve it, something's not coming. [Laughs]

JGF: Oh OK. Sounds like old New England.

JM: Yes! You know. So really, we can't see *why* anybody would want to separate church and state. Because it's such a good match. You know, you're looking out for each other there.

And... But it's always worked there. And I wouldn't want to meet the man try to come in and change it. [Laughter]

JGF: Yeah... what would be the point?

JM: Yeah.

JGF: It's functioning.

JM: But, I mean... You know, it's worked all these years.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah.

JM: And we get along very well. I mean... We just had a lot of..., a big construction project through the federal government. With dyking, and..., and trying to control some of the erosion that the island is seeing from the bay. So..., that was a positive and, we've had a lot of things happen. So...

JGF: Yeah...

And so you've been involved with the fishing industry on one level since you were a child?

JM: Oh, yes. All my life.

JGF: What kinds of things did you do as a child with it?

JM: Well... You know, I can understand somehow—we call them watermen where we live. A lot of places call them fishermen, whatever. But, the watermen..., you know, they see a special thing out in the bay. They never know what they're going to catch. You know, what's going to come up in their nets, or their scrape bags, or whatever. They never know.

And I remember as a child, the biggest thrill would be to walk down on the little wharfs, we call them, with a crab net—that's a little net on the end with a long handle—and you see a crab crawling and you'd just dip after that thing off the dock. You know, it was fun! And we got so excited. I mean, everybody was just, "Here's a crab! Here's a crab!" [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs]

JM: It was very exciting. And I... You know, and I still like, the... The thing we do with crabs, we handle mostly soft shells. That are shipped off to markets. And..., to this day—I've seen it all my life, I love to watch them when—you would call it molting. They shed. They bust out of their hard shell and then they back out and they become a nice soft crab. And each time they shed that shell, then they get hard again, then they shed again, they get bigger. So...

I always said I'm glad we're not like a soft crab. [Laughs] Because when we look at shedding we want to lose weight, but they get bigger when they shed.

JGF: Yeah..., that's just the beginning of...

JM: Yeah. [Laughs]

JGF: So is that a seasonal thing?

JM: Very seasonal. It starts maybe in May. And runs sort of about the first of October. So we're just getting off of our soft crab season. And... Then, the hard crabs, that's..., maybe runs from April to... It's cutting off in October, sometime in October now. So many regulations you can't keep up with it.

But, October and November was when the men made a lot of their money. You know, for budgeting through the winter months. Because it's a couple of months there in between seasons that, *nothing's* coming in.

So we're kind of worried about how that's going to affect people and their ways of lives. You know, if they're going to be able to stay or go.

JGF: Huh.

Do you feel like people on the island are having much voice in regulations?

JM: No. No.

It's mostly state level. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Different ones like that. It's done through scientific surveys. They go out one—maybe one day a

month and drag an area, and say, “Well, it’s no crabs here.” You know, where a waterman is out on the bay every day. They know the bottom. They know where the crabs go. They know where they’ve... You know, and... It’s just a different way of making a living. So we have people working in offices telling us what we’re going to catch and how long we’re going to catch them.

JGF: And they don’t necessarily take a waterman with them to try to...?

JM: No.

JGF: Wow.

JM: No.

JGF: Wow.

JM: It used to be that watermen had some voice.

[15:00]

JGF: Yeah...

JM: We did—you know... But it’s not too much anymore.

JGF: Right. Wow....

JM: Mm hm.

JGF: I have to go back to the soft shell crab.

JM: [Chuckles]

JGF: Because, as a New Englander you just don’t hear... And I can still see the look on my husband’s face the first time he tried to eat one. And he wasn’t sure—it was slightly crunchy or something. And he wasn’t sure what he should eat.

JM: I know. [Laughs]

JGF: So. Can you like talk about that? [Laughs]

JM: Well, it’s so funny. On the island, that’s what we have. You know, they’re there for us. And we take everything off but the meaty body part and maybe leave some legs on. Which is delicious. But, when you eat it in a restaurant you’re going to get the back. The eyes and the lungs are mainly taken off. So you’re going to get mainly the full crab. But on the island you’re going to get mainly the meaty body part, which is delicious.

JGF: OK. So...

JM: So... You know, that’s the difference. But, if you can eat them with the—you know, with the shell still on them in a restaurant, you’re going to *love*, love them anyway.

JGF: Alright... So.

JM: You know, I don’t have to *pay* for my soft shells. If I *paid* for them, I would eat *everything* [laughs]. It’s just like anything local. I’m sure lobstermen do the same thing. I love lobster, you know.

JGF: Yeah... I think he finally dug out the meaty part. But...

JM: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah it was interesting.

So... There were other species that I think are mentioned in your bio, along with crab.

JM: Well, the soft shell is the blue—Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs, they’re called. And, the soft shell is the young crab. They are peel—we call them peeler crabs. They have a sign on the rim of their fin that shows if they’re going to soon be shedding. So that’s watermen look for when they save the peeler crab. If the peeler—if the crab

doesn't have that rim they don't save it. It's a throwaway. Until, you know, it's time for them to molt. But..., the ones that have the sign, they call it. If they got a sign on their fin, they're the ones they save and they're put in holding tanks. You know? Saltwater tanks. And, within a day to maybe three or four days, that's when they shed. But they have a sign they look for.

Now the hard crabs are the ones the women use to pick the crab meat. You know? That is sold to market. So..., that, that—We call them the Jimmy Crabs.

JGF: Jimmy Crabs.

JM: Jimmy Crabs. That's the male adult crabs.

