

Carrie Kline: Can you do like this?

Michael Kline: How are you feeling today?

Olivia Miriam Williams Haynie: Just same every day.

MK: Same every day, huh? Can you start out by telling us your full name? Say, "My name is."

OMWH: Yes. My name is Olivia, O-L-I-V-I-A, Miriam, M-I-R-I-A-M, Williams, W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S, and then Haynie. My family name was Williams and Haynie is the last, H-A-Y-N-I-E. Did you get that?

CK: Yes.

MK: We never ask people their ages, but maybe you would tell us your date of birth.

OMWH: Oh, I don't mind telling you. I'm ninety-seven, almost a hundred. I'll tell you the date of my birthday, 1906.

MK: What was the month and day?

OMWH: April 23rd.

MK: Well, maybe we could start out. Maybe you would tell us about your people and where you were raised.

OMWH: Well, all my people on all sides have been here since 1600s. So, I'm a thoroughbred Northern Neck. Northern Neck, I don't know if you're familiar with it, is on Northeast Coast and it starts at Fredericksburg and ends down here at the Chesapeake Bay. The Northern Neck is almost an island. It is attached to the mainland by a small amount of land at Fredericksburg. Can you understand that? You may not be able to understand. I'm hoarse and you may not understand my dialect [laughter] either.

CK: No, we understand.

OMWH: You do?

MK: Yes.

OMWH: If you don't, just ask.

CK: This is very helpful the way you are laying it out.

OMWH: Yes, just ask me. I guess I've always been interested in history because I had grandparents and I listened to the stories when I was a child. Especially one of my grandmothers told me a lot. Well, I don't know exactly what you want to know.

MK: Well, this is fine. Yes. What was her name?

OMWH: Well, I had another grandmother too. But this one, her name was Florence, F-L-O-R-E-N-C-E, Covington, C-O-V-I-N-G-T-O-N. That was her maiden name. She married a Jett, J-E-T-T. There are a great many Jetts and Haynies down here. Most of the old family names were Haynie and Jett. My grandmother was a child during the Civil War, and her father was killed in the Battle of the Wilderness. She was very bitter about the war. I think you all are both from the north. I don't like to tell these things, but I can say she was bitter. She started telling me all about it when I was child.

CK: What did she say?

MK: So, you think as Northerners we would find her words harsh or her memories harsh?

OMWH: If you'd find the truth.

MK: I would like to hear it no matter how bad it hurts.

OMWH: The truth is harsh.

MK: I would like to hear it no matter how bad it hurts.

OMWH: Well, I'll just speak about this area. Is that what you want? Or do you want Virginia, or...

MK: Well, let us focus primarily on this area. But what were her memories of the war that she shared with you?

OMWH: Well, she was a child, I think seven or eleven years old, when the man came down the lane that she and her mama lived, and brother lived. The home was called Chestnut Grove in Northumberland County. This man came down to tell them that her father and her mother's husband were killed. He was killed in the Battle of the Wilderness near Spotsylvania Courthouse. I guess you object to me calling them Yankees. Do you? I know you do.

MK: No, I do not. Not at all. No.

OMWH: Well, the night, he wasn't quite dead. The Federals brought the dead and wounded soldiers into this – it was a big home up there in Spotsylvania. He was my great-grandfather. They brought him by mistake. I guess it was because they didn't have very good uniforms. The mothers would weave the cloth and use vegetable dyes from grapes and they varied some. They weren't all beautiful like blue and brass buttons like the Federal Army had. By mistake, he was brought into the grounds on the lawn of this home in Spotsylvania Courthouse. The lady, of course who lived there, belonged to the Southerners. They took her house over and I guess for office or something. But she went out that night and looked around and she found that among all the Federal soldiers that it was one that was Confederate. That happened to be my great-

