

**BAYSHORE CENTER AT BIVALVE**

**DELAWARE BAY MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION**

**DATE:** September 2, 2015

**TIME:** Unknown

**SUBJECT:** Personal history stories of two sisters who grew up  
In Port Norris.

**NARRATOR (s):** Carrie Jamison and Edith Selby

**INTERVIEWER:** Rachel Dolhanczyk, Curator Delaware Bay Museum

**LOCATION:** Senior Center, Port Norris, NJ

**ATTENDEES:** Rachel Dolhanczyk, Leo Warner, Carrie Jamison and  
Edith Selby

**TRANSCRIBED BY:** Pat Moore, Volunteer, Delaware Bay Museum

**DATE:** October – 2021

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2015.22.01

Dolhanczyk ([00:02](#)):

Good morning today is September 2nd, 2015. Uh, my name is Rachel Dolhanczyk. I'm the museum curator at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, and I'm here today with one of our volunteers, Leo Warner, and we're interviewing, uh, two ladies here at the senior center in Port Norris. We have, uh, if you'd like to say your name

Carrie Jamison ([00:28](#)):

Carrie Jamison.

New Speaker ([00:28](#)):

Edith Selby

Dolhanczyk ([00:30](#)):

And they are sisters, sisters, so, uh, born and raised in Port Norris, and they're going to share some of their memories and, um, working in the shucking house and so forth. Uh, so to begin with, we normally

ask just, and I'll start with you, Mrs. Jamieson, if you'd like, just a little bit about yourself when you were born, uh, where you grew up, uh, about your family life, things like that. Just a little bit of background information.

Carrie Jamison ([00:56](#)):

Now, what you want? No, no, no. Don't want know too much because...

Dolhanczyk ([01:11](#)):

But just where you were born, when you were born and that you lived here?

Carrie Jamison ([01:15](#)):

Uh, June the third, 1921 in Port Norris.

Dolhanczyk ([01:23](#)):

Were you born at home or ?

Carrie Jamison ([01:27](#)):

[inaudible]? That's all I know. Now. What else?

Dolhanczyk ([01:34](#)):

Uh, uh, so you, you grew up in Port Norris, you attended school in Port Norris, or what school did you go

Carrie Jamison ([01:43](#)):

Right here in Port Norris

Dolhanczyk ([01:46](#)):

Port Norris elementary. They call it the brick school.

Carrie Jamison ([01:50](#)):

Yeah. the brick school, yeah.

Dolhanczyk ([01:52](#)):

And, uh, then in later years, uh, did you have children?

Carrie Jamison ([01:57](#)):

All right. My first child, I had it. I was 21 years old going on 22.

Dolhanczyk ([02:04](#)):

And what's that? His or her name or? No? What was his or her name? Your child.

Carrie Jamison ([02:12](#)):

It was a boy Jason. Uh I mean, yeah, Jason,

Dolhanczyk ([02:12](#)):

Okay

Carrie Jamison ([02:16](#)):

Jason, Gary.

Dolhanczyk ([02:18](#)):

Okay. Uh, any other children?

Carrie Jamison ([02:22](#)):

Oh, I got five or six.

Dolhanczyk ([02:24](#)):

Okay.

Carrie Jamison ([02:25](#)):

Where you want all the names?

Dolhanczyk ([02:28](#)):

If you'd like, it doesn't matter. We're just a little bit of background information.

Carrie Jamison ([02:31](#)):

Put seven children. Jason Jamieson was my first child. You gonea name all yours?

Dolhanczyk ([02:43](#)):

And what about, what about you? You were born?

Edith Selby ([02:45](#)):

I was born in Port Norris and I went to the elementary school and I was born and raised in Port Norris. It was, and I have four children.

Dolhanczyk ([03:00](#)):

And when were you born?

Edith Selby ([03:01](#)):

I was born in 1927 July 17th.

Dolhanczyk ([03:08](#)):

So you're the younger sister cause you were born in 27.

Edith Selby ([03:11](#)):

Well, I'm not the youngest and.

Carrie Jamison ([03:13](#)):

I'm just jumping in here.

Dolhanczyk ([03:16](#)):

How many

Edith Selby ([03:17](#)):

Sisters? We had eight sisters. I.

Carrie Jamison ([03:20](#)):

I was a twin.

Edith Selby ([03:23](#)):

and we had one brother, one brother and four sisters left. Sure.

Dolhanczyk ([03:32](#)):

Who were your parents?

Carrie Jamison ([03:37](#)):

[inaudible] my mother's name is Louise and my father's name is George.

Edith Selby ([03:44](#)):

My mother was a Louise Green Bush.

Dolhanczyk ([03:47](#)):

Oh, okay.

Dolhanczyk ([03:49](#)):

So your maiden name is Bush?

New Speaker ([03:52](#)):

Uh, our maiden name is Bush.

Dolhanczyk ([03:55](#)):

Okay. B U S H or [inaudible]. All right.

New Speaker ([04:05](#)):

How far did you go in school?

Carrie Jamison ([04:08](#)):

I went through the seventh grade. That's what I thought they'd, didn't go. I paid to the eighth, but

Carrie Jamison ([04:15](#)):

I had to go to work.

Dolhanczyk (04:19):

What was your first job then? After school? Can you remember? (laughter)

Speaker 4 (04:33):

A week I come out of school. I didn't go to school. I work in an oyster house. I just happened and I did.

Dolhanczyk (04:37):

Okay. [inaudible].

New Speaker (04:39):

when you come out of school, after you come out of it. Let me see. I have the much in a winter time. Okay. [inaudible].

New Speaker (04:54):

I work in Millville as well?

Speaker 5 (04:56):

Yeah. Okay.