JGF: Yeah. Oh, OK.

JM: So we—That's what we steam, and pick them, and ship that out to market.

JGF: OK... And so it's... Is there a special company that's doing the, sort of shipping and delivering? Or...?

JM: Well... You know, that's another thing, our coop. I don't know if you wanted to get into that.

JGF: Oh I *do* want to get into your coop. So go ahead is fine, yup.

JM: OK. If you want to get into that.

You know, years and years ago, forever people have brought in their own blue crabs. Steamed them. You know, picked it. And a lot of the women would sell it to their mainland friends. Or anybody heard about it, because, it was known as the best crab meat around.

Because, I was picking it and I was selling it to somebody that *knew* who picked. Knew *me*. Same way my *neighbor* was doing, same thing. So if you're... If somebody's buying something from you, what are you going to do? You're going to make it as best as you can.

JGF: That's true! Yeah...

JM: And they would just keep coming back while the industry grew, because women didn't have a way of making a living on the island. And as times change, you need two incomes. So this was the women's way of making some extra money, buying school clothes. You know, things like that. We need the same things everybody else does. And it became a nice way of families sustaining themselves.

JGF: Yeah...

JM: And... About... I'd say about fifteen, sixteen years, the state comes in and says, you know, "You're going to be arrest if you do this anymore." You know... "Heavy fines are going to put on you." And I was one they got. So... You know, I was forced into going legal.

JGF: Yeah....

JM: And I didn't know how I was going to do that, because, you're talking, three, four hundred thousand dollars, which, you know, none of *us* have. And you're picking a few pounds [laughs] of crab meat a day. That's a *long way* from that. So... You know, a long fight ensued. Took four years. Three hundred—almost four hundred thousand dollars. But... You know, with grants, federal and state grants—because we just didn't have the *money*—the state's putting us out of business. You know.

So we—I instigated forming a coop. And I was the founder of Smith Island Crabmeat Coop Incorporated.

JGF: That's great.

JM: And it's all women run.

JGF: Yeah...

JM: And we had fifteen members. Now we're down to five.

[20:00]

JGF: Hmm.

JM: And that's a story within itself.

JGF: Yeah...?

JM: But, we are the longest running small cooperative in America today.

JGF: That's wonderful.

JM: Because most small coops fail after the first year. So I give the women credit. So we're in our thirteenth year *in* the building.

So what the state did, they went back on their..., you know, on what they said they were going to do. Even though the rules..., are *in* the *books*, you know, "You can't do this." They're allowing it to go on everywhere in the bay. You know, so that's pretty much putting us out of business. I wouldn't doubt if this wouldn't be the last year that our coop...

We are the *only* legal Smith Island crab meat available.

JGF: Wow....

JM: And we will probably go out of business this year.

JGF: Now... What—They're going to put you out of business on what basis?

JM: Because, the state has allowed people, you know, to pick crabs and they're not pursuing it as an illegal act, now. After all they did, you know, for suing us. So we're down to five women. Why's anybody going to come in? You know, and pick there? And file taxes? And pay the coop so much on your pound of crab meat when they can pick at home? And nobody knows?

JGF: Oh...

JM: So the state..., really that forced us to do this is really putting us out of business.

JGF: Huh! Oh... So now that they're not enforcing it you've got competition from...

JM: Right. They are not enforcing it and we can't keep up with the competition.

JGF: Wow...

JM: Yeah.

JGF: Wow. What a shame.

JM: And it's the same crab meat.

JGF: Yeah...

JM: Only it's not done in... We... I don't know if you've ever heard of Wegmans supermarkets. But they are big down our way. And..., they are like Whole Foods, something like that. And, they buy our crab meat exclusively. And we've only been able to supply one store, we only have five women picking. And they can't ever, advertise when they're getting it in. Because it's sold out so quick. So, they never advertise. You know, it's just gone as soon as it gets in there. The Smith Island crab meat is, but... You know, if we had more women picking there, they could take it to other stores.

JGF: Right. Right. Huh.

JM: But, when you've got so many women and so many crabs, you can only produce so much.

JGF: Wow... What a shame.
JM: I know. It is a shame. It's sad.
JGF: Now... So, if that happens, will... I don't know if you want this on the tape [laughs]. Will you go back to just doing it?
JM: [Laughs] Well you're going to do what you have to do. And yes, I absolutely will. And I don't care [laughs] who knows it. I mean, you know, I did what was required. And now, I'll do what's required to maintain.
JGF: That's right.
JM: Yeah. I don't have a problem with telling them, "Yes I will."
JGF: It all sounds. I mean it all sounds like the ultimate definition of "bureaucracy."
JM: Right. It really is.
JGF: On the one hand, you have the federal and state government telling you're illegal, then giving you the money to become legal, ...
JM: Yes.
JGF: ...then not enforcing it. Oh my goodness.
JM: How about this. [Laughs]
JGF: Wow...
JM: So... I used to not tell that story. It was a little embarrassing to me. But I said, "No! It weren't my fault."
JGF: No. No. No.
JM: "I'm going to tell this story."
JGF: It's a great illustration of how bureaucracy can get in and, sort of, bungle...
JM: You can see what it did to a little, woman's' business.
JGF: Right.
JM: With the water business. Well, what do you think it does to the big..., you know? Everybody that's working these waters.
JGF: Yeah... Wow.
JM: You know. Same thing.
JGF: Huh. Can you talk a little bit about the technique called "picking crab"? What's really involved in that?
JM: Well, picking crabs... This is the Chesapeake Bay adult, mostly male, female, crabs. And, they are steamed under pressure. They are brought in from the boats, alive. They have to be. And then they're steamed under pressure. And... After that, then they cool off. And then the women go in in the evening. And..., you have to... It's so many little compartments after the crab's steamed that solidifies the meat. So it's like little—what I call little cubicles, I call them. And, you have—you flip the back shell off, and get the waste material out. And then you just cut the..., just the body of the crab, is cut. And you've got three pieces. And each—And so many people come in just to watch. And we allow to come in. You know, the state... When we built the building, you know, we have windows there so peop—We have visitors, that can come in and watch. And, we tell them, "Come on in! Come on in! You can't learn anything like that." So, we give a lot of picking demonstrations. And each one—it's a certain way you cut into the shell of this crab and you pick the meat out. And you *try* not to get any shell in it. That's what makes our crab meat different. Most of the time... Well we've had restaurants that use it and say, "You know, when I get other crab meat I have to have a lady just off to the side dumping

