

Joseph Smith: All right. This is Joe Smith. I'm here at the NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] Library on Pivers Island, and it's March 1, [2017], and it's about 9:30, and we're interviewing John Baptist, a former employee at the NOAA lab, and happily retired for many years. Interviewers here are former directors, Dr. [Ford] Bud Cross and Dr. Don Hoss. Also here, myself and Dr. Doug Vaughan. Here we go. With no further ado, going to turn it over to Don and Bud for most of the interview.

Don Hoss: Well, John, I've known you since 1958, but I'd like you to state your name, age, and what kind of position did you hold at the laboratory when you first came?

John Baptist: Okay, my age is ninety-eight; I know that best. I came here in 1958 as a beginner. I forget what I was called – a helper, I suppose. GS-5, I think it was – and stayed here five years, maybe. Anyway, I came from Bucknell, in Pennsylvania. I was sort of bifold; I was going to be prepared to teach because a lot of people did that in those days. If they couldn't get something else, they'd be a teacher if they had enough courses. So I had a master's in biology and some teaching certificate credits. In the summertime, I would go take summer courses to get a state requirement of eighteen hours of education courses and things like that. On the way, I read one of these outputs of the Fish and Wildlife Service, or Fisheries, and I saw an advertisement for three planned jobs at the GS-7 level, or P-1, it was called in those days, the first federal professionalism, in three places, one in California, one in Hartford, Connecticut, I think it was, and the other was in Annapolis, Maryland. I applied to all three of them, but in those days, you had to pay for your own transportation. I didn't want to go to California under those circumstances. So I picked the two local ones and sent them both my applications, and I got bids on them. Well, I just got offers, not bids, and some were closing down, and there were two or three offers each place. I think I picked the one at Annapolis, Maryland, more out of necessity because I think it was narrowing down. I went there and had an interview [with] the state-level aquatic biologist there. I couldn't find the place, the first place where they were. Somebody directed me to that building, and I said, I don't know where the Fish – it was in a subdivision built for [inaudible] migrants; they had an office right there, and they had a person there from Fish and Wildlife who rented one of the rooms, a suite. He had a sixty-four-foot shrimp boat to work with and three biologists, I think, a secretary, and a boat master. I got a job there as a P-1, or a GS-5, I guess it was, or both. It's a G-5 now.

DH: John, where was that?

JB: Annapolis. Well, it was officially Annapolis, Maryland, but it was [Edgewater]; it was a little town, suburb, where there was a cove. The state guys were not next – maybe six miles down the road, so we cooperated with them a lot. That's how I found where Eastport was. They said that's Jim Engel down the road. Jim Engel was a GS-4, a real nice middle-aged guy about forty-two or something like that. He came to the state building, and he walked in. He looked like an outdoorsman. He had a big scarf hanging, an overcoat, and a sombrero; a middle-aged guy, a real nice guy. I liked him.

DH: Did you come to Beaufort from Annapolis?

A: Yeah. I stayed there five years, I think. Anyway, we had a second in command there; he went to Florida. What's the name of that place in Florida? A tall guy, Dr. So-and-So, and he was a real nice guy. He was a GS-2, and he was ripe for a promotion because he was well educated. He controlled part of the research independently, so he did some lab things and things about growth. Jim controlled the boat and any excursions. He worked with the state, sometimes doing surveys of the fishing grounds and things like that, and biology of the oysters – concentrated on oysters. Anyway, a couple of years, I can't remember what it was – three or four or five years – they were advertising for some job in North Carolina or somewhere down south, and I was thinking of getting – “I'd like to get down there,” I thought, and they were doing field biology – as advertised as field biology and oysters. And there was another lab – I can't think of the guy's name; he was a big, tall guy. He was a friendly guy. I applied to him for this job, and it was out of my range. It had to do with lab work, and it was looking for certain kinds of fish and studying the eugenics of oysters and the histology. He called me; he says, “John, you have to have some histology for this job. I hate to turn you down, but I don't want you to be discouraged.” So he wiped me real quick because I didn't have the background. Later on, Jim Engel, who we used to supply with oysters, was down at the University of Maryland, some outpost on the river, and we used to supply him with – put in a panel truck, a bushel of oysters and take them to Jim Engel. He happened to be a friend of my boss in Maryland at Annapolis. He got chatting with me one day. He was talking to me about his work. He was talking about histology. He would say something like, “How do you think that sounds?” I didn't have any histology. “It sounds good to me.” He got the impression that I had some histology. The first thing you know, I was applying for this other job. A guy comes and says, “You've been recommended for a job.” I said, “Where?” I thought it was this other place that I applied for, and he says, “No, no. This is a guy named Dr. Chipman; he was Ph.D. and was a physiologist by trade, I think, but he got a job in aquatics. He was a middle-aged guy, too. I kept just agreeing with him. I didn't know anything about it. I said, “Well, it sounds good to me.” I should have said, “Because I don't know anything about it anyway.” He had picked me for a job as a junior partner, a GS-7, I guess, in – what's the name of that place I just –?