Dolhanczyk (04:59):

So lots of different jobs. So when did you start shucking oysters? When you were you were?

Speaker 4 (05:05):

I'm going to say I'm a 17. I think when I started.

New Speaker (05:08):

Okay,

New Speaker (05:09):

can we all start the same time? So that must've been in 19

Speaker 5 (05:14):

In the forties

Speaker 4 (05:16):

And he said, wait a minute, my father died in 43. I was 15 16 17. Well maybe 45 to 46. Yeah. [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (05:30):

It was about 1945. Cause you're at the point when.

New Speaker (05:34):

we started shucking.

Dolhanczyk (05:36):

So the war, world war II is just coming to a close and yeah,

Speaker 4 (05:40):

We went to shucking in the winter. It goes into winter. Good seeing the sun

Speaker 3 (05:45):

You're shucked in the winter, oysters in the winter time, starting in September, you started doing in September.

Dolhanczyk (05:50):

Okay. And you worked through till spring till the season time. And what'd you do in the summertime then? Did you do different jobs

Speaker 3 (05:58):

Or different jobs? Just different jobs,

Dolhanczyk (06:01):

anything to fill it....

New Speaker (06:02):

any things. So we were working big money that's all.

Dolhanczyk (06:06):

Definitely. Uh, which, what shucking house did you work for?

Speaker 3 (06:11):

Right? We went work for Robbin Brothers. Well,

Speaker 4 (06:14):

That's the first Robbin, Robbin brothers. We did a lot more of them. We got Carl Reed

Speaker 3 (06:25):

[inaudible] and, and [inaudible] and across the Maurice River

Speaker 4 (06:38):

And Stowman's.. That's that? When you worked at Stowman on the Maurice River and then there was the Big House. Right? And it was

Speaker 3 (06:50):

Where the Big House was.

Dolhanczyk (06:52):

I've heard of the big house.

New Speaker (06:55):

Now George was in Bivalve to buy...And you worked for him, we worked on

Dolhanczyk (07:07):

And, any reason why better pay or that you?

New Speaker (07:10):

No. No, no.

Speaker 3 (07:12):

Um, we better, we got down to one. If we, if he wasn't working, did we go to another one? Right.

Speaker 6 (07:19):

So everybody did that. Everybody. Most everybody [inaudible].

Dolhanczyk (07:24):

So depending on where the work was, Okay. I didn't realize that's. And how long of a span of time are we talking about? So from mid, 1940 till [inaudible].

New Speaker (07:38):

1942

Speaker 5 (07:39):

What was it?

Speaker 4 (07:40):

Well, they really did. They really still shucking right now. Yeah. Yeah. Peterson's down the Shell Pile off the Shell Pile. What was Peterson's Oyster House? [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (07:57):

Yeah. Was

Speaker 6 (07:58):

Peterson is the last one where you are half with Peterson is the last one? Where you are now.?

New Speaker (08:03):

Robbins Brothers was our last.

New Speaker (08:05):

George Gaskell was the last one I worked.

Speaker 3 (08:08):

I worked here a Robbin's Brothers was my last place.

Speaker 4 (08:13):

[inaudible]. And

Dolhanczyk (08:14):

Did you say that you had worked 15, years in the shucking house or longer than that?

New Speaker (08:21):

Quite a bit in year. It's quite a few years. You worked there?

Speaker 5 (08:25):

Yeah.

Speaker 3 (08:26):

Maybe he worked 15 years. I don't know. I know we worked a long time in the houses.

Speaker 6 (08:34):

Were you working when the disease hit and the oysters died off?

New Speaker (08:41):

No,

Speaker 3 (08:41):

No. We had, we had stopped then it started working.

Dolhanczyk (08:46):

So that was 1957 MSX. 1957

Speaker 3 (08:52):

I went to Wheaton's [Glass] after I got up there (Millville) there.

New Speaker (08:56):

In 57,

Dolhanczyk (08:58):

Do you think you were still working then or



Speaker 3 ([09:01](#)):

What? Because the oysters were all gone, just about anyway.

Dolhanczyk ([09:09](#)):

Hmm. So you, so when you were both working was the good years. I mean, there was a lot good years.

New Speaker ([09:15](#)):

yes they were good years? Yes.

Dolhanczyk ([09:18](#)):

What was your, what was your day like when you get up in the morning and

Speaker 3 ([09:23](#)):

I don't know. I get like get up and go, got to go work. It was good. It was good. We

Speaker 4 ([09:30](#)):

Just get up and thank the Lord that we were able to get up and go

Speaker 3 ([09:34](#)):

Serve the Lord, make it at children's and had somebody take care of them. And their mother

Dolhanczyk ([09:42](#)):

Worked during the day, during the day?

Speaker 3 ([09:46](#)):

From six in the morning, we get up in the morning and then go down there, get all the stuff together and we go to work.

Dolhanczyk ([09:55](#)):

And how long was your day?

Speaker 4 ([09:57](#)):

Two thirty? What time? We quit 2:30 and gone back there.

Dolhanczyk ([10:01](#)):

Did you have a, a break for lunch or.

New Speaker ([10:04](#)):

yeah, I got out at three. What would you want to stop? Anytime

Speaker 3 ([10:09](#)):

You don't run out and you got ready to go back to the stop here. We didn't have a special, and

Speaker 4 ([10:14](#)):

It wasn't working by the hour and not from see, he worked by the

Speaker 3 ([10:17](#)):

Bucket, by the bucket and we worked by the, you know, you weren't,

Speaker 4 ([10:21](#)):

You had gallons. And we had those gallon chairs. Yeah and you , after you pull up, them open the oyster then took them to the standard place where up

Speaker 3 ([10:36](#)):

There, where the man was, skimming them off to get them weighed up.

