

RM: This recording is the property of Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated, and it cannot be reproduced without the written consent of Tales of Cape Cod, Incorporated. March 28, 1978. Visiting with Jack Bonnell on North Harbor Road in Orleans, Massachusetts. Mr. Bonnell, what is your full name?

JB: John D. Bonnell.

RM: And what was the date of your birth?

JB: Oh, my God, have I got to put that in? [laughter]. May 18, 1892.

RM: And where were you born?

JB: I was born in Hyde Park, Mass, now a part of Boston.

RM: And when did you first come to Cape Cod?

JB: In 1900, when I was eight years old and spent my summer vacation – school vacation.

RM: Do you remember that first trip to Cape Cod?

JB: No, I don't remember that first trip, but I remember quite a few other trips afterward.

RM: Well, how did you come to the Cape that first time?

JB: Well, we came by train, the first trip. I know that. It used to stop at everybody's backyard. It left Boston around 7:30 in the morning, I think, and it seemed like it stopped every ten miles after we got down on the Cape a ways.

RM: How long did that trip take?

JB: Well, we'd leave at half-past seven, and we'd get down here about half-past eleven.

RM: And how did you get from Orleans center to Rock Harbor?

JB: Well, we used to hire a man – I think his name was Taylor – that had a wagon, and he would put the trunk on back, and we had seats for the passengers. He'd bring us to the station down here. I think he'd charge seventy-five cents or a dollar or something like that.

RM: What were the roads like?

JB: The roads down here were nothing but sand ruts. A rut in the middle for the horses' feet and then a couple of other ruts for the tires. The sand would go up, and the wheels would fall off as we went around.

RM: What are your earliest memories of Rock Harbor?

JB: Well, the earliest memory was that I used to go out and cull quahogs for the hand rakers that were here. I went with Albert Smith and (Winn?) Higgins, and culled the quahogs that they bull raked for a cent a bucket.

I remember old (Orien?) Higgins, the granddaddy of all the Higginses around here. The first thing my father did when he come down was to always buy tautog from Uncle (Orien?) – (Orien?)Higgins.

RM: Pardon? What did he buy?

JB: A tautog. A fish.

RM: What does that look like?

JB: Well, in that book – Frank (Rogers?) was holding one up on his (fork?). I thought everybody knew what a tautog looks like.

Unknown: In this book?

JB: They call them black fish in New York.

RM: And how big are they?

JB: Oh, they run about – yeah, that’s a tautog that he’s got there, see? There used to be an awful lot of tautog in Cape Cod Bay. Little sailing boats used to come here from Connecticut – New London, Connecticut. They had a well in the bottom of the boat, and they’d fill that well with fish and then sail back home around the Cape.

RM: Back to Connecticut.

JB: Yeah. Back to Connecticut. They had a fish well in the boat. That’s a [compartment] that had holes bored in it to let water in and kept the fish alive.

RM: So there used to be a lot here?

JB: Well, they used to come here every summer.

RM: Do they not come here anymore?

JB: No. Not for years.

RM: Why is that?

JB: What?

RM: Why is that?

JB: Well, I don't know. Of course, there aren't so many fish here now as there was in those days. In those days, I could go out in four hours and catch a barrel of fish. Now, you could fish all day, and you might not get more than a dozen.

RM: You mentioned bull raking. Can you tell me about that?

JB: Well, they had small boats – around thirty feet long. They used to have half a coil of rope – six hundred feet. Some people had a whole coil – twelve hundred feet, an anchor on each end. They'd throw one anchor over and head the way they wanted to – head over the ground they wanted to work on and let the rope run out. When it got almost all out, they'd shut the motor off [inaudible]. They'd shut the motor off and throw the other anchor over. Then they would pull back on that line, tighten up their lines, and they're held right there, so they could rake. And the rakes they used were very similar to what they use over in Pleasant Bay now, only larger. The poles were longer because the water was deeper. They'd turn that basket upside down and run it down the road aways. Then you would tip it over, and it would fall off and go down teeth first into the ground. Then you'd pull it back through the ground, and as you did, you'd hopefully pick up some quahogs. Then you had a job to pull it up. It went right up, straight in the air, and when it dropped to a certain height, the [inaudible] would fall over. It had to be a good pole, or it would break off. We used to buy the poles from Nickerson Lumber Company, and they were pine. We used to have to plane them down.

RM: Did the rake have prongs in it?

JB: Oh, yeah. It had teeth in it, see, that went into the ground, and it pulled hard; the bull raking is hard work.

RM: What was underneath to catch the quahogs?

JB: Quahogs.

RM: A net or something underneath?

JB: Huh?

RM: Was there a net under the –?

JB: Oh, yeah, there was a net. The teeth went in the ground. The quahogs came up the teeth and went into the net.

RM: I see.

JB: And when you pulled it up, you had a net full there, and the quahogs and stones and shells and everything might weigh a hundred pounds in that. You had to pull that up.

RM: A hundred pounds.

JB: Yeah. Of course, it didn't weigh quite so much when it first started, but when it got near the top, it got heavier. When it got out of water, it was quite heavy.

RM: You mentioned culling. Can you tell me about that?

JB: Well, culling the quahogs, you separate the littlenecks and the (shafts?); we used to call them (counts?) in those days.

RM: Counts?

JB: We used to call the (shafts?) (counts?) because we got a cent apiece for them. They were bigger than littlenecks, and they were [inaudible]. And then the others were what they called blunts, which were nothing but old quahogs, which were, well, practically ready to die anyway. They'd be thick on the edge. They really weren't very good eating, but we used to sell them. [laughter]

RM: Where did you sell them?