crab meat and going through it for shell.” But this they just dump it in the recipes and go on with it.

[25:03]

JGF: That’s wonderful.

JM: Yes it is. We’ve been very proud of that product.

JGF: Do you have a special knife that’s a crab knife?

JM: Yes! I do. And I don’t even know if I have it with me. I thought I put it in my bag today. It’s a crab picking knife. You’ve got to have a little knife. For that.

JGF: Wow. And how many can you do an hour? Or is that one of those...?

JM: Well, no... It’s not a secret, it’s just I’d like to know. [Laughs]

JGF: It’s what? Not...?

JM: It’s a secret I’d like to know.

JGF: Oh, OK. [Laughs]

JM: Because it depends on your crabs. The quality of them. And how big or small they are. You know, how many crabs you’re going to have to pick to make a pound. If you’ve got a big, blue crab, you might get by on ten crabs. And might be up to twenty crabs for a pound of crab meat. It’s a lot of crabs that goes into a pound of crab meat.

JGF: Right. Right. Huh.

JM: You know. I just don’t know. But maybe this would narrow it down, too. A bushel of steamed crabs. It takes my daughter maybe two hours. It takes me maybe a good two and a half. So it’s according to the speed you go.

JGF: Right. Right.

JM: Mm hm.

JGF: And is this one of those things... Like, I couldn’t believe it the first time here that I watched the scallop shucking contest.

JM: Oh, my goodness.

JGF: Those guys are like [swinging motion with hand] Phewm! Phewm! Phewm!
[Laughs]

JM: I know.

JGF: Is it like that for you guys?

JM: It’s so funny. You know, they have crab picking contests in the town next over. It’s called a crab derby. And that’s one of the things they have. They have crab races, crab picking contests, you name it. Boat docking contests. You’d like to see that. And... So, that... A lot of the women are really fast. But, you know. We’re not....

JGF: Huh. You’re not... You’re just, sort of... OK. Yeah. I was floored when I first saw that.

JM: Well, we... We try to do that as fast as we can. But we like a quality product. You’re watching for bone. Yeah.

JGF: Yeah... Interesting.

Can you talk a little bit about the process of fishing? [Brief interruption/phone ringing/answering machine]

The crab fishing—is that day trips? Or...?

JM: Day trips. The Chesapeake Bay, I was telling earlier, for the most part is a shallow bay. But... You know, it’s deep parts. I mean we have ships go up and down the bay channel. But, on either side of the bay, it’s shallow. And that’s the little....

shallow bottom boats, you know, that scoop up the soft crabs and all. That's where we live. But... You know, they are day. They leave in the morning, come back in the afternoon. It's not like this ocean... I mean, this port is *massive* compared to what I'm used to. And the *boats* are big compared to what I'm used to.

JGF: The boats are unbelievable.

JM: Yes.

JGF: Yeah. So is there sort of an average size that the crab boats are?

JM: Well, the soft crab scarping boats—we call them scraping boats—they're usually around eighteen foot, and, maybe a foot-and-a-half. I don't know what you call that.

JGF: Depth or whatever.

JM: And my husband has a forty-foot work boat too, that's used in the wintertime for oystering. So, you know, in summertime we have crabs, in the wintertime it's oysters.

JGF: OK. Huh.

And the boats—what are they made of down there today?

JM: Well... Just like it's getting everywhere. My husband still has the wooden boat. But a lot of them... You know, a lot of them are fiberglass now.

JGF: Yeah. Interesting.

And how are they... You mentioned scraping? Is that like a trawl—bottom trawl net?

JM: Yeah. It's something like a little dredge with a mesh bag. And that's dragged along the bottom.

JGF: Yeah.

JM: And..., that's hauled in. You know, after so long. We call it a lick. They say, "I'm going to make two or three more licks." I don't know how long a lick is! But, they drag that bag, that's a lick. And then they haul it in. Some by hand, some by hydraulic rigs. And... Dump it out on a culling board. They keep the ones that's going to shed. The ones that don't have a sign goes back overboard. [Laughs] So.

JGF: OK. So how many people will be on a boat at a time?

JM: One. Mostly one. Now sometime, in the summertime if you got a crab pot rig, that's different. That goes in deeper water. You usually have another mate.

JGF: OK. And is that for the hard shells?

JM: Yes. That's for the hard shells.

JGF: So that's more like the traps.

JM: Yes. Crab pots we call them.

JGF: And... So those, hard shells, would sort of just be walking around on the bottom, and, crawling into the pots.

JM: Yes.

JGF: The soft shells? Are they in the sand or are they...?