DH: That's when you came to Beaufort.

JB: In Beaufort, yes.

DH: And that was in the radiobiology laboratory?

JB: Yes. I said, “I didn't apply to that one.” Even Chipman had been talking to Engel, I guess, right? He had talked to me, too. He had recommended me. They said, “Well, you better take it; you were recommended.” I got there; I know Chipman was dissatisfied because I didn't have any technological lab work on oysters. So I was working out in the field and helping to get the oysters and worked as a helper. I gradually got into it. I knew a little bit. I knew some biology. I majored in biology. I don't think I had that one course, histology, in the microscopic type. But I worked there for several years, and I worked up to – I finally got a GS-9 sometime in [inaudible]. But I didn't get anywhere very far. I had projects sometimes and a lot of fieldwork. In the lab, I learned to do radiobiology studies, [inaudible] like a regular diagnostic test for [inaudible].

DH: Did you think working at the laboratory was fun, or was it a good place to work?

JB: Yes, I really liked lab work, and it wasn't difficult. It wasn't masculine; it didn't take any muscle. But I learned a lot, and I kept reading and studying and reading the papers and working as an assistant and preparing tissues and counting the samples. I could design things on my own if I wanted to. I haven't prepared for this; I didn't look up anything. But I worked there several years. The rest of my career was there. Later on, Dr. Chipman retired, and Ted Rice, who was a Ph.D. from Kentucky and was very sharp, took over as the lab director. He had me help him write some things, and he liked that I could write in English and help him edit some of his stuff sometimes. Eventually, he says, "John, when I went to Washington, they said they wanted me to overlook the industry as a whole, as nuclear power plants and stuff to do with contamination of reactor nuclear power plants." He says, "I need an assistant. I want you to help me when I write my papers." I showed him I could write English. I did that for quite a while, and then he had me – he'd devise a narrowed down report that, instead of being verbose, was categorized into categories that they would consider – contamination and public acceptance of the rules. We gave this stuff to the Atomic Energy Commission [AEC]. We were an unofficial off-branch of their external studies, and they had a guy in charge of that. Ted eventually got where he'd give you an assignment – "write this up" – and I helped him make the reports out. When we'd get requests about a new power plant, they'd send us a stack of books this high, big, loose-leaf notebooks, and we'd do the environmental part, and we'd study that, and we'd make suggestions together – mostly him, of course. We'd make requests about how much sampling to take – at least one a week – or field studies and radioactive studies, suggesting them to the states because the states were by themselves. They were in charge of it, and we wanted to, as a national firm, help the AEC protect the public. He took over the lab finally. He was an intellectual guy, Ted Rice, and he hired people and fired them. He surrounded himself with people that thought like he did and had a scientific approach to everything. He finally said, "John, I haven't got time. I haven't got time. I'm really too busy." Assistant lab director, I think, was at the time because there was another group there. He says, "I want you to overlook this. You're going to go to public hearings instead of me to be a witness. First, I want to take you to a meeting to break you in, to just be a witness, just to watch it." One day, he says, "John, you haven't got time." "What for?" And he says, "You got to go to –" I forget which nuclear plant it was, one in Virginia or somewhere – "you have to go there and be an expert witness to the Fish and Wildlife Service." I said, "Yeah," He said, "I'll talk to you. I'll brief you." He gave me a lot of stuff and told me what to enunciate – talk about the food chain and being aware that it'll get to people sometime. We would write up – he would write up the minimum requirements of microcuries that should be allowed, and it would cut that fishery off if the state tests showed that. I went to my first meeting – I can't think of where it was – Michigan or somewhere – freshwater. I went to several after that. I went there, and I took notes. They were talking about – and then they had a whiz – they brought a whiz as a witness, and he talked about the biology of it. He was just a high school kid and learning. This was Michigan or Wisconsin, I forget. I think it was my first or second. This guy cornered me, a captain who was [inaudible] for the public, an officer, and he said, "Shame on you." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "The way you talked to that –" I said, "I'm just telling the facts. He was talking, and I was correcting him." The kid was a nice kid. He was one of these stars that was looking ahead and studying things beyond high school, and it was just radioactivity and measurements and that kind of stuff. I said, "Well, I was as polite as I could be, and I want to be truthful." The other guys that were there – we had a lawyer there,