JB: Well, mostly to Arthur Smith. The Smith brothers' father, Arthur F. Smith. He was chairman or selectman here for a good many years. I guess twenty years, maybe. He owned that store down on the corner, and he used to buy them from the fishermen. He had orders come in from all over – even New York State. And they'd order a thousand counts or five hundred counts like that. I used to truck them up. At first, he had a horse and team, and later I got a truck, and I used to truck them up to the station, and (Jack Walsh?) would take them then.

RM: To the railroad station?

JB: They'd go to New York. Yeah. They'd go to Fall River, and they'd go on the Fall River boat to New York. They'd be in New York the next day. We don't get service like that now.

RM: What were some of the other things you did as a young boy?

JB: You want to know about the clams – digging clams? When I wanted to get a little extra money, I'd take the wheelbarrow and wheel it down to the edge of the water at low tide, and I'd dig. Well, I'd dig four or five buckets of steamer clams. They were quite plentiful – all I could wheel back in the wheelbarrow. Then I'd go from house to house, and even the old-timer Cape Codders would give me twenty-five cents bucket for those little steamer clams because it's a kind of a backbreaking job digging them, see? I used to have no trouble selling four or five buckets for them. I'd get a dollar, dollar and a quarter, you know? That was big money for a kid when our men were working for a day for a dollar in those days. They worked for a dollar a day.

RM: And how old were you then?

JB: Oh, I was nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old.

RM: So what year would that be?

JB: Oh, 1908, '09, '10 – along there.

RM: Can you tell me about some of those trips from Boston to Cape Cod?

JB: Well, we used to get up early, and we used to get up about five o'clock when we lived in Hyde Park and take the first train into Boston. And then the Cape Cod train, as I remember it, left about 7:30, and it would pull out of the station. They'd come through the cars selling candy and newspapers and magazines. And every once in a while, every twenty-five or thirty miles, they'd come through again. So if you'd eaten up all your [inaudible] candy and stuff, you got to have some more. We'd open the windows, and the soot would come in. [laughter] We'd run up and down. We'd have a regular holiday of it. When they got down – they used to go express, I think, to Brockton, and then from there on – and Middleborough. Then from there on, they started stopping about every five or six miles. They'd stop at everybody's backyard, it seemed. So it was along about 11:30 before you finally got down here. Before they got to a station, they'd holler, "East Brewster, East Brewster. Orleans next." Then we'd get up, and we'd start getting our stuff together, see? We'd just about get it assembled when we'd reach Orleans. Then when we got off, we had to hire transportation. This man had a livery stable. [inaudible] the old Snow [inaudible]. I think his name was Taylor. He'd put the trunk on back, and we'd get in this thing, and he'd drive us down to the cottage here. We had no electricity. We had no plumbing. Just a pump outside to pump and an outside toilet there we had to go to. The next-door neighbor, old lady Hopkins would come over with a scythe, and he'd cut the grass; it would be about that high. That's all the grass was cut that whole summer. Wasn't cut anymore. One cut. [laughter]

RM: What was a day like – a typical day? What time would you get up in the morning?

JB: Oh, well, we got up about five o'clock and used to start to take the first train into Boston.

RM: No, I mean, in Orleans. What was a day like in the summertime?

JB: Oh, in the summertime? Well, quite often, we'd get up fairly early and go out and spend all day out on the boat with Albert Smith and (Winn?) Higgins. If it was windy and they didn't go, then we were left to our own – do what we wanted to. We'd go looking for birds' eggs, or we'd go picking blueberries or huckleberries. Or digging clams. We always found something to do. Going swimming. We used to go swimming in the buff, of course, right down there. [laughter] Yeah. We found something to do. Sometimes we got into mischief, but nothing very serious, like a kid vandalizing – the kids do now.

RM: What kind of mischief would you get into?

JB: Well, we might swipe some apples or some strawberries or something like that, you know? Or we might take [inaudible] somebody's boat and go off rowing around the creek or something like that, you know? Nothing real bad. [laughter]

RM: What happened if you got caught?

JB: Oh, my mother would keep us in the house, make us go to bed after lunch, and stay there until the next morning; that's usually what she used to do.

RM: Do you remember what the town of Orleans looked like back in those days?

JB: Well, it looked like – just looked like old pictures you see there.

RM: Can you describe it?

JB: The only hard road we had was from uptown down to the east Orleans Post Office. All the other roads were sand roads. It was very quiet. Very few summer people came down. Few summer people came down – owned the cottage there, see? People in Boston, New York, like that, owned the cottage. And they'd come down and stay all summer. There wasn't a lot of this transient stuff like you got now.

RM: What were some of the businesses in Orleans in those days?

JB: Well, [inaudible] (Stowe?) was in business, and A.F. Smith used to be in business there.

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: (Newcome?) had it one time. Then Warren Smith had it. Then (Herden?) Smith. When (Herden?) Smith had it, that's when A.F. Smith got in there. He bought it so that his two boys could have a business there. (Albert?) and (Calvin?) were identical twins, and they were just about our age.

RM: What kind of a store was it?

JB: Hardware store. General hardware store. Been there for years.

RM: Do you remember going to that store?

JB: Going to what?

RM: Going to the store?

JB: Oh, yes. I used to go up to the store all the time.

Unknown: [inaudible] Higgins', too.

JB: Yeah. And (Will?) Higgins had a store uptown there – Bill Higgins.

Unknown: Dr. (Bessie?).