grandfather. She talked to him and he told her my grandmother's name and to please try to let her know that, well, he was dying. All he had in his pocket was a Confederate note. They were not much. Confederate money wasn't any good anyway at that time. He had a ring that he had made. He was in the 15th Virginia Cavalry. The ring was out of a horse. How the tail in a horse, he wove it around in a ring. He gave that lady the ring and his name. Of course, they didn't have much in the way of postal, but things were carried by hands or by different ways. She finally got the news about him and he died that night. This Southern lady and one of her servants went out and brought him as close as they could and they dug a shallow grave, it must have been, and buried him. Then she finally got all the news down in the Northern Neck to my great-grandmother. After the war was over, my grandfather and great-grandfather went up there in an ox and wagon and got his remains. Anyway, they got his remains and brought him back. That was a distance from the end of Northern Neck up to past Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania. They were in an oxcart. Southern people were very close in their family ties. Anyway, I don't know how long it took them to get home and he was buried back of their home, the Covington home. But later, the remains were moved to the modern cemetery of Roseland, Reedville, Virginia. That's where he's buried. That was just one instance. So much went on and so many were killed. The women were at home with the real old men who were not fit for the army and the young boys up to about – I think they could go in when they were fifteen. But my grandfather was, I think, eleven years old when it broke out. He was in the Northumberland Home Guard. The home guard was composed of very old men and boys who could not serve in the army. My grandfather said because he was a boy in the guard, he thought they did more harm than good because – well, I should tell you this first, are you familiar with the map of Northern Neck? There's Rappahannock and the Potomac River and at the end of is Chesapeake Bay. They only joined on about a little bit of land at Fredericksburg. So, it was almost like an island. People traveled by water and all. Well, when the Civil War started, the Federals blockaded all the rivers and everything and the gunboats, and they were out in Chesapeake Bay. Then they would come up in the rivers and creeks and shell their homes. My father's home was on – well you don't know the name, but it's Cockrell's Creek is what surrounds this point. They were all shelled and the bricks knocked out of the house. My home, the one I was raised in, had a hole in the underpinning where part of a shell was still there and it's still there now. My father never did put the bricks back. I don't know why, but maybe he just wanted to leave them. One of the family was in the room when they shot the underpinning. The Northumberland Home Guard, they shot at the gunboats. As my grandfather said, he thought they did more harm than good because they drew the fire of the Federal boats. Then down at Fleeton, which is – I don't know if you – you'll have to get a map and study it, I think, to understand. That book you were looking at, there's a map in that. Do you still have it out there?

CK: No. I glanced at the map though.

OMWH: I guess this is it. The map, there it is. If you study that, you'd understand it better.

CK: Thank you. I can see Fleeton.

OMWH: Can you find the Northern Neck?

CK: Yes.

OMWH: Can you look at the end of it where you see Fleet's Point?

CK: Yes.

OMWH: All that part, everything was blockaded, so people couldn't leave. You all are above the Mason-Dixon line and I hate to tell you – I don't know whether you want the truth or not.

MK: Go ahead.

OMWH: All right. They would go ashore and steal everything they could. Go to the meat house and take out the meat. Go to the dairy, drink bowls of milk. They just put them up to the mouths and drink it because they didn't have much milk on the Federal boats, I guess. The Federal gunboats were composed of all kinds of boats that the government converted into gunboats. I had pictures of some of them. One of them was sunk not far from here in the [inaudible]. But if it's going to be a brief thing, I can't tell you all the little details and things. So, I don't know how you want me to tell you exactly. How do you want me to?

MK: Well, I am interested in hearing it all. I do not know whether we can. I doubt that we can hear it all today.

OMWH: Well, I could talk all twenty-four hours.

MK: [laughter]

OMWH: Because everybody in my family on both sides were involved in it and killed.

MK: They all told stories about it, I am sure. You heard this from your foreparents?

OMWH: Yes. My goodness, I should say I did when I was a child. That's the reason I became interested in history. I don't know how to tell you because it would take me too long. I can give you a general idea, but you're not going to like it, I don't think. They went ashore. They stole everything they could. Killed the pigs, the pork. If you look through the book, there's some illustrations in there of it. They were trying to crush the civilians as well as those in the armies. They took all the food until the people were starving. I don't think there's any Negro here, but they would go ashore and secretly tell the Negroes that they would take them away. Then in the night they would come and get them and they'd all leave. I know they carried them to Washington and they didn't have any place really for them in Washington. I'm speaking of the federal boats now, the gunboats. A lot of them died. There was smallpox and a lot of them wrote to the masters that the Southern owned them and wanted to come back and all that. The people who owned the home and the plantations, some were small and some were large. They'd wake up in the morning, they'd all be gone. I know in my family, that one who lived down near the Chesapeake Bay. At that time, when they had little boys, every white boy had a little colored boy. Well, you can't use the word colored anymore. But they didn't call them Black, they called them colored. He always had a little companion of his age. He played with him, guarded him, and all that. I know my grandfather had a little boy like that. When the gunboat came and they'd