experts, different experts. After the meeting, he says, “What are you talking to that guy for? He asked you a question. They’re always pulling that stuff. You don’t have to answer all those unofficial questions.” But I handled them okay, I thought. Anyway, that was that kind of a thing. There were a lot of public people there, and fortunately, they were there a lot of times because they were trying to protect the public, and they were civic-minded, and so forth. We were trying to keep the things within reasonable bounds, so they would get examined, and radioactivity wouldn’t get into the public foods and that kind of stuff. For that time, I went to practically all of the – I went to about five of those things in different states. They said, “We have John Baptist here from the Fish and Wildlife Service to answer some questions.” Their lawyers would cross-examine me, and I’d say, “What we recommended was a program for the habitat they had there.” We would demand tests on edible foods – fishes, oysters, and even the food chain – check the algae and everything else. We had a routine. We figured we’d spot something. This guy would start eating my – I was only in my first or second meeting. I was a little green, but I defended myself. I said, “Well, somebody has to do it. I’m not criticizing anybody because of who they are. I’m criticizing what they’re not doing or what they are doing and making suggestions. That was the whole idea. When I went – “John,” he says, “you shouldn’t have talked to that guy.” I said, “Well, he started asking a question.” They could see I was a new guy, I guess. I said, “Well, I didn’t mind. I answered him truthfully, and I seem to have squelched him pretty good.” I went to about five of those, I think, in the course of a period. Meanwhile, I still did my work and published a few papers.

DH: John, on a lighter note, there must have been some funny things that happened here during the time you worked here. I remember one that occurred in the old radiobiology lab, the old turtle building; a funny thing that happened that you were involved in, and Dr. Chipman was involved in it. You went up in the attic of the old building. Can you tell us about that?

JB: [laughter] They had one of those World War II buildings we renovated, and it was too shallow; it was a shed. They put a lab in there, and they boosted it up to ten feet. The base – what do you call it? The foundation was about this high; it was concrete. You’d go up to it, and there was this half-concrete building. We had three or four labs in there. It wasn’t bad inside. That was my first job. I went there as a – that was my first job. I’d forgotten about that. I didn’t mention the building. But it wasn’t bad inside. The one room had three desks in it, the boss over here, the assistant boss over here, and me over here, or something like that. We’re just a small staff, and we had some technicians to count things and count [inaudible]. I went up in the attic looking for something, and it was done over, but the roof part is usually just cross [inaudible] and stuff like that. Some places, they put floors, and they had some flooring up there. I stepped and missed the flooring, and my foot went down on my crotch. I looked down there, and there was Dr. Chipman’s desk almost beneath me, plaster scattered all over the place. He looked up, and he says, “What are you doing, coming down the quick way?” “Sorry,” I says, “I didn’t see this hole.” I could’ve gone all the way through, but my crotch caught. It did hurt; it did catch a testicle like that. But anyway, it was hilarious at the time. We all laughed about it. There were plaster crumbs all over his desk.

DH: You’d have to know Dr. Chipman to appreciate it because he was mostly a pretty serious guy when he was working at the lab. When he got away from the lab, he was different. I can imagine him looking up and seeing yourself hanging down.

JB: That's right. I'm glad you said that. Yeah. It was to him – he didn't laugh or say – He was just – “you could've come down the stairs.” He had some remark like, “You could've come down the stairs,” or “that's a quick way down. What are you – taking a quick way down?” Something like that. Didn't rattle him too much – pieces of plaster all over his desk and mine. Mine was over this way somewhere. But that was one funny incident. There were others I can't think of right now. But we had a field crew. We had a few people that go – we had a boat captain, and he was an old Scandinavian from way back. He migrated to the United States back in the war. He was forty, fifty years old, something like that. He was a captain. If he was a biologist, a [inaudible] biologist, he became a boat mate; he became part of the crew.

DH: Deckhand, yeah.