JB: Yeah. Dr. (Bessie?) – he’s still [inaudible]. Used to fill teeth for a dollar and pull teeth for a dollar. He’d pull a tooth for a dollar, or he’d fill it for a dollar. [laughter]

RM: Did you go to Dr. (Bessie?)?

JB: Huh?

RM: Did you go to Dr. (Bessie?)?

JB: Oh, yeah, I went to Dr. (Bessie?).

RM: How did he pull a tooth in those days?

JB: Oh, God. [laughter] He’d sometimes put his knee up in you, and he’d get ahold of it there, and he’d – no anesthetic or anything. Just got a hold of it, loosen it a little bit, and tried to pull it out. I’ve had him hold my head back and pull it out there. Finally, he’d get it back. Sometimes, he’d fall down. [laughter] I remember when he pulled the last tooth I had; he said, “Well, there. You’re clean.” [laughter] Oh, dear. It used to get his goat. He would see people going to – coming up here from Eastham and Wellfleet and going to the movies. They owed him for dentistry, see? He told me about one guy he made a plate for. The guy didn’t pay for it. He saw him on the street one time, and he says, “Oh, Frank, how’s the plate?” Well, he says, “It hurts me a little.” Well, he says, “Take it out and show me just where it hurts you.” So he took it out, and he says, “Well, that’s about right there. That’s where it hurts.” And Dr. Bessie said, “I took it and put it in my pocket.” He says, “Hey, give me that back.” He says, “When you pay for it, I’ll give it back to you.” [laughter] Oh, God.

RM: Do you remember him filling a tooth for you?

JB: Oh, yeah. He used to fill teeth for a dollar – dollar a filling.

RM: What did he –

JB: Silver. Silver fillings. He didn’t have any porcelain fillings in those days. [laughter] I was interested in dentistry because, of course, my uncle was in the business as the [inaudible] dentist. Dr. (Bessie?) was one of our best customers. He was a hardworking man, and he took care of quite a few – he was the only dentist for miles around.

RM: What else do you remember about Orleans? Were there any rooming houses?

JB: Huh?

RM: Any rooming houses? Inns?

JB: Well, there were – yeah, there were a few houses that –

Unknown: Must have [inaudible].

JB: There were a few houses where you could go and board, usually by the week or so. There were no motels. There was a couple of hotels. There was Southward Inn, and there was a – what was the name of the one up –? The Nauset Inn up in the square, wasn't it?

RM: (Chadwick?)?

JB: (Chadwick?) House it was. Yeah. You could stay overnight in those places. The salesman – what few salesmen come down would stay overnight there. But there wasn't any business like the motels do now. The summer people that came down usually had – well, they'd stay a week or a month and would board with someone. Lots of people took in summer complaints. "The damn summer complaints." [laughter] (Everett?) and I were over to Snow's Landing one time, and Howard Snow was there working on his lobster pots. Everett says, "Hey, Howard. Hello, Howard." Well, he didn't pay attention. No answer. Finally, Everett went up and tapped him on the shoulder. Says, "Howard, how are you?" "Oh," he says. "God," he says, "Excuse me. I thought you was one of those damn summer complaints." You better not put that in the thing. [laughter]

RM: What is a summer complaint?

JB: Howard is still around there.

RM: What is a summer complaint?

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: Just a person – I was, I suppose. We were. We came down for the summer. Anyone that wasn't a native was a damn Off-Caper. To be a Cape Codder, you had to be born here, and your folks had to be born here before you. [laughter] Otherwise, you weren't a Cape Codder. [laughter]

RM: Do you remember your first automobile?

JB: Huh?

RM: Do you remember your first automobile?

JB: Oh, yeah. I remember the first automobile I ever – it was a little – they called it an Orient Buckboard, made in Waltham, and they made them in single cylinders and two cylinders – two cylinders V. The one I had was a single cylinder, four horsepower, and it was nothing but a wooden platform with four wheels on it, steered with a tiller. The motor was on the rear axle, and it had only two speeds. It had a low speed, which was kind of a planetary gear-like and a drive, which was high speed. It had no reverse. If you wanted to back the thing up, you had to throw it out in neutral, get out, and push it backward. Yeah. Well, I made three trips down to the Cape here – it was about a hundred miles from where I lived. I made three trips down to the Cape here with that, and only once did I make it without breaking down. [laughter] The other



two times, we broke down and had to go back and repair it. Had to take the train down and train back and fix it up and get it to a blacksmith shop or somewhere. There weren't many garages around in those days – very few. Perhaps, there'd be one garage every town, maybe, where you could buy a little gasoline. Some of them didn't have any tanks. They only had barrels of gasoline, and they'd pump it out of a barrel – hand pump it.

RM: You mean tanks on the car, they didn't have?

JB: Huh?

RM: They didn't have tanks –?

JB: They didn't have electrically-operated tanks.

RM: Oh, I see.

JB: They'd have a barrel with a hand tank in it, and they'd turn the crank; it would pump a gallon of gasoline into a measurement, and they'd pour it into your car usually through a chamois – a funnel with a chamois in it. That chamois was supposed to collect the water [inaudible].

RM: How much did gasoline cost then?

JB: Huh?

RM: How much did gasoline cost a gallon?

JB: Oh, god. Used to pay about eight, nine, ten cents a gallon for it. It was good and cheap.

RM: Did this car have headlights?

JB: Huh?

RM: Did it have headlights?