sent a small boat, I guess, ashore, and took them off. The dogs were still there. I think they took the pigs. In fact, I own a piece of land exactly where it happened. This is just one little incident that I'm trying to describe what was happening all over the south. Down here by being almost an island and so much water everywhere, they gunboats always kept it blockaded. I should say, they would go ashore. I know that one of my grandmothers was left alone. Her husband was in the army. She had called the Black servants and the federals came one day. I think they were riding, came down the lane and they said that they wanted a meal. There was a whole lot of them. My grandmother was real young. She was a bride, really. She got her friend and servant to help them. She said, "We get to fix a real good meal." The people then were good cooks and they got together everything they could. The officer thanked her and washed. They were doing that. They were lying up out in the yard, resting under the – they had big old trees. After that, he thanked them and they left and they didn't burn the house. That's the reason she did it. Because she didn't want them to burn the home, so they didn't. A lot of it depended on who the officers all were in these outfits. Some of them were very nice and treated the white or the Confederates' women and all with respect. Some of them didn't. One thing that they did, if they saw any certificate or anything that referred to the Masonic lodge, they would spare that house. There's one in Heathsville. I don't know if you are familiar with that. It's in Northumberland County, not far from here. The soldiers had orders to burn the house. They had put everything around it and ready to burn it when the officers saw a Masonic pin or something of that kind on a portrait of somebody in the parlor of the house. They had this Masonic little thing. He changed the orders and they didn't burn the house. It's still there. I'm giving you these incidents, but they happened all the time. The same things. I had three or four stories about the Masons in one of the books, *The Stronghold*, and I think there's some in *The Family by the Sea*. Ask me what you want to know, I'll try to tell you.

MK: Well, at the time that you were telling me about the Civil War, I guess the principal travel then was by water. Was it?

OMWH: Yes. Well, they had on the plantations and all that, they had beautiful horses. But the federal gunboat took them too. They took horses, they took pianos, they snatched a locket off one lady's throat that I knew of. I could go on and on. There was no use to...

MK: After the war was over, then...

OMWH: The carpetbaggers came.

MK: The carpetbaggers came. [laughter] Talk about that. Talk about the recovery after the war and the steamboats and how people traveled and everything at that time.

OMWH: Well, I don't know that I want to call the names of anybody, but they did come down from the north and they bought up land because the Southerners didn't have money enough for the taxes. They came down and the carpetbaggers picked over everything they could get. I don't guess you want to hear that, but that was true. I'm telling you everything is true. What is your next question?

MK: Well, let us go to your own childhood when you were a little girl. Can you remember

the...

OMWH: Of course, I can.

MK: Tell me about the steamboat travel and the other kinds of travel at that time.

OMWH: Well, the steamboat came down here to Reedville from Baltimore. If I could find that book, I could show you a picture. Wait just a minute. Can you turn that off?

CK: Kim? Kim? I think she has gone upstairs, maybe.

OMWH: Let's see which other. As you said, that's a poem.

CK: Do you remember the poem, to say it?

OMWH: What?

CK: Do you remember how the poem goes?

OMWH: That poem goes, "The steamer was –" I don't know. I can't repeat it, but it's in there. But I put it in there. I have a picture and here of the two of me my husband took.

MK: So, can you talk about the first steamboat you ever remember seeing?

OMWH: Yes.

MK: Where you were and what the boat was doing and what you were doing?

OMWH: Yes. Well, so many here, but it too, I can't find it.

CK: I will have a look.

OMWH: There is a good picture in there. Let me see that. There you go.

CK: Let us hear you talk about it. Can we?

OMWH: What?

CK: Can we hear you talk about it for a while?

OMWH: Yes. The steamboat was our connection with another world. Because down here, we didn't travel to Richmond, hardly ever, or Fredericksburg. We had close contact with Baltimore City and went up on a steamboat. You'd get on at about 5:00 p.m. in the afternoon and spend the night on the boat. You'd arrive in Baltimore in the early morning. My first remembrance about it was going on a boat when it was early in the morning. They would load on – no, I don't mean that. That was in the evening, was when they loaded the steamboat. Sometimes there were a lot