JB: There were some funny events there. I liked boats, and I liked to learn something, so I used to steer the boat and learn starboard and port and beginners like I was in the Navy. But the other guy was a Ph.D., and he was more serious. That was Phil Butler. He became a lab director down in Florida. He was pretty sharp. But he says, “John, don't get too friendly with him. He's got weird ideas, and he's not your boss.” I said, “Okay.” I liked to talk to him, though. He had a lot of experiences. He ran away from Sweden to join the Navy or to get into some kind of – he ended up in the United States as a boatman, talked good English, and in his forties. He had a wife and no kids, and he lived in a houseboat parked at the city dock there. He built it himself, and it was just forty feet long or whatever. I used to go there once in a while and have lunch with him.

Ford “Bud” Cross: John, could I ask you another question?

JB: Yes, break in any time.

FC: You came here in the mid to late '50s – 1950s?

JB: Yeah, I have a hard time remembering.

FC: '55? What was it like to live in Carteret County at that time? What was it like compared to now?

JB: Oh, it was very interesting. I came from Newburyport, Massachusetts, which is a suburb of where we worked. Actually, the office was in Newburyport, and we worked on clams. I told you how I got hired. Chip thought I was a biologist because he was talking about histology, and I didn't know anything about it. I kept it on my head, and he recommended me for this job that he had nothing to do with – as an opinion. First thing I know, Phil Butler's on the phone. He says, “Phil, that's not the job I'm talking about. I'm talking about my job. You can't be here because you're being considered for another job.” I said, “I didn't know that.” Anyway, they hired me, to their chagrin, I guess.

DH: Well, what was the county like when you came and the town?

JB: Oh, it was interesting. It was interesting. It was rural. Geez, nothing like it is now. I liked it. I rented a house in Beaufort called the (Gibble?) House. Now, it wasn't named in that time. It was owned by an official, a lawyer, whose mother was (Mrs. Ives?) a nice ninety-some-year-old lady. I made a mistake of getting a television set when they came out. Without permission, I put an antenna on the – I said, "That's too low," so I got a twenty-foot staff, and I put it right in the middle of the top of the roof. It's two gables – right at the peak. This was very stupid of me. It didn't do any damage, but I put that there on a plate, and I put three or four guy-wires to the corners of the house. I covered the roof with two or three cables. Didn't cover it, but it spanned it to the corners to give it good tension, good lateral pull. I was proud of myself. I [inaudible] my wife was on the roof, holding the staff, and she was getting blown by the wind. I said, "Hold it still," and she's, "I don't want to get blown off this damn roof." She was up there, her skirt flying, and she was doing all the hard work, and I was tightening that cable. Once I got one side done, it was safe – more safe. She had something to pull. I pulled against something, and she didn't have to hold it so hard. Boy, she yelled at me for that. We finally got it up. She came over, and she scolded me, and I apologized. I said, "Honey, I'm sorry, I didn't think of that." I did tar all the holes real well, so it won't leak and all that. She was a nice old lady. She was my landlady, and she had a couple of lawyers, so they could have put me in jail at any minute. But we were on the waterfront – I mean, two houses from the waterfront. The big lawyers in town were across the street. I forgot their names, but they were well known. There were a couple of lawyers in the family. They had a nice big waterfront house on the channel there.

DH: Claude Wheatley.

JB: Claude Wheatley. My wife became friends with their wives, and they were pretty friendly. I didn't need a lawyer at that time, so I didn't have to hire him. Yes, I did. I think when I bought that lot in Beaufort, I bought it through a lawyer. I'm not sure. But they started Mitchell Village, named after somebody in upland in North Carolina; I forget what city.

FC: John, let me ask you. There were a couple of tough hurricanes when you first came, 1955 and 1960, Hazel and Donna. Do you have any thoughts, or do you have any experiences with them, or did you have any damage from those two storms?

JB: When I first came here?

DH: No, Hurricane Donna.

FC: And Hurricane Hazel.

JB: Oh, yeah. The first hurricanes were scary. One whizzed by up at Cape Lookout – what's that cape up in New England?

DH: Cape Cod.

JB: Cape Cod. Yeah, it sort of hit the end of Cape Cod, and we start looking at our shingles and all that. We lost a shingle or two. When we got down here, they're having them every year. Yes, we were quite concerned and got oil lamps. We were in Beaufort, and Beaufort got flooded

up the streets, partway up the Front Street crossways, and then it goes right up the – it went vertically with it. I think it got this deep on our street, two or three houses to the waterfront. The other thing was we had a barn next to the house. It looked like a finished barn. When you go into it, it was a sand floor. They'd built the thing right on the sandy soil. Built it right there. We kept worrying about it blowing away. It was ready for a car, but we didn't have a car at the time. So it was kind of interesting when we first came. We liked the place. The temperature was just right, and the people were friendly and southernly. Dorothy made friends, and we all went to Beaufort schools and so forth. My kids – Trudy, who is now sixty-six, was four years old, I think. She was our youngest. I had him ten years older than her. We quit for a while, and then I got sterilized. [laughter] I didn't want a houseful of kids. Anyway, the oldest guy is now sixty-nine, I think. I got mixed up this morning. I put him ten years ahead. He started saying he's approaching seventy pretty quick. He went to college, and he worked in Maryland with the fisheries up there, I think.