JB: It had –

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: I believe it had gas – we had a tank, acetylene tank, and it had gas headlights. It had an oil taillight – kerosene. You couldn't drive after dark because you couldn't see. Well, you couldn't see very far with those headlights. They weren't very much good. [laughter]

RM: And what other cars do you remember?

JB: Well, I remember my uncle that owned this dental supply business. He bought a 1906 Peerless. I can show you what that Peerless looked like. You want to go and get that. It had acetylene gas headlights, which came from a tank, a little gas tank, which was on one running board.

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: And it was a right-hand drive. You notice the wheel is on the right-hand side, see? Right-hand drive instead of a left-hand drive like you got now. And we had a couple of extra tires, and it had a top like that. My uncle usually folded the top over.

RM: That was considered –?

JB: Usually had the top up.

RM: That was a convertible.

JB: No, that's supposed to be a touring car. There's a seat in the back and a seat in the front.

RM: The top lifts up and down?

JB: Yeah. The top comes up and goes onto there. And then we had straps. That shows a rod, but we had straps, leather straps that went down there to the mudguards. It looked like that and had a crank on the front, and it had no starter; you had to crank the darn thing. [laughter] It was always breaking down. Believe it or not, they got around – well, over three thousand dollars for those cars in that days because it was one of the best cars made. There was a – Packard, Peerless, and Pierce Arrow were the three best cars. They were high-priced. There was a lot of other cheaper cars all the way down to Fords for about three hundred dollars. I always wanted my father –

Unknown: Just think if you could buy a car for three hundred dollars now.

JB: Yeah. I always wanted my father to buy a Hupmobile. They sold for seven hundred and fifty dollars, and they were a very nice, small car. He finally said he would buy one. But goldarnit, he died before he ever bought it. [laughter]

RM: Could you describe a Hupmobile to me?

JB: A Hupmobile? Yeah, there's a Hupmobile right there, see? It was a smaller car than the Peerless and a lighter car, and it sold for seven hundred and fifty dollars.

RM: And what year is this you're talking about now?

JB: Well, that's 1914, see? That's about what they – and they were a very nice little car. My God, if you could only get – I'd like to buy one for seven hundred and fifty dollars now, or a thousand dollars, even. They were a nice little car.

RM: How many cylinders were they?

JB: Oh, they were only four cylinders. There weren't many six-cylinder cars in those days.

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: Yeah. You could get a Peerless or a Packard or a Cadillac in a six-cylinder. My uncle bought a 1912 Cadillac, which was the first car to come out with electric lights and an electric starter. 1912 Cadillac.

RM: How much did he pay for that?

JB: Oh, God, I couldn't tell you now. I don't know what he paid for it, but I imagine it was a couple of thousand dollars or so. It was a darn nice car. It had electric lights and an electric starter, which was something new.

RM: Tell me about your trip down to the Cape when you were driving the Peerless.

JB: Yeah. Well, we used to – I used to come down when I was about seventeen or eighteen years old. I used to drive this Peerless.

RM: And what year would that be?

JB: Oh, let's see. 1910, I guess. My uncle bought this car secondhand in 1906, and it was about three or four years old in 1910. See, I'd be eighteen. I already had a chauffeur's license. You had to have a chauffeur's license to drive then for anyone besides yourself. He used to want to drive the car. He just wanted me around to change the tires and anything like that that happened. Well, on this trip, the damn thing – he was driving it, and it backfired and got on fire. Well, we stopped, and I got out. We got the hood up, and we flew handfuls of sand on it, and we got the fire out. And then, it wouldn't start. [laughter] So my uncle sent my brother-in-law, my sister's husband – said, "You go up to that farmhouse, and if they got a telephone, you telephone a garage, if there's such a thing as a garage in this town." [laughter] So he went up there, and meanwhile, I got to cleaning the thing up and fooling around with it. I said, "Try it now." I cranked it over, and it went, see? So he says, "Get in, get in." So I got in, and he started driving off. And I says, "Listen, aren't you going to wait for John (Carrol?) to come back? He's gone up there to that farmhouse." "Oh," he says, "let him make out the best he can. He can take the train down." [laughter] So we drove off and left the poor guy up there. He had to come down on the train. He got on the afternoon train as the train left Boston in the afternoon. He come down on that, so we went off and left the poor guy there. [laughter] I'll never forget that. That was my brother-in-law, my sister's husband. He was always taking – he'd let the clutch in too quick, and the damn thing would jump. And either the clutch would break, or he'd strip the differential gear [inaudible]. One time, we were driving along, and he run right smack into a telephone pole. I says, "Couldn't you avoid that pole there? You had plenty of room to ..." He says, "I saw it, but I couldn't get out of the way of it." [laughter] Oh, God.

RM: Did you have many accidents in those days?

Unknown: That was one, I guess, wasn't it?

JB: That was one right there. Yeah. Oh, we had quite a few accidents like that but never injured anybody. I never actually collided with another car.

RM: No head-on collisions?

JB: No, no. Thank God. [laughter]

RM: How fast would the cars travel?

JB: That car wouldn't go over forty miles an hour – wide open. Forty miles was [inaudible]. And if you ran it at forty miles an hour, you would overheat it or something. The regular speed was about thirty-five miles an hour; you could maintain that pretty good. [laughter]

RM: You mentioned getting a chauffeur's license. Can you tell me about getting a license?

JB: Well, as I remember it, we had to answer a few questions, and I think we had to drive a car, too. If you wanted to drive your own car, all you had to do was ask for a license, and they gave it to you. But if you wanted to work for anyone and drive their car, you had to get a chauffeur's license. It didn't cost very much, and it wasn't too much of an examination. A lot of the boys got it when they were sixteen years old, even. You could get one when you were sixteen. I think I was about eighteen. I got one when I was driving before that.