JM: Well, mostly peeler crabs, they're caught as peelers. They're hard too. And then they molt, most of the time, after they're caught, in the holding tanks.

Sometimes you just drag and, you know, you've got the soft crabs that come up in the scrape too, that's, shed on the bottom.

[30:01]

JGF: I see. I see.

JM: Mm hm.

JGF: Yeah... OK. So the boats have tanks right on them that they put them in while they're waiting?

JM: Mm hm. Mm hm.

JGF: Interesting.

JM: Nothing big. You know what they do? They go maybe to Dollar General, and get these big round tubs they have. You've seen the plastic tubs? And they put a little hole in it. You know, so they can run a [?pot] and salt water to it. That's it. I mean, I'm telling you it's not a big rig.

JGF: Yeah. But that's fascinating. You know, however anyone does it so fascinating.

JM: I know. [Laughs]

JGF: And the oysters. How are they caught?

JM: The oysters are caught, mainly by oyster tongs or hydraulic tongs. Maybe go to the oyster ground, drop a weight overboard to hold your boat in place. And then you stay, and, you know, your tong just goes down. And you work your pedals, open and close.

JGF: Oh...

JM: That's an oyster tong. And then the oysters are brought up off the bottom. And then they have the oyster dredge. That they can pull along on the oyster bottom. Like they do a crab scrape. Only that has, like, chain link, bag. And then... What was the other way? Oh. See it's such a..., old way now, it's *almost* phased out, which is a shame. The skipjacks. I don't know if you ever heard of the oyster dredging skipjacks. They were a sailing boat. And they still oyster in the bay today, although it's very few. It's very few of them. They're allowed, two days using a push boat with a motor. And then the rest of the days they have to oyster under sail.

JGF: Wow...

JM: Yeah.

JGF: Huh. That's interesting.

JM: I know.

JGF: Now why is that phasing out?

JM: Well. It was such a hard way to make a living. And the boats were hard to maintain. And most of the boats were built a hundred years ago or more. You know? They're very old boats. But they were *beautiful* boats. They're beautiful sailing. Yes.

JGF: So... It was like, sort of almost like, just the sight of them is what's going to be regrettable.

JM: Yes... Well that's, that's what's trying to be kept in Maryland today. That's why they're alive to still do that. It's such few of them. And they have to have maybe a four or five man crew.

JGF: So... I feel like this all leads nicely into the fact that you're known as an incredible cook.

JM: [Laughs]

JGF: Have you been cooking your whole life? How did you become an incredible cook?

JM: It's so funny. No... I couldn't cook—I couldn't even boil water, at one stage, but. You know, living on the island, there's no restaurants so you've got to learn to cook or, you know, that's it.

And, you just..., you know, ask all the different ones. I would ask my mother and..., different ones, "How do you do this?" And... I guess everybody cooks alike on the island. Most island women are good cooks. And I usually say that's because, they didn't *have* another industry that they could perfect. And I think the women—you *need* something that you can do. To make you feel a little self worth. And I always thought the women of Smith Island always perfected that. Because if they had company or anything, it was a feast set up for them. And most women enjoy that.

JGF: Wow. And would the recipes be mainly around crabs and oysters or not?

JM: No, not really. We enjoy stewed chicken and dumplings, and..., steak, and baked potatoes. But... A lot of it is around seafood, because, you know, in early years... And wild good. Wild duck. You know, recipes like that.

JGF: From hunting?

JM: Yeah. Mm hm.

JGF: So what are some of your hallmark recipes? Like are you in the foodways tent here?

JM: Yes, I am.

JGF: What are you going to be cooking?

JM: Well... Yesterday I made a Smith Island layer cake.

JGF: Oh right.

JM: And that's so funny. I call Elaine Eff our Columbus. Because she's the one discovered Smith Island layer cakes.

JGF: I love it!

[33:56]

JM: Smith Island layer cakes have been around forever. I mean, nobody knows the origin of them. They don't know *where* they started. Only they were *always* on Smith Island. You never *find them* anywhere else. But the women were so used to making them over the years, you know they were to everything. School social. A supper. You know? And usually if there's a death in somebody's family we have a big meal for the family at the church. They were always there. And Elaine would say, "Where did these come from?" And I'd say, "What?" And she'd say, "These cakes." And I'd say, "I don't know. They're just cakes." We never *thought* of them as being special. So, that's what I call Elaine. She's helped us—you know, that's become the state dessert of Maryland.

JGF: Well that's what I heard!

JM: The official state dessert.

JGF: So can you describe what it is.

JM: It's so funny! All it is..., is just..., you mix up your cake. And you—*We* bake individual layers. Eight to ten layers. They're baked in pans.

JGF: And round, or...?

JM: Round pans. And it's only about two or three tablespoons of batter to a pan.

JGF: Oh....

JM: They're baked kind of thin.

JGF: Yeah....

JM: And then you put a thin layer of... chocolate, coconut, banana. Whatever icing you want.

JGF: Huh...