Speaker 3 ([10:43](#)):

And tell you what you had in there and then you going back and shuck some more.

Dolhanczyk ([10:48](#)):

So with, uh, with everything drained first, and then he'd weigh it?

Speaker 4 ([10:52](#)):

You weigh in and he tell us how much we got. He'd give us a tickets.

Dolhanczyk ([11:00](#)):

I would take it. It'd be a little card on it. Yeah. With how much it weighed.

Dolhanczyk ([11:06](#)):

So what were you paid then by the weight or by an account?

New Speaker ([11:13](#)):

I believe by the gallon. I think so.

Speaker 3 ([11:20](#)):

I don't know whether it was by the pound or whatever.

Dolhanczyk ([11:24](#)):

Do you recall how much you were paid?

Speaker 6 ([11:27](#)):

Carrie will know, Oh, yeah.

Speaker 4 ([11:29](#)):

It has been so long. I can't think of it.

Dolhanczyk ([11:41](#)):

Oh, wow. So we're looking at here is a, um, a stub from, from Robbin Brothers. For Carrie Jamison, uh, the date is, um, payday ending September 24, 1984, uh, the date of the check, the pay stub is, uh, September 28th. And let's see, it looks like, um, so see how to read this here, it says 40 units.

New Speaker ([12:21](#)):

Let me see there that big. Can you, I don't know where it was. I had that wrong. Thank you. That's interesting.

New Speaker ([12:35](#)):

So you went back to work there in the eighties, then

Speaker 5 ([12:40](#)):

In the evenings, in eighties,

Speaker 6 ([12:42](#)):

1980s, 1984.

Speaker 5 ([12:45](#)):

Yeah.

Dolhanczyk ([12:48](#)):

Well, the date of the check is 1984,

Speaker 6 ([12:51](#)):

So she went back to work again

Speaker 5 ([12:53](#)):

In the 1980s.

Speaker 4 ([12:58](#)):

We work now. I can't say I don't remember, but, um,

Speaker 3 ([13:02](#)):

That was in the eighties. I think when we stopped, wasn't it. Now

Speaker 4 ([13:07](#)):

I went to work to the state school in 76. Maybe you did you look, you might have, but I didn't. So the 40 you might've still must've worked there then, but I wasn't, I wasn't working there then because I went to, um, I left George Gaskells. I went to the state school [New Jersey Developmental Center] in 76. Okay. I remember I did.

Speaker 3 ([13:44](#)):

[inaudible]

Speaker 4 ([13:44](#)):

She might have been a small check-in.

Dolhanczyk ([13:46](#)):

How many, how many gallons would you, would you be shucking in a day if you're going up to the skimmer,

Speaker 3 ([13:52](#)):

When we really shucked, I don't know how many we shucked, but we really shucked them up.

Dolhanczyk ([14:00](#)):

So you're you're good. Shuckers.

Tawes ([14:05](#)):

What method did you use for shucking?

Speaker 5 ([14:08](#)):

Oh, we had a cracking iron.

Speaker 3 ([14:15](#)):

The crackin iron had a handle about that long. the iron was round.

Speaker 4 ([14:23](#)):

Put it up on now, if he had a knife on the box and if they have a flat iron, we could hit our oysters on this flat iron on the box. And as we shucked that oyster it cried a little, but you stabbed them. Now you could stab up them. We stab up, do you know, just pat them and stab them. And then some of them had a hammer and a crack. A hammer, hit them and open them like that too.

Dolhanczyk ([14:57](#)):

And, and, and what, what was your method again? You, you had.....

New Speaker ([15:00](#)):

A cracking iron and then you hit em and then you open them up with your knife. And, um, you take that top shell off and then put them in the can.

Dolhanczyk ([15:14](#)):

So you had two tools then one to crack and one to open the shell?

Speaker 3 ([15:25](#)):

Like you had the man the other day we had like break it on one, but we had one with a wooden handle and you put the knife, in and bend that handle like that, and that was your knife. [inaudible]

Speaker 4 ([15:43](#)):

She would have the four buckets, gallon buckets, but that tall, we set them over there.

New Speaker ([15:54](#)):

And we had lots of stalls, we stood in

Speaker 4 ([16:01](#)):

And then we would grade our oysters. First pot, second pot.

Tawes ([16:06](#)):

So you graded them as you, as you open them?

New Speaker ([16:08](#)):

Yea we opened em.

Speaker 4 ([16:10](#)):

You could put small, in the little pot, and second size in second pot, next size in the third pot and large in the fourth pot.

Tawes ([16:31](#)):

Okay.

Tawes ([16:32](#)):

How did you know which grade? I mean, is it just like learning? How do, how would you know which who is through? Well, we knew what we learned

Speaker 3 ([16:41](#)):

And we had to learn that too, when he got upset, because he would tell us what to do, what size they wanted t in them buckets. And then that's what we did.

Dolhanczyk ([16:51](#)):

Did you learn on the job? Who or who taught you?

Speaker 4 ([16:53](#)):

We had a man named, Mr. Joe Booz.. He told us how to shuck them. And the size small, then it be another size then the next size and the next size having big. And when you came up there, well, they would grade them too, that they would put them in that strainer and they would have a great big strainer and they'd drop them in there. They put them in every, they take your, your oysters that you carry your bucket up there and drain the juice off. What they've done the rest week

Speaker 6 ([17:34](#)):

And they had big tanks there.

Speaker 4 ([17:37](#)):

Yeah. Then I guess they would pack in the cans. Pack them up with seal. And I kept telling him anything like that, do it. Right. Right.

Dolhanczyk ([17:49](#)):

Do you remember, uh, how many people worked around you in the shucking houses?