RM: Did you have to insure your automobiles?

JB: You didn't have to. You didn't have to have any insurance, but my uncle did have insurance. [laughter] He needed it. I never had any insurance on any cars I had or any motorcycles, either. I had half a dozen motorcycles. I used to be a motorcycle nut.

RM: Can you tell me about the first motorcycle you had?

JB: The first motorcycle I had was an M&M – so-called mechanical mistake or nickel-plated lemon. [laughter] It really was a Marsh-Metz, M&M. Some people called them nickel-plated lemon or mechanical marvel. [laughter] And the one I had – they about were about four horsepower, and they were belt drive. The one I had, one of the early ones – they had no clutch on them. The only way you could stop and leave the motor running was they had an idler on the belt. They were either flat belt drive – the belt about three inches wide from a pulley on the motor to the rear wheels. Some of them had a V belt, a V belt instead of a flat belt. My brother had a V-belt drive, and I had a flat-belt drive. I think the flat belt drive was the best because it could be repaired much easier than the V belt. That was hard to repair when it broke. But the flat belt drive, you could strap a piece of harness leather on there and get a few nails and nail it together; you could get home anyway, see? In order to start it, you had to push it; you had to run with it, and then when the motor started to fire, you had to jump off, and you landed on top of the

gas tank, or maybe you didn't, or maybe you fell off, or else you had to throw the idler [inaudible]. Well, we used to try to jump on. [laughter] We used to have a great time riding those old M&Ms. We had a motorcycle club there.

RM: What year was this that you're talking about that?

JB: Oh, about 1906. Well, let's see. Six and eight – fourteen. Well, it was probably a little later then, about 1907 or '08. Yeah. From then on, all the way, I always had a motorcycle. I bought an Indian – I had several Indians. I remember I had a 1913 and a 1915 Indian. Then I changed to Harley-Davidson – a '16 Harley-Davidson and an '18 Harley-Davidson. I got a picture upstairs of me on a Harley Davidson. I don't know whether she'd like to see that or not.

RM: When was the beginning of motorcycles? What year?

JB: Well, of course, they began quite a little while before I got that one.

RM: Was it before automobiles?

JB: Well, no, but along about the same time. There used to be a minister down here that had an Indian motorcycle. I remember he went from – when they got the [inaudible], he went from here to Buzzards Bay in forty-five minutes on that Indian. That was way back about 1906. So they were fairly good then. The Indian motorcycle was the best one for years.

RM: You mentioned a motorcycle club. Can you tell me about that?

JB: Yeah, well, you had a motorcycle club up in Hyde Park where I lived.

RM: Did you have one on the Cape?

JB: No. But that was more when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old, and I didn't come down here for only two weeks or so. I was working for my uncle, and I didn't have all summer vacation. I'd only be down there a couple of weeks, see?

RM: Can you tell me about when you first had electricity?

JB: Yeah. When I first came down here, we sold our place in Hyde Park, and we came down here in 1922. I was thirty years old. I threw out my job in Boston. My uncle had died. I got sick of working in the store there. I said, "I'm going down to the Cape." [laughter] My mother said, "Well, I'm not going to stay here alone. If you boys are going down there, I'm coming down too." So we sold the place and came down here, and we spent about ten thousand dollars fixing the place up. Well, they had no electric lights down there, and we put in a little diesel generator and a bank of batteries. That was a thirty-two-volt system. Well, we used that for two or three years. Then the Cape and Vineyard come through here with the electric lights. I wanted to see them come through, and I bought fifteen hundred dollars worth of their stock. My father bought the place.

RM: What was spool wiring in 1898?

JB: Spool wiring? Well, it was a little spool like that, [inaudible] nail. Your nail went down through, and you nailed that spool. That spool would have a split; it would come apart, and you put the wire through that, see? The spool insulated the wire. That was on the earliest wiring they did. You can see some examples of that around here. Over to our old house over there, there's a few – a little bit of spool wiring left there. I don't know whether [inaudible] or not. That was the first wiring they did. It had a porcelain insulator. It was split in the middle, and they put the wire through there. Then a nail went down through there, and you nailed it into the beams where you wanted to go. It was alright, but it was exposed there. After that, they passed a law you couldn't use – you had to use this BX, which was in the cable. Well, then, years after that, they outlawed the BX. So now they've gone back to put cable again. And they don't even have porcelain insulators; they just put staples over that cable.

RM: You mean the wire was exposed? If you touched that wire, would you –?

JB: Well, no, they got a heavy insulation. The cable that they use now is much better and heavier than the covering. The covering on that wire they used with the spool wiring wasn't very thick, and it could chafe off easy, or it could dry out. Now, I got the cable down there – it's as big as my finger that they use now. But the earliest wiring was that spool wiring, and you can still see some examples of it in some of the old houses. It's illegal, I guess, to use it, to have electricity run through it. You've got to replace it with the modern stuff.

RM: You mentioned you remodeled the house in 1922. What did that house look like?

JB: Well, it was just a typical Cape Cod house. My father paid seven hundred and fifty dollars for it. The house on the land where [inaudible] across the street. I've got the check somewhere, but I can't find it. I found it a while back.

RM: That was in 1898 he paid that.