JM: In between each layer until you build it up and you've got your cake.
JGF: Wow...
JM: And, when you cut into it, you know, you see all these little layers. Well... You know, it's always been there. We didn't know! [Laughs]
JGF: That's awesome! That sounds great.
JM: I know...!
JGF: So the pans are the typical cake size pan?
JM: Yeah.
JGF: And three tablespoons of batter?
JM: Yeah, eight, nine inch cake pans. And, you don't have to buy special ones. Go to a flea market, anywhere. Because, none of my pans match.
JGF: How long do you bake a layer that thin?
JM: You don't bake it long. It's according to your oven. You only bake it like, maybe, eight to ten minutes.
JGF: Wow....
JM: Just keep checking it.
JGF: That sounds... I'm going to have to copycat that!
JM: I tried it... You know, when I do this demonstration, I just tell everybody, it's so easy I'd like you and your family—maybe your children just try it some rainy day. It's fun.
JGF: Do you ever mix the fillings—like different fillings between different layers?
JM: No, that's too much trouble. You mix up a bowl and that's it. [Laughs] Whatever's in the bowl is what you get.
JGF: And is it white cakes or not necessarily?
JM: Yeah... You can do devil's food. You know, any kind.
JGF: It sounds so good. And sometimes they're frosted? Or maybe not?
JM: Well, they always got frosting on them, the layer cakes.
JGF: OK. And all the way around the edges and everything?
JM: Yeah, all the way around. It looks like a regular cake you buy to the store, that's got two layers, only ours has got eight to ten. [Laughter]
JGF: Oh, my gosh. I love it.
JM: It looks like the same size.
JGF: Huh. And that's interesting that you had no idea that it was anything special.
JM: It's just always been there!
JGF: That's interesting that nobody knows how or why or when.
JM: Yeah...
JGF: I love it.
JM: And... You know, I mean it's been forever. Because when Elaine was asking, I asked my aunt, she's in her eighties now. And, I said, "Do..."—Marlena was my grandma. I said, "Do you remember Marlena making these cakes when you were a little girl?" She said, yes, that she did. But not as often as we have them now, because it was not available. They didn't have the ingredients.
JGF: Right. Yeah.
JM: But she said, Christmas time, everybody made them. Or special occasions.
JGF: Wow.
JM: Yeah.

JGF: Wow. So fascinating how that started. But anyway. Huh. It almost sounds like one of those things you wonder did at some point did somebody only have a really thin pan or something [laughs] and so they had to do it that way?

JM: Well I... You know, we tried to figure it out. My grandmother—and this is the only stove I remember her having. We called them a [?] stove. A kerosene stove? Cook stove. Kerosene. And, the burners was—it was like a chimney.

JGF: So about a foot high.

JM: And the burner was down here and you had a chimney. And..., up top was where you set your pans, you know. And it took forever, you know, to heat them up. And then she had a little tin baker she kept on the floor. It looked like a foot square, tin box, with a little oven rack. She would take that—because they had no ovens—put that on top of the burner, let that heat up. And I believe, out of necessity maybe, you know, you'd bake a thin layer one at a time instead of trying to bake a thick cake. I mean, it took forever.

JGF: That's so interesting.

JM: And I... You know, that might have something to do with it. I don't know.
[Laughs]

JGF: Right. Exactly. It's like a fun theory.

JM: But it's so funny. You know, Tangier Island is in Virginia. They're just ten miles down the bay from us. *They* don't do it. And any of the islands up the bay from us, like Tilghman and Deal Island, they're connected to the mainland by bridges. They're not out like we are. You know, they don't do it. It's only been found on Smith Island. So that was what was the fascination. Where did it come from?

JGF: Yeah... That's interesting.

And how did it become the state cake?

JM: Well, I think it come from Elaine, you know. And different ones trying it. Because our state senator, Lowell Stoltzfus, when he would, you know, have bills or anything coming up and, we would just bring a little treat up for him. He would order all these Smith Island cakes, take and pass out, to the senate and when this..., come about, you know... "Why don't we just try to get it the state dessert?" You know, there was a lot of opposition to it, so.

JGF: Huh. Why?

JM: They made a lot of Smith Island cakes. Sent up to them. And everybody got cake.
[Laughs] And it ended up being the state cake.

JGF: That's funny. Who put up opposition? Do you remember?

JM: Well, there was a few. From the Baltimore area, you know. Because... You know, why wouldn't it be—I think it's a Lord Baltimore or a Lady Baltimore cake. You know, different things. Why couldn't it be that?

But they... I think what got it, it's from such a unique place. Because it is. You know, it's a unique place and a unique dessert.

JGF: Yeah. Wow.

JM: [Laughs]

JGF: That's interesting.

JM: I know.

JGF: So... Let me just ask you. Like, chowders, let's say. So in New England it's a New England clam chowder, it's a cream base. I know down around southern Jersey—I

went grad school in Philadelphia—it was the Manhattan Clam Chowder, which I utterly preferred, I loved it. When you guys make, say, a chowder what is it?

[40:07]

JM: Well if I get time today, along with the cake I'm going to be making oyster pie. It's like an oyster stew, inside of a pie crust.

JGF: Oh like a chicken pot pie but an oyster pie?

JM: Yeah... But it's just a little bit different. You know? So, if I get a chance I'm going to do that too, so. So that's usually known to the island. And clam chowder, is just a plain clam chowder. It's not thickened or anything.

JGF: What's the broth?

JM: Clam juice.

JGF: OK. So it's not tomato or cream.

JM: No. We put a little bit of evaporated milk in it, after it's done. That kind of mellows out the flavor, you know, so it's not so strong. But after it's cooked, we stir a little evaporated milk in it. But it's not a cream base.

JGF: And is clam juice just water that clams have been cooked in? Or am I misunderstanding?

JM: Well, when we shuck the clams, we save the juice out of them. As they're shucked. You know, they catch them there and they shuck them. Just like we save the oysters in the juice. Shuck your own oysters, you keep that juice with them. [Laughs]

JGF: So do you... It must take quite a few clams to get enough broth.