DH: As I remember, Dorothy didn't like the shopping around here at first because there wasn't much to do. The women had a little problem –

JB: Dorothy became a [inaudible]. You remember the dime stores and even the dry goods were small. She'd come from Massachusetts and Maryland, and Scranton was a big city, a fairly big city of Scranton, and she lived in the city. She started going to New Bern and Jacksonville. The stores in Morehead now are city-sized. The dime store was just a little place on Front Street on the corner. I can't remember the number of the street, but there was a hardware store over here, maybe, and a dime-store here, and a bank over here, all little stuff. A lot of these houses – the houses became businesses. Even now, when I go there, I see new places that look like they used to be houses. That is very rural, and it was country-style. It was pleasant. You get to know people better and all. I don't know anybody in Morehead, hardly, except in [inaudible] division there, people like me.

FC: John, you worked on a lot of different research projects over the years.

JB: Over the years.

FC: You told me once about holding an albacore; it was flapping in your arms, and you went out and did all kinds of interesting things.

JB: When I came here – Dr. Chipman.

FC: What was your most enjoyable project that gave you the most satisfaction that you worked on?

JB: I liked them all. I think when I started getting results and being able to write about them thrilled me. That one where we were catching albacore, there was a time when things were going on in the Pacific and contaminated fish. We were worried about oceanic. They had stations over there in the islands testing that stuff right after the war, I guess. We had what used to be a building there in earlier days. Foundations went up in a square; there were two or three of those along the waterfront on the channel side. The concrete was still there. There was water

coming in and out of there, and fish used to come in there. We would catch them, trawling for them, and tow them with a barbless hook, or if we could – you can't leash them very well, so we would go to Cape Lookout someplace and trawl for them. And if we'd get even one, we'd tow it back and put it in one of those containments. There were about three or four feet of water, and then it tapered out to fairly deep for a big fish. It was maybe four or five feet deep because it was the edge of – the end of the thing as it went in. They had had a building over that. All that was left was the foundation, and we had to get a hold of them and put them in a tank and bring them in the lab. Or inject them and leave them there. We would inject them with radioactive isotope and let go of them. That was one of my jobs – put a pair of hip boots on and go out there. And I'd pick one up like this and was going to put him in a container or something. I'd start going – the fish started wagging its tail, and the whole world was vibrating; everything was a blur. This guy's shaking my head off. So he'd start flapping his tail while I was holding him, trying to swim. Everybody got a laugh out of it except me, I guess. We had a lot of experiences with that wild stuff that we didn't know how to handle.

DH: How about the –? You led a project down on the Savannah River one time. Do you remember much about that? Your Savannah River work with (Sable?), I think his name was – Public Health Service.

JB: Yeah, we worked as a cooperative project with the Public Health Service. This big heavysset guy was – he had a lot of rank; he was a colonel or something in the ranks, and he was in charge of it. I was his marine assistant. He had another guy, a real nice young guy that was sort of a helper. I think that was just about the [inaudible]. He threw orders around, and this other guy and I did the work. We used a Coast Guard boat, and it had a stanchion right in the middle of the afterdeck. They would tow boats with it. It was a forty-five-foot – I don't know what they called it, and it had just that one-man crew, and it was diesel. He would pick us up at the dock, and we had a chart where we had stations where we'd take samples – salinity and all that aquatic stuff – and try and catch some fish. This was their project, so they would take the fish and fix them some way and ship them to Cincinnati, wherever their marine place was, up the coast – up the midcontinent. This guy was from there, a real nice guy. He was a college degree and a biologist of some kind, and he'd take care of the samples and fix them up and send them up to Cincinnati or wherever. Well, there's a big Taft Engineering Center; that's where it was. The Taft Engineering Center had – doing radiology studies. I can't forget the time; I got the fish [inaudible] the whole load. I said, "Hey, do something with this thing." I was shaking myself to [inaudible].