JB: 1898. He bought it from a man named Feeley, T.C. Feeley. It's an old house and probably a couple hundred years old. When we came down here to live, we cut off the old L, the kitchen L, and built a new L on. Meantime, before we did that, we raised up the house and dug a cellar – dug a cellar under the L and built a new L on over that, see? So we had an L on there with a cellar, where we could put a heater and anything else we wanted down there. There's no cellar under the main house. All, of course, we had was a little round, typical Cape Cod cellar. We spent about – well, I guess we spent nearly ten thousand dollars on the whole job there. We raised the house up, and we moved it away from the line; it was too close – within two or three feet of the next neighbor's line. We moved it away, dug a new cellar, built a new L on. We had Fred Snow. Fred Snow did the work.

RM: That seems a lot alike –

JB: Huh?

RM: Excuse me. That seems like a lot of work back in those days.

JB: Well, it was a lot of work. Fred worked all one summer. He had four or five guys working with him. Every once in a while, he'd say, "I want another thousand dollars." So I'd give him a check for a thousand dollars. About another month, he'd say, "I need another thousand dollars." I'd say to (Everett?), "Your turn." [laughter] And he'd give him a check for a thousand.

RM: Well, what were you doing besides putting in a foundation and cellar?

JB: And that foundation all had to be mixed by hand and poured, see. Then we built an L on, a two-story L, all new. And we had to have all new plumbing, all new wiring.

RM: Oh, you had indoor plumbing then?

JB: Oh, yeah. By that time, when I came down – when I threw out my job and come down here, my uncle had died, and he had no children of his own. He left the business to my brother and I and four others. I owned a six share in that business. So I says, "I'll let the guy that's running it run it."

RM: What did you do for a livelihood?

JB: Well, I had that boat that I used to take parties out. I used to take parties out for five dollars on the tide, ten dollars all day.

RM: What kind of boat was it?

JB: It was a second-handed trap boat – a twenty-six-foot trap boat. Eight and a half feet wide. I got it over to (Chatham?). So if I made – lots of days – lots of times, I'd make twenty-five or thirty dollars a week on my own, taking parties out. So I was doing pretty good where guys were working for dollars a day.

Unknown: Never did happen [inaudible].

JB: What?

Unknown: Never did happen [inaudible].

JB: No. He didn't go with me. He didn't go with me on the boat. [Recording paused.] Bought a dragger, and it cost five thousand dollars, see? I couldn't run it alone. So (Everett?) offered to go in with me on it. So from then on, until we sold the dragger, he was with me. Then I bought another boat after I sold the dragger.

RM: All right. Getting back to the trap boat. What is a trap boat?

JB: Well, a trap boat is a boat that they tend the fish trap in. They set these fish traps or fish weirs – some people call them a weir. The Cape Codders used to call them traps. At low tide

every day, you'd go out with this boat and put a seine around the weir and take the fish out. Well, it had to be a burdensome boat because you'd get to – oh, you'd get three or four tons of fish sometimes. So they take them – dump them right into this boat, put a seiner on inside the weir. Get them up and load them into this trap boat. Then the trap boat would take them to shore, and they'd have to clean them and ice them and filet them, whatever they were going to do. So they would use them for a few years, and then they would get a new one. And they were nice, sturdy boats.

RM: Sailboats?

JB: Oh, no, motorboats.

RM: Can you tell me about those trips that you took people out on?

JB: Well, I used to take them out to catch tautog. There were bass around here, but nobody seemed to want to go bass fishing, although there were bass around here, and they caught them in the fish [inaudible]. I used to take them out, and all I had to do was run out and anchor on the fish grounds. There used to be a lot of grass on the bottom there in those days. Then there'd be holes, sand holes, in between. We'd try to anchor over a sand hole where there was grass around it. These tautog would be in the grass. You'd throw your hook and line down in that sand hole, and they'd come out of the grass and bite it. Well, usually, if you go out on a four-hour trip and usually, you'd catch a half a barrel to a barrel of fish. That is, you'd catch a hundred pounds to a couple hundred pounds. I used to get five dollars for that, for taking them out. I only had to run out about a couple of miles. It didn't use very much gas – and anchor and fish. It wasn't like fishing for bass, where you keep trawling all day long and use a lot of gas. We anchored and fished on the bottom. If I stayed over low water, it was ten dollars. I remember I used to average about twenty-five or thirty bucks a week just before I got married.

RM: How do you spell tautog?

JB: T-A-U-T-O-G. It's a Nauset Indian name for – the New Yorkers call them black fish. They grow as big as thirteen pounds, but the average of them will be five pounds.

RM: Can you tell me any stories about your fishing party trips?

JB: [laughter] Well, I could tell you a lot of stories because a lot of the guys who took out the – didn't care too much about fishing. They wanted to drink. They wanted to drink, and they wanted to shoot [inaudible] and have a good time. I remember one time taking some Jewish people out, and it come up pretty rough, see? The waves were breaking over the bow. We had no windshield on [inaudible]. When I used to come in, before you had [inaudible] the waves, I used to have to oil up.

RM: You used to have to what?

JB: I used to have to oil up, put oilskins on. This Jewish fellow – “Is it alright? It's alright, ain't it? We ain't in trouble, are we?” I said, “Hell no. We're alright. Catch your fish.” [laughter] So



then I'd take them in. I'd put on oilskins. If the wind was southwest, and I had to come in [inaudible], the waves and the spray would go out; they'd get soaked. I had oilskins on; I didn't care. [laughter]

RM: What year was this?

JB: Oh, that's when I first came down – 1922, '23, '24, around there. I got married in '25. [laughter]

RM: Any other stories about your fishing trips?