Speaker 3 ([17:54](#)):

About 40, 40 people. So I imagine bout 30, 40 people,

Speaker 4 ([18:00](#)):

Some days less and some days more.

Speaker 3 ([18:03](#)):

People could see, the inside of the shucking house they had two sides to it, two sides of stalls. And some would workout on that side, we were on this side, right there going down.

Dolhanczyk ([18:15](#)):

Did you always have the same stall?

New Speaker ([18:16](#)):

Yeah, so that was the same one, same one. We always have the same one.

Speaker 3 ([18:21](#)):

We had to put an apron on and we had to wear boots. We made most of our clothes most of the time. And sometime we made our gloves.

Dolhanczyk ([18:35](#)):

What were the gloves made out of?

New Speaker ([18:37](#)):

Canvas.. We go to their store and buy really big yard of it and make our gloves up.

Dolhanczyk ([18:48](#)):

And what about with your tools? Did you say were yours? I mean, you didn't borrow them?

Speaker 3 ([18:55](#)):

Well, we had to buy the tools too.. We had to buy the knives and put them in the handle. And, um, I don't know where we got...from. We just found them. So I don't know where we got them from.

Dolhanczyk ([19:07](#)):

So you always used your same tools. They went with you everyday.

Speaker 6 ([19:12](#)):

Took our tools home everyday.

Speaker 3 ([19:17](#)):

Better not leave 'em. You wouldn't have 'em the next day,

Speaker 4 ([19:20](#)):

You know, we had a bucket, the bucket you would take it with you and bring it back to them.

Dolhanczyk ([19:28](#)):

It was like, uh, like the hairdresser with her scissors.

Speaker 4 ([19:31](#)):

Yeah. You couldn't be just stuck there.

Dolhanczyk ([19:34](#)):

Okay. What about like your apron and your boots? Did you take them home?

Speaker 4 ([19:37](#)):

That? [inaudible] but if

Speaker 3 ([19:42](#)):

You want it, or we had to take the apron..

Speaker 4 ([19:47](#)):

Either leave it on there someplace. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([19:50](#)):

You could hand the apron up there, but we take ours with us. Right.

Dolhanczyk ([19:54](#)):

And what was it, what was it like working in the shucking house? Like the, like when did it sound like or smell like, or was it hot? Was it cold? Was it sometimes

Speaker 3 ([20:04](#)):

It was cold or sometimes it was hot. Sometimes it's had an oyster smell. So they weren't in bed. They weren't him at a wheel bar. And so Morgan box, if, as you empty that box off, they burned their, throw me back on the box where you full

Speaker 4 ([20:27](#)):

And you dropped your shells right down the side of, you know, then they would pull them off.  
[inaudible].

Dolhanczyk ([20:35](#)):

Did you like the work?

New Speaker ([20:37](#)):

I liked shucking.

Dolhanczyk ([20:39](#)):

What you like about it?

Speaker 4 ([20:41](#)):

I don't know. I just liked it. I just liked the oysters. Um, I felt, when I really got tired of it when I to the Vineland State Development Center

Speaker 3 ([20:54](#)):

Told her it was a good experience. Was,

Dolhanczyk ([20:57](#)):

Um, do you remember any, some of the other people who, worked there? Who, who did you know?

New Speaker ([21:04](#)):

Oh we knew all of the people who worked there.

Speaker 3 ([21:06](#)):

Come from Bridgeton and, they come all the way down from Bridgeton to work,. And then there was a gang. that lived on down to a place called Shell Pile, Shell Pile people. They'd all come in and work there and Port Norris people. And Bridgeton people.

Dolhanczyk ([21:25](#)):

How did people from Bridgeton get here?

New Speaker ([21:27](#)):

In their cars.

New Speaker ([21:27](#)):

They drove, I guess by then, the trolley was long gone or not. At that point, no way. We had real trains.

Dolhanczyk ([21:38](#)):

I think the trolleys, even (inaudible)



Speaker 3 ([21:40](#)):

The train to come in right up here on that back route over there, straight on down. Come on on, down by ??? the . Them.

New Speaker ([21:52](#)):

I Don't remember the trains.

New Speaker ([21:52](#)):

You don't remember, oh Eddie!. She's just a kid. [inaudible] I remember the train cause we used to walk from, um, from Port Norris all the way up the hill to Haleyville. Me and my girlfriends, we had grandmothers up there. We used to walk up there on all weekends with them and the trains would come, come in. Sometime we'd better be up there one time and a train done come up to come in and made such a such a noise, scared the horse to death left. [inaudible] Sarah was good.

Dolhanczyk ([22:37](#)):

So how'd you get to work?

New Speaker ([22:38](#)):

Wel drove to work. Yeah. Yeah.

Dolhanczyk ([22:45](#)):

So people were coming either from Bridgeton, Port Norris or Shell Pile?

Speaker 3 ([22:48](#)):

Yeah. And um,

Dolhanczyk ([22:51](#)):

And then when you worked at Stowman's and Maurice River,

Speaker 3 ([22:55](#)):

Oh, we drove to Maurice River. We would come right on through here (pointing).

Speaker 4 ([22:58](#)):

And we're on or whatever, you know, that bridge was there and then that new other bridge, it wasn't there in that old, old bridge. We went across that old bridge, but we got stopped waiting for bridge to open there, Uber.

Dolhanczyk ([23:18](#)):

So sometimes you'd have to wait if the bridge was open. Yeah.

Speaker 5 ([23:23](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Warner ([23:26](#)):

Who were some of the people that you remember working with and working for... Freddie Morris (sp?), Jesse Darasol (sp?) from Bridgeton and, um,

Speaker 4 ([23:49](#)):

He shucked Maurice River.