FC: John, let me ask you about a couple of people that used to work here. Rachel Carson worked at Duke University and Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*. She used to come over and use the library a lot. Did you ever meet her during those times?

JB: No, I never did. I wished I had. I used to read her stuff.

FC: She was around then. How about Sylvia Earle? Didn't she work for Ted Rice?



JB: Sylvia Earle. I'm not sure that I met her, either. I read a lot about her. She was younger and more active, I think. I don't know.

FC: Yeah, she was. In fact, she became chief scientist of NOAA, and I just was wondering if you remembered her.

JB: That was my early days, so I'm fading now, fading away.

DH: I don't think so. When I first came, we still had the Russians that had come over after World War I or II – I don't remember – (Goltzoff?) and (Lazanoff?).

JB: Oh, yes. (Goltzoff?).

DH: You knew them, didn't you?

JB: Casually, yeah.

DH: Yeah, well, casually. Anything you remember about them?

JB: No, but they all had accents.

DH: [laughter] Yeah, they did have accents.

JB: We used to call him (Russinoff?). I think it's (Rosanoff?). I don't know how they are pronounced. (Lazanoff?) and the other guy was (Goltzoff?). (Goltzoff?) was the [inaudible] (Lazanoff?), right? They came from New England, I think. I think they're stationed up around Connecticut or somewhere. Yes, we did see them once or twice. I didn't [inaudible].

DH: I remember they didn't like each other.

JB: Oh, yes. They were jealous of each other – cross-purposes, I suppose.

FC: Should we take a break?

DH: Take a break.

JS: Okay, we're going to take a break here at the end of part one.

-----END OF TRACK ONE-----

DH: John, are there any special people you remember from the old days that you worked with that you'd like to mention?

JB: Yes, I can hardly remember their names, but I do remember some activities that happened. But I can't think of anything right now that's epic.

FC: How about Jack Price or Jimmy Willis?

DH: Jack Price was a good friend of yours.

JB: Yes, I got to be friends with Ted. I helped him write some of the miniature reports that he took me on as a helper.

DH: But we covered a little bit of that. How about Jack Price?

JB: Oh, I'm glad you brought Jack – Jack was probably my closest friend there. Here was a nice guy. I don't know why he didn't catch a girlfriend because they liked him; all the girls liked him. He was a pleasant, polite person and joked a lot.

DH: This might go where we don't want to go.

JB: Dorothy thinks he had a bad love affair that hurt him or something like that because he would flirt and talk, and I think he started dating in later life and moved to Western Maryland. Their family lived there. But we used to have him Friday nights. He was a bachelor. Almost every Friday night, he would come up for supper, and he loved that. To get revenge – or not revenge – he invited us down to the Ice Capades in Boston. He lived in Boston, and he rented a place, an apartment or something in Morehead and Beaufort – Beaufort, mostly. He took us down there and paid our way down – or drove us down, I guess. He got a car eventually. I'm not sure if he got that after we moved to Mitchell Village. I remember I was raking my yard – I just bought that lot. He got a rake and offered to help me rake my yard on the weekend. But he was a good friend. He drank a little. Who doesn't? He would come up to the house. In this arm would be a six-pack of beer and another one with two or three packs of ice cream. He always brought enough ice cream to last the kids for the weekend. He was very, very close. When he moved to Beaufort, he didn't come up as often, but he was there when he came up to help rake my yard. It didn't have any grass. I was just getting ready to plant grass. Yeah, I have some old snapshots of him laying around someplace. I don't put them in albums anymore. They get collected. Someday, I'd like to get them all out and put them in an album or something or put them on the computer.

FC: Did you work on any of those that work with Jack Price dealing with the moon rocks that came back –

JB: No.

FC: – in the 1960s and were tested for toxicity?

JB: I think Ted had me sewed up with writing and stuff. Did you get a lot of stuff on that?

FC: No.

JB: No?

FC: Not yet.

DH: When you first came, do you remember Prytherch? The former director, Herb Prytherch?

JB: No.

DH: You don't remember him?

JB: Who was he?

DH: He was before any of us worked here, but I wondered if he'd ever come back and you'd met him.

JB: Oh, no, I never – I don't think I ever met Clifford.

DH: No, Prytherch.

JB: Oh, Prytherch, I'm sorry. My earballs aren't – I never met him, but I heard a lot about him. He started there, I guess. Prytherch.

DH: Yeah.

JB: And he had a son, I think.

DH: Yeah.

JB: Do you remember him? Herb Prytherch.

DH: Yes, I know him very well.