JB: They used to get drunk and fall overboard once in a while. And all kinds of people. I had one guy down here; he was a wealthy man. He said, "I want to go out fishing tomorrow, Jack. I'll hire your whole boat. I'll pay you thirty dollars. You won't have to take anyone else." So I said, "Well, will you promise to leave the liquor home?" "Oh, yes, I won't take any liquor," he would say." I won't tell you who this guy was because he was a prominent guy around here. He said, "Oh, yes, I'll leave the liquor home." So I get him out there. First thing I knew, he'd have some liquor. He'd stand up in the boat fishing. I'd be afraid he'd fall over. So I'd take a rope, and I'd take a clove hitch around his ankle, and I'd tie it over to a cleat. If he fell overboard, I was going to pull him in again. [laughter] When he got ready to go in, he said, "Now, here's your thirty dollars." He pulled out a roll of bills – tens, twenties, fifties even there. He was [inaudible] two or three [inaudible] overboard. So he gives me –

Unknown: [inaudible] drunk.

JB: Yeah, he was drunk. He gave me the thirty bucks, and I got him ashore and got him off the boat without him falling in. He was a good guy. He was a good guy, but he couldn't leave that liquor alone at times.

Unknown: I don't think I'd want him on the boat if he's falling over.

JB: Yeah. I used to tie a rope around his ankle. I got him [inaudible].

RM: Did you ever lose any of your passengers?

JB: Oh, no. [inaudible].

RM: Never had to rescue them?

JB: I've had them fall over and pick them up again.

RM: What did you do after you had the party boat?

JB: I bought a dragger.

RM: What's a dragger?

JB: A dragger was a boat that fishes on the bottom, either for shellfish or for finfish, either for flounders and cod or else for scallops or quahogs. We used to drag quahogs, my brother and I. We paid five thousand dollars for the boat, and the first year we sold five thousand dollars worth of quahogs. But, of course, it wasn't all profit. We put in our day's work, and we had to buy gas and keep the boat up. But we sold five thousand dollars the first year.

RM: What year would this be?

JB: Oh, 1930, '31, '32. I kept that boat eleven years. I got a picture of it.

RM: What was the name of the boat?

JB: Well, we couldn't agree on a name, so we had no name on it. [laughter] We had no name on it, just a number. It was a thirty-five-foot, thirty-five by eleven, brand-new. It was planked in inch-and-a-quarter oak planks. It had to be steamed to be put on. It was a real heavy boat, which is good for a dragger. A dragger needs to be a heavy boat.

Unknown: [inaudible]

JB: We had a forty-horsepower heavy-duty [inaudible]. We had a starter on that motor, which was a very unordinary thing in those days. Most fishermen didn't have a starter. They had to crank the damn thing over. He used to stand on the [inaudible] sometime and kick it over. But we had a starter on there. The guy that built it – Franklin Post down in Mystic, Connecticut. He says, "You got a damn strong boat." He says, "It would stand most anything but rocks, and it will stand a few of them." Inch and a quarter oak planks, see? It was rugged.

RM: Can you tell me any stories about the dragger?

JB: Well, we used it eleven years. We had it during the war. I sold it right off after the war in '45. When the war was over in '45, a lot of people wanted to go fishing again. It took a long while to get a boat built. And there weren't many second hand ones. We sold. I think we got thirty-five hundred dollars for it. After that, I bought a smaller boat. I took out a few parties, not too many.

RM: Well, tell me about some of your trips to Billingsgate.

JB: [laughter] Well, I can tell you about one trip over to Billingsgate. We went out, and we dragged our –

RM: Tell me what Billingsgate is, first of all.

JB: Huh?

RM: Tell me about Billingsgate.

JB: Well, Billingsgate is an island at the mouth of Wellfleet Harbor. It used to be four or five acres in area, but it kept shrinking and shrinking. As years went by, it kept eroding off and flattening out so that now it's completely underwater at high water. At low water, there's still –

RM: What was on the island when you knew it?

JB: Well, there used to be houses on there. Dr. (Richardson?), I believe it was, had a gunning camp over there. Used to go over there and shoot ducks and shoot shorebirds over there, too. There were several fishermen that had little camps over there. In the summertime, they used to go over there and live there, and they'd go fishing for tautog. They got five cents a pound for those tautog then even. Or they'd go bull raking for quahogs. There always used to be a lighthouse on them. They had to move that lighthouse several times. It kept getting down, getting down where the water was so close, they were afraid it would cave in. Then they'd move it. Usually, they just knocked the old one down, and there was plenty of bricklaying there where they knocked it down. People would go over there with the boat and load up with those bricks. If you wanted a thousand bricks, you just went over to Billingsgate Island [inaudible], picked them up, and put them in your boat. Well, you had to clean them off. After you got them home, you had to clean them off. But still, it was cheap. It was cheaper than – although, they only cost about two, or three, or four cents apiece. Anyway, that's where everybody got their bricks. There used to be – I remember Bill Bailey. There was a guy named Bill Bailey who was the lighthouse keeper over there. He lit the light. He lit the light every day. He had a boat that (Amos Heard?) built him – right up the street. (Amos Heard?) lived up near the Odd Fellows Hall there. (Amos Heard?) built this boat for the lighthouse keeper. When he needed supplies, he would come into Orleans, or he would run into Wellfleet. He could go into either place. You couldn't get out of Wellfleet [inaudible] either, or you couldn't get out of [inaudible] low tide. So he had to figure it. So he would come in here in the morning and get his supplies, get back in time to light the light. I don't know. Maybe he had a wife who'd light the light. I think he did have a wife there. Bill Bailey. He'd come in here for supplies every once in a while.