JM: Maybe... You know, it's according to how much you're going to make. A nice little pot for maybe four or five bowls would be about, fifteen to twenty clams.

JGF: Wow. So they're pretty juicy.

JM: Yeah.

JGF: And do you put like vegetables or things in it?

JM: Neahh.... [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs]

JM: Well maybe that come from Smith Island too. You know, we didn't have a lot of... Way back there they had gardens. You know, they would can that. But mostly they stick to maybe the onion, potato, and clams.

JGF: OK. Yeah. Root vegetables. That's interesting.

JM: Mm hm. Yeah.

JGF: Well the only other thing I really want you to touch on today before we run out of time is the parodies.

JM: Oh, my goodness.

JGF: That I hear that you do. I forget—are they poems or songs? I know you also do skits.

JM: Yes.

JGF: Can you talk a little bit about that?

JM: You know, this show came about that we do on Smith Island... It was meant to *stay* on Smith Island. Like I said, a lot of rules and regulations are coming down on the watermen. We're a very small place. So we would have a fundraiser once a year, to try to raise some money. You know, when you needed a lawyer. You know, to fight some of these, things, bills that's coming against you.

So we would have a fundraiser every year and it was called the Annual Waterman's Dinner and Show. And I started this. I've been doing this a *long* time, like fifteen or more years ago. Might be longer than that. And the men and women would get together. And I'd select a few that didn't care, you know, that was not bashful, that would probably—and some that was. And I would write these songs. And like—you know, Willie Nelson would come in. And Elvis would come in.

JGF: Oh, I love it!

JM: Sonny and [?Sherbet] would come in. You know? And Sonny was always the woman and Sherbet was always the man dressed up like Cher. [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs] I love it!

JM: You know. And... You know, it was just meant to stay on the island because we didn't think the lyrics would appeal to anybody on the mainland. Because, you know, we oyster and crab. That's what we do. So that's what the lyrics were about. And maybe the problems, most men have, you know on the boats and things. But it was done in a humorous way.

JGF: Yeah...

JM: So that was our way of getting celebrities to the island. [Laughs] We made our own. [Laughs] And we made our own costumes out of what we could find on the island. You know, it was just good island humor. And, like I said Elaine and two or three more started hearing about these shows. And..., you know, she started coming and we were asked to take it to Ocean City where the state watermen's convention was and we did it there several years.

JGF: Oh, I have to imagine they loved it.

JM: People got a real big kick out of it.

JGF: Yeah....

JM: Yeah.

JGF: Yeah... Wow.

JM: So that's how it come about.

JGF: Now were you one of the people that sang any of the songs.

JM: Yes. I was the person that usually wrote them all. Got the costumes together.

[Laughs] Put on the show for them. Got...

We had some funny costumes. When we were going around with that, that was some of the best times—even the watermen said that was some of the best times they've ever had, doing that.

JGF: That's great. Wow...

JM: You don't—You can't have an ego of any kind, if you're doing that kind of work.

You got—you know, you can't even *own* one. [Laughs]

JGF: [Laughs]

JM: So... And, you know... But it's been fun. And it's been good for us. And it still gets a little message across.

JGF: Are you going to be performing any of these here?

JM: Yes I sure will.

JGF: So you'll be on tape in another place doing that. We don't have to ask you to give us a personal... Unless you want to.

JM: Well, I don't mind if you want me to.

JGF: Well I'd love to hear one.

[45:00]

JM: Well... You know, I could give you a little hint of some of the things we do.
Like Sonny and Sherbet. He [referring to JSh] probably wouldn't even know who this is?

JGF: Do you know who Sonny and Cher?

JM: Do you remember Sonny and Cher?

JSh: I know Sonny and Cher.

JGF: He's a film student so he probably knows a lot about media stuff.

JSh: Yeah.

JM: OK.

[Singing]

They say we're young and we don't know,
how to catch crabs until we're grown.

But catching crabs is all we do.

And I got crabs and baby so do you.

[Laughter]

We got crabs [laughter]...

See but that was meant to [?stay] and we just... [Laughter] I mean it was just a whole song and we acted it out like Sonny and Cher. [Laughter]

JGF: And you have a very nice voice.

JM: And [?Julio], you know, and Willie would come and sing, "To all the crabs I've caught before." You know. And then Elvis...

JGF: [Laughing]

JM: And then Elvis comes in and he sings:

[Singing]

Well bless my soul, what do I see?

The Virginia police boat coming after me. [Laughs]

I pull my scrapes right out of the mud.

I'm a wreck.

Mm!

I'm all shook up.

[Laughter]

You know. And the song goes on about how you're running away from the Virginia police boat. Because we are in Maryland. And sometimes you sneak across the line.

Because them crabs know right where that line is and they go right on over it.

JGF: Oh funny.

JM: [Laughs]

JGF: Can you even tell where the line is when you're on the boat?

JM: Well, believe it or not, it's markers. Line markers. And I can see the line marker, how close we are to Virginia, I can see it out of my back door.

JGF: That's so funny. Oh..., man.

JM: I can see the line marker. And many—Many times—my husband don't like for me to tell this story—but he's got a forty feet work boat, and it don't travel like some of the smaller boats. And I'd be there to the kitchen window doing my dishes, and I'd look down there and here'd be three or four of these big work boats coming, their bow out of the water. I'll *bet you* anything he's been down in Virginia again.

[Laughter] So, when he gets up, I'll say, "Was that you coming up?" [Laughs] And he'll say, "Don't even talk about it."