JB: He was there about the same time you were, I think.

DH: Yes

JB: Herb Prytherch. I just knew him casually, and I don't think he ever worked with me. Maybe he did. Sometimes, you'd get somebody to help you count samples or something, temporarily, part-time, or something. I didn't need a full-time helper at that time. He was there when I first came. He was in college, I believe, and maybe working in the summer.

FC: Then there were some other people that you worked with, part of that old gang, like Marianne Murdoch?

JB: I didn't work directly with her. She was upstairs. Most of Ted's domain [was] plankton. He was an expert on plankton, mostly in his scientific work, I think. She did a lot of work up there, and she worked with other people in that field. She worked there a long time, and she was very reliable. She had an accent, too. [laughter] I liked Marianne.

FC: And then there was – my mind just went blank, damn it.

DH: Which one? Which group, I mean?

JB: They had a lot of college temporaries that came in. What's her name?

FC: In the radiobiology group.

JB: Don's wife came as personnel, didn't she?

DH: Antioch College.

JB: What?

DH: She came from Antioch College when we had the group. Remember, they came every six months.

JB: Yes.

DH: They rotated.

JB: We liked that. Don liked that; he kept bringing pretty girls.

DH: I kept one.

JB: You liked one so well you just [inaudible]. Remember the time I met your mother?

DH: Yes.

JB: I went to – what's that town? Cincinnati?

DH: No, Webster Groves, Missouri.

JB: I went to a track meet. I went to see the games, and he told me where she lived, and I called her up. She talked to me on the phone. She was all alone, and I went over and visited with her. We had a nice chat, and I made a couple of dates with her.

DH: You had met her when she – you had met her first when I first started work here. They came down, and you had briefly met her. But yes, she was very pleased that you came.

JB: Yes, I enjoyed it. I told her all the best things about you. I didn't tell her anything about your rum drinks and your drunken parties or anything like that.

FC: And then there were other people you worked with, like Tom Duke, Claire Schelske. Remember them?

JB: Oh, I liked all those guys. Tom was a fairly close neighbor; he lived in Mansfield Park. I got his old dog.

FC: That's right. That's right.

JB: Was that his dog I got?

DH: Yes.

JB: Yes. He didn't know it had heartworm, but we had a couple of dogs with heartworms. We had one that died on the front porch one time, and I don't know if that was Tom's. Tom's was a terrier, a little black dog, and he didn't want to give him to anybody. He said, "I'd like to have somebody I know get him." Gee, after he left him, he'd start swelling up, and he got really bad. I had that veterinarian in Beaufort that died years ago fishing. He was fishing alone and dropped dead in his boat. I can't remember his name this minute, but he was one of the vets we knew. There were a few vets.

DH: He was the only vet.

JB: What?

DH: He was the only vet. [laughter]

JB: Yes. There's plenty of them now. They have two of them on [inaudible] Street. Anyway, he swelled up, and we'd take to the vet, and he'd drain him. He said, "John, there's no cure for this when they get this far." He would take a syringe and unload him, and he'd shrink him down. Then he'd be a little chipper. He'd get fat like he was pregnant. It wasn't a girl, either. One day, Judy called me up hysterical at one o'clock in the afternoon, something like that. "John." I can't impersonate her. "John," she says, "the dog just died, and he coughed up blood all over the porch. You'll have to come home and clean it." She said, "You have to come home." So I did. I left work and went home and buried him.

DH: I remember an incident one time that Dr. Chipman wasn't too proud of, and I don't know if you remember it or not. But you had had one of those station wagons, and you went –

JB: Oh, I'll bet I remember it.

DH: Go ahead and see.

JB: Did I take the station wagon and do an unofficial act with it?

DH: Well, no, this was about fish. You loaded up a bunch of samples from out in the field, and you brought them in; it was a Friday afternoon. Do you remember this?

JB: I don't know, but I can guess.

DH: You left them in the car, and it was August.

JB: I forgot I left the fish in the car over a weekend.

FC: All weekend.

JB: I guess he only yelled at me once [inaudible]. I remember that.

DH: Well, I think we had to get rid of the van, as I remember it. [laughter]

JB: Had to do what?

DH: Had to get rid of the van; it smelled so bad.

JB: Oh, my gosh. I don't blame him. I don't blame him. [inaudible] fish in the car. I had just left the fish in the car? I just stopped thinking.

DH: Well, you probably tried to forget that one.

JB: I guess I did forget it until you brought it up.

DH: How about the unofficial use of the van?