Speaker 3 ([23:50](#)):

They shucked through the Maurice River too. Yeah, they shucked everywhere there was. Yeah. And, um, um, fatty and, um, they all died. I can't hardly remember now. Um, Henry Brooks was our foreman over Maurice River. Henry Brooks was. And

Dolhanczyk ([24:23](#)):

What about the people you worked for? The different people you worked for? What, what were they like or, or did you prefer certain shucking houses over?

New Speaker ([24:34](#)):

They all were nice.

Speaker 3 ([24:35](#)):

They were all were nice. All of them with nice people. Very nice. Yeah. That's what I always hear. We didn't have no problems at all with them. They were nice.

Dolhanczyk ([24:48](#)):

Did, um, did much change over time. Um, obviously the way you shuck oysters remained the same, the process, but within the shucking house itself, um, did things change like different technology or, um, you said like the guys would bring the oysters and dump them in front of you. Did they ever switch it to having the conveyor belt bring those oysters?

New Speaker ([25:13](#)):

We never had no conveyor belt.

Speaker 5 ([25:14](#)):

Their hands with the conveyor belt. Pretty much everything was done

Speaker 3 ([25:23](#)):

By hand. Everything was put in wheel barrels and wheel the shells out and put them, take them out to the pile and pile it high, you know,

Warner ([25:33](#)):

What would happen with the, with the empty shells where

Speaker 3 (25:36):

They'd take a bag outside and outback and pile them up and look what they do doing. Oh, they take them in, come up the river and then spread them along the ground on the beds up there a river. Yeah. It would take them up the bay. Let's call up the bay wherever you can spray it.

Dolhanczyk (25:56):

Was there ever a time where you'd have more work than other times? Yes,

Speaker 3 (26:02):

Man. Sometimes you get so tired when you get home. Work got to be so good. It'd be shucking. So yeah, the oysters be so good sometime. Yes, sir. big and little, nice oysters.

Speaker 4 (26:15):

I used to like to shuck the little ones the best

Speaker 3 (26:17):

You did ? I liked those big ones.

New Speaker (26:21):

I used to, I would want the big ones too much. Cause I would cut them, cut them sometimes cause some of em would be that big [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (26:36):

And they call it New York oysters.

Dolhanczyk (26:40):

and you're showing like eight inches. I know to be that big, they would call it the Fourth Potter.

Dolhanczyk (26:50):

So that would, so the biggest would be the Fourth Pot. And how, how big were the smaller ones that you like to shuck?

New Speaker (26:58):

A couple of, couple of inches.

Speaker 4 (27:01):

The name is, Squat and it will go up a little higher, little squat pot you know? So be that small. Uh, so, so would you,

Dolhanczyk (27:10):

Would you shuck five days a week or does that depend on the oysters?

New Speaker (27:15):

Monday through Friday, we need shucking on Saturdays, you know?

Dolhanczyk (27:19):

And uh, and then you say you start in September,

New Speaker (27:23):

September, September to.

New Speaker (27:28):

When did we stop? April May or something?

Speaker 3 (27:38):

Before Easter. (laughter)

Dolhanczyk (27:39):

And so was the work always consistent like five days a week

Speaker 4 (27:43):

And we could, you know, we didn't do them over. We could draw it out on unemployment.

Speaker 3 (27:47):

Yeah. We brought our unemployment. Yeah. Okay. [inaudible].

Warner (27:53):

You mean like in the summertime?

Dolhanczyk (27:54):

Was there ever any years where there weren't enough oysters during the winter that you'd have to leave and you're seasoned sooner?

New Speaker (28:02):

No, no, no, we didn't. [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (28:10):

It got low when we got older, you know? And, um, then I went to Wheaton's (inaudible)

Speaker 4 (28:17):

To speak. I went through it. I wouldn't, before I went to Wheaton, I did go to another, I went to Wheaton's. In '59. I went to I'm Venice Maid. Then I come there, left there. I come back and shuck some oysters. Then when I left the Oyster house I didn't it was in 70 um, 76, 76. Then I went to the State School.

Dolhanczyk (28:39):

Oh, I see. And then did you ever go back to shucking oysters? No. So you retired from the state school,

Speaker 4 (28:47):

A state school and I think it was 89, 88 or 89, something like that? Yeah. Oh, okay.

Dolhanczyk (28:54):

Okay. Um, what, uh, we have a couple of questions. Uh,

Warner (29:02):

Are any of the older folks that you used to work with going around or, you know, if they're what, like the folks that used to work with are any of them still living or are you two the last go of your time? Um, you know, um,

Speaker 4 (29:21):

After then worked, I

Speaker 3 (29:23):

Worked in [inaudible] Andrew, Jim [inaudible] around too many of them might be a few of my older ones is all gone. [inaudible]

Dolhanczyk (29:41):

You were working Monday through Friday. Uh, what, what social activities did you do?

New Speaker (29:48):

Church.

Dolhanczyk (29:48):

So what church did you belong to?

New Speaker (29:54):

Shiloh Baptist.

Dolhanczyk (29:54):

Still do then? . Were you very active with your church where you're very active with your church as far as other activities that they would do or Sunday school?

New Speaker (30:06):

Well, on Sunday, we worked so hard, we didn't have time to do anything.

Speaker 4 (30:10):

there used to be a show. I did the children's choir and I used to be present on the scene of choirs and I was a Deaconess in the church.

Dolhanczyk (30:23):

Because you were tired when you got home,

Speaker 3 (30:26):

You know,

Speaker 4 (30:27):

We did good work in there. We worked in church. I did.. We used to work in a few different things being [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (30:39):

Didn't go to town. We didn't, we didn't run around like other people run around or tell them, Oh yeah we did our grocery shopping. Oh yeah, we'd go to grocery shopping, like Millville. Well, one time we had to clothing factories, clothing stores right here in Port Norris. We had everything at Port Norris. Everything you wanted to big clothing stores, Les Godowns. And Gelburns (sp?) They were the clothing stores. We had everything in Port Norris but things got low at that time.