RM: How far a trip would that be from here to Billingsgate?

JB: About six miles from here. Probably five. You could see the light.

RM: Tell me about your fishing trip to Billingsgate.

JB: Tell you about that trip to Billingsgate. [laughter] The one I remember so much – we went out there, and we got our quahogs. We got our twenty bushels of quahogs; that's all we were allowed to take.

RM: How many people?

JB: Huh?

RM: How many people?

JB: Just my brother and I. We could get a dollar and a half a bushel for them. We got our thirty dollars for our days' work, see? So we had to wait; we couldn't get in. So it breezed up northeast, kind of rough.

RM: What do you mean you couldn't get in?

JB: Well, the water. You see, we couldn't get in [inaudible]. So I said, "Let's run over [inaudible] horseshoe." [inaudible] get a few hours rest, maybe. So we ran over. We ran in the horseshoe. I showed you that picture. We run the boat right up the [inaudible] anchor with a little bit of [inaudible]. So I said, "When it floats again, on the [inaudible] tide, we'll be all set to come in." So we went along and turned in. The first thing we knew, we heard somebody coming onboard the boat. [laughter] Lo and behold, it was the Coast Guard from Provincetown. They were looking for guys that had been running rum. They saw those bags of quahogs on deck, and they thought they were bags of rum. [laughter] They come aboard the boat, and they looked in the bags, and they found they were quahogs. Then they looked below to see what we had for a motor, whether we had a big, powerful, fast motor. Now, we had a powerful, heavy-duty [inaudible] motor. So they said, "Sorry, boys. We got to watch out for these guys around here. They're running quite a lot of rum in here lately."

RM: What would a fast, powerful motor be? What did that mean?

JB: A big speedy motor that would drive the boat fast like a Hall-Scott or something, a large motor. We had a heavy-duty slow motor. Powerful motor. We didn't have one that would drive the boat fast. We couldn't drive that boat over – twelve miles an hour was about as fast as she goes. She'd only turn up about seven hundred and fifty revolutions – slow motor.

RM: Who would be using the fast motor?

JB: Well, these guys that run the rum in. [laughter]

RM: I see.

JB: They'd go offshore and get a lot of rum, and they wanted to move. They'd get in and unload it before daylight. They had to run offshore about –

Unknown: Didn't they sometimes unload it beforehand, then go back and pick it up?

JB: Sometimes, when the Coast Guard kept chasing them, they would take a trawl line, which is a long line that they set out with hooks on it to catch codfish – they'd take a trawl line, and every – about every five or six feet, they'd tie a sack – the liquor was in sacks – they'd tie a sack to it. The Coast Guard got pushing them too much. They'd drop it overboard, and it would go under to the bottom and be fastened to that line, strung up. Well, they'd know where they dropped their – and they'd go back later on, hook it, and pick it up. Some of us fishermen used to get on [inaudible], and we'd try to pick it up first. I know I hooked a line of it once. I had a large – what do you call it that I was dragging? A grapnel. I had a large grapnel with three or four grapnel hooks on it. I hooked on. I put it on [inaudible] and started pulling it up. I got it right

out of the water. There were three or four sacks hanging there. This guy come up alongside of me, and he pulls out this shotgun. He says, "Cast that loose. Let that go, or I'm going to let this shotgun go at you." [laughter] It was a guy from Provincetown, a well-known rum runner. I got down behind the bulwark on the edge of the boat, and I wasn't going to let it go. I was going to let him shoot. Well, I had to reach out with one hand and [inaudible] there. Meanwhile, the boat was pulling on it. I should have thrown out the clutch, but the boat was pulling too tight, and it broke the damn line. [laughter] The booze went down in the water again. I says, "Tomorrow when I come out, I'm going to have [inaudible]." [laughter] There was half a dozen other boats around me. They saw that liquor. They knew where it was. Tomorrow, there was nothing there. [laughter] That was a well-known Provincetown fellow. We had some local boys that [chose] to rum run. They had a boat called the *No More* because they had been caught once and the boat confiscated. They got this other boat, and they called it the *No More*. Well, they went out, and they got a load of liquor. They came back in the bay here. Ourselves and half a dozen other boats were dragging quahogs. Well, they got right in the middle, and they anchored there so that the Coast Guard would think they were dragging quahogs. If they watched them, they'd seen they didn't move. Well, they had a lot of liquor on deck there, and they started sampling it. They were two local boys here. They got plastered. Well, when it come time to go in, everyone else went in. They were too plastered to move. They stayed there. The Coast Guard come out and nailed them. [laughter]

RM: What happened to the *No More*?

JB: [inaudible], too. I could tell you who they were – they were two local boys – but I better not, I guess. [laughter] Another time, the Coast Guard chased one of them all the way in. He wasn't a real rum runner, but he picked up quite a few cases. They were suspicious of him. They were right on his tail. He had about a half a mile ahead of them. He came in the creek. When he got in the creek, he started dumping the bags over. By the time he got up to the wharf where he tied up, he didn't have any. It was all in the bottom of the creek. Well, at low water, you should have seen the gang out there. [laughter] [inaudible] out of the creek. It was terrible. Most of it was terrible rotgut. Oh, god. I don't know whether it had wood alcohol in it or not.

RM: What do you mean, rotgut?

JB: Oh, terrible whiskey. Whiskey, to be good, has got to be aged. It should be aged.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----  
Reviewed by Molly Graham 10/14/2022