JGF: [Laughs]

JM: But if they can get over the line..., you know, the Virginia police boat has no say... [Laughs]

JGF: So you're very close to the Virginia line, then.

JM: Oh, yeah. Like I said, I can see it right out of my back door. We're not far at all. And I can see it good. I mean, it's not that far away. I can see the Virginia marker. And... You know, sometimes, it just happens.

JGF: Yes. [Laughs]

JM: [Laughs]

JGF: Nature's above boundaries.

JM: Right.

JGF: What are you going to do? [Laughs]

JM: Right.

JGF: [Laughs] Wow... That's fascinating.

Well, I c—Other than, you know, that I could talk to you all day, I'd like to ask two more questions.

JM: Alright.

JGF: The first one is the sort of broad... You know, is there anything I haven't asked you that you would like to share for the record?

JM: Well..., just for the record, you know, in our area—Different areas have different rules and regulations. And, we're a very small community. You know, and some of the things that bother me more than anything is they talk about how watermen are depleting our bay. You know, they're overfishing. Well, we live on a little island in the middle of the bay. And I bet we don't contribute one percent of pollution that goes in that bay. We're *surrounded by* cities. You know? And yesterday, when it was raining like that, first thing I look at is all the runoff. Now where is this runoff going?

JGF: Right.

JM: Where do you think it's going? It's going right out here in this bay and then the ocean. You know, and that's a lot of silt goes down there.

So... Watermen are getting the brunt of the regulations, where everybody is contributing to, the decline in seafood. Because you're not going to catch a crab, or a fish, living in waters that they can't breathe in. Now oysters and clams don't have that choice. When that water runs off, it settles on them. They're there. They can't move like a crab and a fish can.

JGF: Mmmm.

JM: So that's why crabs and fish leave different areas. But scientists say it's because watermen have depleted it. You know? And that's one of my beefs. You know..., when the rules and regulations come down, the watermen are the one that suffer the brunt of it, more than what the real cause is.

JGF: That's interesting.

JM: But I mean, anytime I go to a city and it's raining, I always watch this water going on down.

JGF: Right.

JM: And you know where it's going.

JGF: That's right. And I know like, around here, with the waterfront communities, and a lot of, housing development happening.

JM: Right.

JGF: You know, and people wanting lawns...

JM: Right.

JGF: You hear a lot about, you know, nitrogen from fertilizers or whatever running into the bays.

JM: Right. I told Elaine one time and I said, "I hear about all this about lawns. And I don't know of one waterman that manicures a lawn. We keep—We cut, we keep it trimmed, we keep it neat. But, as far as trying to make pretty grass. No. [Laughs] Never.

JGF: I'm with you. Where I live, it's like... Well, A, it's too much. We don't need to, but even if we did, I think they get a little overrated.

JM: But... You know, and, most waterfront areas now are phasing out watermen. You know, they're putting up condos, so you got—you got, parking lots right *on* the *water*.

[50:00]

JGF: Right.

JM: You know? And.... A lot of oil and..., pollutants from cars goes straight in the bay.

JGF: Yeah. Interesting.

JM: That's one of my beefs. You know? When I hear, you know, "You're the ones [?] up everything. You're the ones done this." You know, nobody taking responsibility, but a lot of this growth, around.

When I was a little girl, it was a disgrace to live near the water. *Nobody* wanted to live—You were low class if you lived near the water. Now, you know you got—your high-falutin' if you can get a place. [Laughs] That's how it's changed.

JGF: Yeah. Yeah. That's interesting.

Something I just—along those lines that was occurring to me. But anyway..., I'll just wrap up with my other question, which is, what would you like to see festival visitors understand from having come to this festival? Either about fishing in general or you know, your community's piece in it?

JM: Well I think, I'd like for them to take away fishing in general. Because, everybody loves seafood. You can't, go out and catch your own seafood for the most part. And I like to see people local, and American seafood. You know? So, when people go out and they have this—Some of them have a bad feeling about watermen and fishermen. That they're depleting everything. But, you know, we *all* have a part to play in it. And..., that when they're enjoying this fresh seafood, *somebody* had to go out and get it. Somebody had to pay for a rig. Somebody's got to maintain a rig. You know..., so, it's not just from the kitchen to the table. It's a lot went on even before it got to the kitchen.

You know, and I'd like for people to remember that. That we're just people. Trying to make a living like they are. And we're just plan folks. We're not trying to get rich. You never see a rich waterman in *our* area. Because, it's all—Each boat is owned by the man that has it. And that's the family boat. That's the family business. That's it.

JGF: Yeah... Yeah. So it sounds like in your area, what you have is much like what was here...

JM: Yes.

JGF: ...probably decades ago.

JM: Yeah.

JGF: And it is ironic in that—yeah..., I mean, the fishermen are out catching it and they take the bad rap. Yet, they wouldn't be catching it if people weren't buying it to eat. So. [Laughs]

JM: Right. But... You know, they're people, too. They've got to make a living. And a lot of people don't know anything else. They really don't know anything else. It's like one of the poems I wrote. I believe a waterman, is something like a minister. A minister—If you're not called to the ministry, you're not going to be a good minister, or preacher. And I believe most watermen are called for that purpose. Because it's not many... How do *you* know where to go drop your nets? Would you know how to take one of these boats and go drop... You don't just drop them anywhere. You don't drop a crab pot anywhere. So I believe they have to have some kind of calling. And they're just so dedicated to it. I always told my husband he's got saltwater in his veins. No blood. [Laughter]

JGF: Yeah. Happiest on the water.

JM: Yes.