Speaker 4 (31:19):

Well, they died. That's one thing

Speaker 3 (31:21):

That everything got, everything died out. Even the bank. We don't even have no bank down here That's gone.

Warner (31:31):

What was the bank that was here was it Sun National?

New Speaker (31:37):

Yeah. We don't even have a bank . We don't have nothing around here and lucky they had something to eat round here. You got to go to Millville to do my shopping.

Speaker 4 (31:50):

You had to go shopping there and go shopping, go to Millville, go shopping. [inaudible]

Dolhanczyk (31:59):

Do you re do you remember in, Bivalve? Do you remember much about Bivalve when you were younger, when you were a child or a teenager?

Speaker 3 (32:07):

Been for

Speaker 4 (32:15):

I lived in Bivalve for four years?

New Speaker (32:17):

I never used to go down and go up there and go up the boats used to go up to the bay. And I sail with the sails.

Speaker 3 (32:23):

After I got married. I lived there for about four years.

Dolhanczyk (32:25):

In Bivalve?

Speaker 4 (32:29):

Never went down there to go down there. My oldest sister, she used to live down there. Just go down and see her sister.

Dolhanczyk (32:38):

Did you have other family members who worked in the oyster industry?

Speaker 3 (32:42):

Yeah, it was her husband. [inaudible]

Speaker 4 (32:48):

Allison's

Speaker 3 (32:50):

Married.

Speaker 4 (32:50):

Mary Alice

Speaker 3 (32:53):

And Francis [inaudible] yes, and my sister Sarah,

New Speaker (33:00):

She didn't shuck.

New Speaker (33:00):

Yes she did.

New Speaker (33:00):

She did.

New Speaker (33:01):

She, when we first started, yeah, she the shucked sometimes .

New Speaker (33:08):

There was about five of us shucking sisters.

Warner (33:11):

How about your brother.

Speaker 4 (33:13):

He died when he was two years old, five years old. He was two. He was five. Yeah.

Dolhanczyk (33:28):

Uh, any of the men work on the boats on the, on the, on the schooners that you remember anyone in your family work on the boats?

Speaker 3 (33:40):

My father

Dolhanczyk (33:40):

What was his name?

New Speaker (33:46):

Elliot(?).

Dolhanczyk (33:46):

Your dad. Okay. And what was his name again? Jordan?

Speaker 3 (33:56):

Yeah, he worked on the boat. He worked on the [inaudible] and worked for farming in his fields].

Dolhanczyk (34:03):

What did your dad do on the, on the boat?

New Speaker (34:06):

Judge? [inaudible].

Speaker 3 (34:16):

And the men from Maryland would always come down and work the day on the boats for Merle.

Speaker 1 (34:24):

Did your father work year round on the boats or, and during he'd work base season and harvest season two or

Speaker 3 (34:32):

She did because they went up to the bank [inaudible] in the winter time he worked on the



Dolhanczyk (34:37):

But then I know there were guys, as he said, he would come up just for bay season.

New Speaker (34:43):

And yeah just for Bay season and then go home.

Speaker 4 (34:47):

The men around here went on the boats.

Speaker 3 (34:51):

It was a lot of men's round here during that time.

Dolhanczyk (34:55):

And what about your mother? What did she do?

New Speaker (35:00):

She kept the house. She had enough to do

Speaker 3 (35:06):

That woman could cook my mother was a good cook,

Dolhanczyk (35:09):

Any particular favorite things you remember?

New Speaker (35:12):

Anything, she cooked anything.

New Speaker (35:12):

And she was from Maryland.

Speaker 6 (35:16):

What did you like best that she could?

New Speaker (35:19):

Um, um, I don't know.

Speaker 4 (35:23):

She used to make, I remember she used to make like chicken pot pie,

Speaker 3 (35:27):

But I felt like I don't like dumplings.

Speaker 4 (35:30):

She always saved me a wing. That's all I would eat.

New Speaker (35:34):

And I still remember she could make anything really good mom.

New Speaker (35:36):

And I remember that any meal she made was a full course meal. And she made some good soups.

Dolhanczyk (35:50):

Where was your childhood home in Port Norris? What street did you live on?

Speaker 4 (35:55):

Uh, Yock Wock Road. Straight on, down there. And on Brown Street or down there, we were raised straight down where the alpacas or whatever on that side?

Speaker 3 (36:26):

On that side? Well, we live right down the street from there. That's where we were raised there. Built the house. It's a big yellow house over there.

Dolhanczyk (36:35):

Still there?

New Speaker (36:36):

You remembered that was still there. We live next to that.

Dolhanczyk (36:39):

So you said your mother was from Maryland....

New Speaker (36:44):

and Pop was too, my father.

Dolhanczyk (36:45):

And where was your, what, what part of Maryland? Eastern shore?.

New Speaker (36:53):

Saint Mary's County.

Dolhanczyk (36:53):

Okay. And what brought them here? Do you know? When did they come here early? Were they do you know much? Did they...

Speaker 3 (37:01):

The cam here to go working on the boats and things?

New Speaker (37:03):

Yes, no, no. All I know is that I was born here,

Dolhanczyk (37:10):

But when they, uh, but when they moved here, they settled here...

Speaker 3 (37:12):

And they settled. Yeah. They just come here and settle down right down here. Yeah. I guess they liked it here with with the farm work and everything.

Dolhanczyk (37:21):

Cause he could have employment year round with working on the boats, working on the farm.....

Speaker 3 (37:25):

Working in different farm work and all that, jazz.