JB: I did that. Or maybe I asked him. I don't know. Dorothy had a sister-in-law just outside of Washington, and they wanted to give us their bedroom set. They got a new bedroom set. We didn't have any furniture hardly at all. We just were married a short time. This was early in – I don't know who – somebody gave me permission to take the van. Maybe it's Phil Butler. Phil Butler was second in command at that early time. I drove all the way to just outside of Washington, DC – this side of Washington, DC.

DH: This sounds illegal.

JB: It is. We loaded the dresser and the bed folded up. Well, the main pieces, two or three pieces, in the van. But I think he knew it. I think he said – maybe he said, "Don't tell me about it."

DH: Well, have you got any other special thing you want to mention before we wrap it up?

JB: No.

FC: Let me ask you this.

JB: okay.

FC: Do you have any regrets that you came to Beaufort and spent your career here?

JB: Oh, no.

FC: Do you ever wish you'd gone somewhere else?

JB: No, usually you go with the idea you got to live here, and you don't think about what's bad about it; you try to find out what's good about it. I find good things in every place I go to. You find good friends. Sometimes you don't find a liquor store you want. Or my wife always wants to know where's the department stores. She used to go to New Bern to shop when we came. You probably did, too. Now they got big stores all over the place. Great big stores like Walmart, chain stores, and thousands and thousands [inaudible] and small businesses. My son and daughter-in-law moved to New Bern to get away from traffic. They moved to New Bern out of Morehead City. I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." New Bern's full of traffic, but it's spread out on more streets. See, [inaudible] Street has got all the traffic in Morehead. It's always two lanes of traffic going and coming.

FC: Well, how about your kids? Did they enjoy living here? Are they glad they grew up here?

JB: Well, two of them moved out.

DH: Well, they're not moved far.

JB: What?

DH: They're not very far – New Bern.

JB: No, no. Well, they don't live here.

FC: But they grew up here.

JB: Gary and his wife said they moved to get out of the traffic. I says, "Traffic? New Bern's full of traffic." They said, "Yeah, but it's spread out more." He knows the back way to come to Morehead. He takes some other road off the main highway. I don't know what it is. It's just you go to the left and come – right away, you're in the country and the suburbs and so forth. They come down some two-lane road. I don't know.

FC: Well, when you came here, you came off the Beach Bridge to a light. You turned left at that light to go towards Havelock, and there was not another traffic light until you got to Havelock in those days, if you remember.

JB: Yes. I remember that.

DH: You used to – one thing you liked to do here was fish.

JB: Yes. We used to – Dorothy liked to fish more than I did. She's, "I want to go fishing every Sunday." We would surf cast, and she caught a nice fish one day about that long and got all excited. She says, "You pull him in." I says, "Dorothy, it's your fish. If you don't pull him in,

you didn't catch him." She said, "I don't care." [inaudible] but it was nice fishing about that long. I don't remember what it was. After I got them, I says, "Now, don't be bragging that you caught that fish. You did not catch that fish." She never would put with it. She insisted that she – I got a picture of her standing, holding it like a trophy in her bathing suit. We went over to Pine Knoll Shores – not many people then. They weren't settled completely. [inaudible] weren't organized. It was a nice place to fish, and there were a lot of fish there. But she did love to fish. She liked the boat because we could fish. She liked to fish, and she liked to eat them. But I got that boat from the guy's wife that lived over at Pine Knolls Shores. Who was that? His wife was the one that liked to fish, I think. But he lived over there near Bud Cross – you're Bud Cross – Doug Wolfe, in that area.

DH: George Rees?

FC: Angelovic?

DH: Angelovic.

JB: Angelovic, yes. But I'm trying to think of the people's names that she knew. Well, she knew somebody over there that probably worked at the lab. She liked to go fishing with her. Oh, the guy that the – what's an animal doctor called?

FC: Veterinarian.

DH: Veterinarian.

JB: Yes. The guy that lived in Beaufort, the short guy. He died in his boat fishing. His wife and Dorothy met somewhere, and I guess they went fishing. She would go fishing with her, and they would go on the piers fishing during the week. Say, "We went fishing today. We caught some so-and-so." I said, "Yeah, who took them off the hook?" But she enjoyed going fishing with her.

DH: Well, I think we'll come back and get you another day. But we'll probably finish up for today.

JB: Well, I'll think of some more experiences.

FC: But thank you for coming.

DH: Thank you much.

JS: Thank you, John. This is the end of the interview. It's about 10:45.

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Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/14/2022