JGF: Is that poem something you recite from heart?

JM: No. The Waterman's poem. [Laughter]

JGF: OK. But that's a wonderful analogy.

JM: But, you know, I've been trying—because I've lived with him all these years, and, he can't see anything but working the water. You know?

JGF: Yeah... Yeah...

JM: So. But, I've never notice him until this past two or three years to encourage our grandson to get a education. You know? And try to go out and find something that he would be satisfied doing.

JGF: Your husband?

JM: My husband.

JGF: He's encourage him *not* to follow...

JM: He always encouraged him to be a waterman or something. But, now, I think he... You know?

JGF: Oh. So that's a sad commentary on the situation.

JM: Yeah... I mean, you know, along with everything else it's like... Not only the regulations are putting you out, but it's prices. Things like that.

JGF: Yeah. And I suppose you take a hit from the fuel prices, going back and forth on the boats.

JM: Oh, it's been terrible. Yes, it's been terrible. Seafood has not gone up, you know, according to what the prices of fuel and bait and..., maintaining a boat have. So that's why a lot of the young people are leaving. Because of *having* to.

JGF: Right. Wow...

Well, actually before I say thank you, is there anything Jeff, that you would have asked that I didn't ask?

JSh: The only thing I was thinking of, is, living on an island, do you feel like your views are different than those that are on the mainland? Like, if you could be represented in Maryland, would you go in there and tell your point of view to the Maryland senate or the Maryland government?

[55:00]

JM: Yes... I have done that. In fact, I was invited to speak to the senate in Washington. I got to speak to people—Barbara Mikulski's a real good friend. And Chuck Robb. Different ones. There was a lot there that day and I got to talk about oysters. You know. And that was a big thrill for me. And I don't mind talking about any of it. You know, I'll talk with anybody. It's just *me*, I'm a very plain person. Nothing fancy about me. But I—you know, I have a cause about living and working in—I guess being on Smith Island, and the isolation and the little area... You are... I mean, we live in a little place where everybody's Methodist. Everybody went to the same school. We went to the same parties. If it was a wedding on the island, if you got an invitation or not you went. [Laughs] You know, so that *does* do something to your thinking. But I think, with TV and the Internet and all, it brings the world into you, too. So..., we've had a lot of people over the years that have gone out on mainland jobs. You know, they've been helicopter pilots, they've been doctors. You know, it just don't bother people being raised like that. I—I related it to something like being raised on farm. You know, where you're to yourself, and you've got your own point of view. But when you get out—and you're grown and you get out in the world... I try to understand more people's point of view. You know, everybody's not Methodist. Everybody don't go the same school. So.

JGF: Yeah... But now, do you—I just—maybe—I just have a follow-up. Do you feel like the way the legislative districts are set up, do you feel like Smith Island's point of view is well represented in the legislature?

JM: Well, I think that the senators we have from our area have been very helpful, and the delegates. You know, and they do what they *can*. Of course, you know they're outnumbered. But, everybody could do more. But, when you're a politician, you know you've got a limit as to what you can do.

JGF: Right.

JM: And... But I think they've had our interests at heart for the most part.

JGF: That's good.

JM: Some of them—now, you know, all of them state level don't. But a lot of them do. So I've appreciated that.

And I just wanted to tell Jeff... You know, our school system on the island... Our kids—We used to have the only one-room school east of the Mississippi, until 1996. On Tylerton. It closed, so the school in Ewell—that's the other part of the island. Pre-K through seventh grade goes to Ewell. And, after Ewell they go by boat every day, the little pre-schoolers and all get on a boat and go to school. Put their life jackets on. [Laughter] Then when they go to high school, they have a school boat that takes them to the mainland every day, to high school. So..., my grandson, he gets up early in the morning, boards the boat, goes to Crisfield. And I was telling—I was telling one of the other young men I was talking to last night, it's down to a few students now. So when they board the boat in the morning, the high school kids. You can look around, they've each one got their seat marked with their

pillow and a blanket. So as soon as they get on the boat [laughter], they go to sleep or they study in their own little area until they get to school. So. You know, that's a different way too.

JGF: That's interesting. So they have school boat drivers.

JM: Yeah. School boat. School boat.

JGF: Now, are these open boats? Do they get exposed to inclement weather?

JM: No. The school boat is a very nice boat. I'm *so glad* the state allowed that boat to be built. You know, because you don't have a lot of students. But they're precious cargo.

JGF: That's right.

JM: So you want a trustworthy boat that's taking them. Because it's not only fair weather they go. They go—wind, rain, just like you all do. So.

JGF: Yeah. Wow. That's fascinating.

JM: Yeah. I thought I'd that to him. My grandson, he goes, every morning. But, he wants to come... The only time he don't get back every day, he's on the basketball team. He has to stay—during the basketball season, he has to stay—I have a house on the mainland, either to my house or to his sister's house. And, he *hates* that. Because he can't get home. You know, every evening. He comes on Monday morning and he don't get back home until Saturday afternoon.

JGF: Oh boy... He misses it.

JM: Yeah it's a sacrifice. And he feels it, but... You know, living on the island, he's never had the chance to play basketball or anything. And he made the team soon as he got over there.

JGF: *That's* amazing.

JM: I know...

JGF: Wow... That's great. Well thank you very much.

JM: I appreciate the interview. Anytime I can tell anybody about the island I appreciate it.

JGF: It's been great. I had probably heard it referred to now and again. But can I say I knew anything about it? No. So it's been wonderful. Thank you.

JM: Thank you.

[End of interview]