New Speaker (37:28):

Where you the oldest of the children?

New Speaker (37:31):

I was the third one was third, but now I am the oldest because they all died. And I'm the oldest one now? 94.

Dolhanczyk (37:42):

Would you ever get sick? Um you look great.

New Speaker (37:47):

And, um, where were you?

Speaker 4 (37:52):

Well, we had four sets. I'm the oldest of the second set. That the way I see it.

Dolhanczyk (38:00):

Okay.

New Speaker (38:01):

I'm 88. Okay.

Dolhanczyk (38:07):

Gotcha. Oh, I, I started to ask, uh, about Bivalve and we got [inaudible] because we're cause where we work in the oyster shipping sheds of course for built, you know, long before you all were around to, you know, 1904 and that's when they packed the oysters, you know, kept them in the shell, pack them out. Yeah. [inaudible]

Speaker 3 (38:29):

Yeah they shipped a lot of them in the shells.

Dolhanczyk (38:31):

Even when you were working, he shipped them in shell?

New Speaker (38:35):

And then they bagged them up in big bags, and ship them out.

Dolhanczyk (38:37):

So different people would be

Speaker 3 (38:42):

packing yeah, I don't know who would do that.

Dolhanczyk (38:43):

Do you remember, um, much of what Bivalve looked like when you were younger?

Speaker 3 (38:48):

Were nice. Nice. Bivalve looked good down here years ago. There was houses down there and nice buildings was one little church, two churches down there I think it was. It was look no good down here.

Dolhanczyk (39:04):

Well, there's still, uh, the one church there that building, but it's all raggedy.

Speaker 3 (39:11):

That was the House of Jacob. That was the House of Jacob, right?

Dolhanczyk (39:14):

Yeah, it was the House of Jacob.

Dolhanczyk (39:16):

Uh, what do you remember about the boats? You started to reminisce about the sails.

New Speaker (39:25):

Them sails on them boats was pretty.

Speaker 3 (39:28):

Beautiful sails on their boats. See our father was strict with us girls. He didn't allow us to go down there to see them boat see. But when we got older, we'd steal away down there to get the oldest one to drive. You know, we go down there unbeknownst to him, but he, our father was strict with us.

New Speaker ([39:52](#)):

I got to see the boats. At the last boat. I think when he passed away I think was in 43. And I think it might've been 43, 44, 45. I went to see the boats to go up to bay with the sails. We went to see the sails.

Speaker 3 ([40:12](#)):

That was a pretty site you ever seen. And the next year

Speaker 4 ([40:16](#)):

They didn't have no more sails.

Dolhanczyk ([40:24](#)):

What'd you think about that?

Speaker 4 ([40:27](#)):

Not me and my sisters, my younger sisters, the ones under me. Me and my sister. I remember telling her, I said, we'll go see the boats this year.

New Speaker ([40:36](#)):

And we didn't see them go out. We had to go home cause our father was really strict with us.

Dolhanczyk ([40:51](#)):

Do you remember the name of the boat your dad worked on or did he work on a lot of different boats?

Speaker 3 ([41:01](#)):

Robbins, he worked for the Robbins Brothers. Nicest people. You ever laid eyes on what I've heard? Yes. Robbins brothers. They were nice people.

Dolhanczyk ([41:18](#)):

Mm. What did you think when they switched to? When they took down their mast and sails?

Speaker 4 ([41:31](#)):

We just wanted to see them one last time.

Speaker 3 ([41:35](#)):

We got in the car. And we went there just to them.

Dolhanczyk ([41:43](#)):

Well, it's interesting because other ladies have said when they were young girls, that their fathers wouldn't let them go to the river.

Speaker 3 ([41:51](#)):

No, that wasn't a place that you go [inaudible].

Dolhanczyk ([41:57](#)):

Was it dangerous? Or just because of that...

New Speaker ([42:07](#)):

No cause of being around too many men down there.

Speaker 4 ([42:11](#)):

When we was younger then.

Speaker 3 ([42:14](#)):

I didn't care. So I seen a boat once or twice. I've seen them beautiful, beautiful prettiest site you ever seen. Around noon time they started and going on up the river boy that was something pretty.

Dolhanczyk ([42:31](#)):

And that was on Sunday afternoon?

New Speaker ([42:35](#)):

Yeah Sunday afternoon every week.

Dolhanczyk ([42:36](#)):

Sunday. And then come back Fridays?

Speaker 3 ([42:39](#)):

Yes back on Friday, Friday. Yeah. Beautiful, beautiful. Nice.

Warner ([42:48](#)):

How did they bring the oysters in to the shucking house? How did that work?

New Speaker ([42:56](#)):

I think they had a convener (conveyer).

Speaker 3 ([43:00](#)):

Conveyer. They bring them boats they would come right there to the sheds ,and the men's would uh, um, she put them on the conveyer and then putting them on in. They're rolling them on into the oyster house.

Speaker 4 ([43:18](#)):

And they'd, have them in a big pile in the oyster house.

Speaker 6 ([43:27](#)):

Because I'll just say, because they used to put them in the floats and then shovel them into

Speaker 3 ([43:33](#)):

The [inaudible] wheel barrels and then roll them on in there, you know, pile them up in the work houses. It had men there to be right there with the wheel barrels.

Dolhanczyk ([43:51](#)):

How old was everyone, was there an average age of people working in the shucking house? Like were the younger guys with the wheel barrels? Or were they, well, they were,

Speaker 3 ([43:59](#)):

They were all grown. They were brought up. It wasn't a children's done, but yeah, there was some older people there was some real old people. and it was shucking, I don't know how old I was maybe about 24. Yes.

Dolhanczyk ([44:18](#)):

Just cause that's a lot of, that's a hard, hard work. Yeah.

Speaker 3 ([44:23](#)):

Well I liked that. I used to like doing it

Dolhanczyk ([44:26](#)):

And one of the, one of the things people remember about the shucking houses, they remembered the singing and how beautiful it was.

Speaker 3 ([44:38](#)):

And those Maryland peoples, they could sing. Get in there singing and I don't care what they're singing or not just as long as I was shucking oysters.

Dolhanczyk ([44:41](#)):

Did you sing to?

Speaker 7 ([44:49](#)):

No, not me. They all be singing together.

Speaker 3 ([44:50](#)):

They all in their boxes singing, whatever they were singing. We knew it, it

Speaker 6 ([44:57](#)):

It was mostly the Maryland people that sang?

Speaker 3 (45:01):

People that send it was over. But they lived up to the Jersey. Then they were from Maryland. From [inaudible] right up here. Stayed up here, had homes all over here, up here in Port Norris.

Dolhanczyk (45:17):

Did any of them did they all, when they moved here, did they stay or did any ever go back home in the summertime back to Maryland? Do you recall? Or were they pretty much here folks? When they moved here, they didn't women

Speaker 3 (45:30):

The men would stay in the summertime.

Speaker 4 (45:32):

They would stay up here and sometimes they'd come up and stay, it stayed and they would go back home on Friday and come back on Fridays, the men's would. They would come back on like that.

Speaker 6 (45:44):

Do you remember any stories about things that happened that you thought were interesting or funny? And during the time that you worked there, any, any like day that you remember, and it was funny stories about when you were working, you know, this happened or that happened?

Speaker 3 (46:13):

Worked, we worked, you know, weren't

Speaker 4 (46:15):

Even getting active being there, laughed all the time. You could laugh and talk when you work.

Speaker 3 (46:22):

And it didn't get out to eat. When you got ready, he wanted to eat. So you get out and eat.

Dolhanczyk (46:28):

So just to clarify, you said that some of the men would go back to Maryland on the weekends. Were those, the guys who were working on the boat?

New Speaker (46:36):

When they come up they call it Bay season.

Speaker 4 (46:42):

And they would come up Fridays here at work and went to sleep. When they got done work, they'd go back home. Then he come back timing up to go back on the boat, on the boat. They stayed on the boat all the week.



Dolhanczyk (46:57):

That's where they lived. They didn't go back in. So they didn't have a house now. Yeah. Yeah on the boat.

New Speaker (47:03):

When they got off the boat, they go on home, back to Maryland. They stayed on the boat all week. Right.

Dolhanczyk (47:10):

But the folks who work in the shucking house lived here right? So like your parents, when they moved here, they've settled here. So that was true for most people then except the guys working on the boats for Bay season. Okay. Yeah. I just wanted to clarify that. Yeah. Wow. Thanks.

Speaker 6 (47:33):

What do you remember about Shell Pile? The town?

Speaker 3 (47:41):

Well see, we weren't really allowed to go to Shell Pile, we lived uptown. We didn't end up down. We weren't allowed to go to the down to them places. When we were younger, you know, our parents never allowed us down there. I was down there only when we got older, we could go down there. If we wanted to we'd go down or sometimes go in to the Beer Garden. I never drank. I couldn't drink. Never drink.

Dolhanczyk (48:05):

(knock on the door) I think it's time for lunch. All right. Yeah.

Speaker 3 (48:15):

I never drank but one time. I had the normal stuff in the cup, you know? So somebody said, put some, put in some in your coffee, I put that stuff in coffee and I about died. God, you know, one thing that's nice in the morning. No more than life. I never drank. Never smoked in life,

Speaker 6 (48:34):

So the shell pile folks were mostly, the drinkers?

New Speaker (48:37):

yeah. The big dip.

Speaker 3 (48:39):

That's where they had you know, the bar at the down there. (laugh) They had the good times down there.

New Speaker (48:41):

They had a restaurant and many places. Restaurants, they had restaurants all over, down there. A nice restaurant [inaudible] new stuff. Our parents allow that kind of stuff, they didn't allow it.

Dolhanczyk (48:58):

Uh, do you remember any of the children who lived in Shell Pile? Do you remember any of the kids, the children who lived in Shell Pile? You didn't play with any of the kids who lived in Shell Pile?

Speaker 4 (49:10):

Associated with some of them. Cause I used to, at the time I used first, I used to go down to the church, go and Shell Pile.. They had a church down in town. We didn't associated with them.

Dolhanczyk (49:25):

Okay. Because I guess the, if any of the kids from Shell Pile, well, they didn't go to school in Port Norris.

New Speaker (49:33):

Yes they did.

Dolhanczyk (49:33):

And [inaudible]. Oh, okay. But, but early on there was the Brown school.

New Speaker (49:48):

she said church, he had a school down there. That lady from, um, middle, nowhere. He used to come and teach [inaudible] school down here.

Dolhanczyk (49:59):

Right. So when did they go to school with, with you all important or us

Speaker 4 (50:05):

Older? They, um, had so many classes down there and then they would come to the court in our school, our school. So they would start there and then we start down there, but he didn't hang out with the kids. No. You had your own friends. Some of them, some of you did because I'd been up to school with us, but I didn't go, you know, if I go down and I, we didn't go down there. Right, right. I just stayed at friends. Some of them are very strict

Speaker 3 (50:37):

Our parents made us good children's out of us. Our good parents were strict, but good. And I appreciate it. [inaudible] with children's. We never give. Them no trouble. Right. All these of sisters never bought no trouble on their own. That's

Speaker 3 (51:04):

Good. Yes, sir. We had nice parents.

Dolhanczyk (51:06):

Right? Well with that note, I think that's a good note to end on. Thanks for your time.