of calves. Especially calves and other animals. They'd take them away from the mothers. If you were a passenger on the steamer, you could hear the calves all night bleating for their mothers. You could hear all these animal sounds. They were in the lower part of the steamboat. Then they had the upper part, the salon or the saloon they called it. There was no alcohol served that I know of. That was very Victorian, the red carpet and brass and mirrors. It was all glamorous. They saw the lounge, they called it the saloon and they served good meals. They had separate rooms they called staterooms. If you couldn't afford to pay it, then you could go in the cabin, which was just a place like a part of the vessel. They were like closets. It was dark because they didn't have electric lights and that wasn't too good. But people could afford to go in there when they couldn't afford the stateroom. They also, a lot of times, carried their food with them, like fried chicken and all that, to save the money because they didn't have the money. Staterooms were small rooms with bunks and one little portholes. If you were in a stateroom, you could hear these calves. Still hear them in the sound of the boat. We left there and my first impression of that, I remember. We arrived in Baltimore in the very early morning. I could see these street cars going all around the edge of the city. I could see it from the boat. That impressed me a lot, all the movement they had. Next thing that impressed me, they had lots of bananas there. Lots and lots of bananas. They had markets down there at the dock. Each steamboat had a pier. Not a pier. What is it?

MK: A wharf? A wharf?

OMWH: They had a slip, each one did. The one that came down here, and I was familiar with, was Piankatank. That's the Indian name was taken from the river. They had all those boats too. Well, that's the one I remember. As I said, when they loaded it in the evening, lots of people would go and watch them because the calves, the stevedores had a way of twisting the calves' tail and pushing it on. It was like a show. They had practiced it. So, they took the tail and twisted and pushed the calves aboard. That was very interesting to watch them. Usually when you left, some of your family or friends were down to tell you goodbye. When you got in Baltimore, it's very often you had somebody to greet you because the people from down here in the Northern Neck went backwards and forwards to Baltimore all the time. It helped them a lot because they had college. They went to college there, went to the Peabody for music and the libraries in Pratt Library. Lots of people went to college there. My mother did. I always had some relatives in Baltimore, they called it the Virginia poorhouse. It was after the Civil War. Everything was gone and some would go up there and start a boarding house for the people from Northern Neck to come and stay at the boarding houses. A lot of people got jobs up there. I don't know what they would have done without Baltimore at that time. Baltimore, the Southern Maryland, were friends of the south. They helped a lot during the war. Over on the right, the Potomac Grove, they would cross, well, most all the men were able to go in the army. But the Southerners would send them food and they'd get medicine. Quinine was the main thing for the malaria. It was the main thing. I don't know what they would have done. They'd stalled, I guess, if it hadn't been for the Southern Maryland across the Potomac on that side. Of course, the other side was Rappahannock. That was part of the Southern Confederates lived there. You ask me some questions, maybe I can answer them.

MK: Oh, you are doing great. This is just what I wanted to hear. So, you would catch the steamboat here at Reedville?

OMWH: Yes, at about 5:00 p.m. if you were going to Baltimore. You spent the night on the boat. In the early morning, you were in Baltimore.

MK: Can you describe the wharf here at Reedville where the boat landed and everything that was happening?

OMWH: Well, they would call them the steamboat wharves.

MK: I am sorry?

OMWH: I can't talk. Very good.

MK: You are doing great. You are doing great.

OMWH: The steamboat wharves, they'd call them. They were just like you know how wharves were built, don't you? They call them docks and all now, but W-H-A-R-F or W-H-A-R-V-E-S. They had a steamboat wharves all along down there. The steamboat landing here was Reedville. There was one named Tims, one named Blackwells, and the name for different things. They made these stops to take on passengers and the things they freighted up there. They served very good meals on the steamboat, like crabs and ice cream and things like that. The rooms were neat and they had bunks and clean. They were clean too. The officers, the person and all, had uniforms, a dark blue with brass buttons. The captain and the person, I don't know about the others. People were treated with courtesy and it was a very nice way of traveling and being in touch with a cosmopolitan city was good. The people then, yes, – well, I guess I shouldn't sound like I was bragging – but they were not likely backwoods pioneers because they were educated lots in Baltimore and they studied music. They went to medical school and they were more sophisticated, I should say, than the average pioneer people.

MK: You attribute that to the connections that were made with the steamboat?

OMWH: Yes, I do. It was Baltimore. It was everything to the people here. When I first remember it, it was like that. It was on up until in the last of the [19]30s. They were the first, I guess now. When the steamboat stopped on account of the trucks and mechanical machines and better roads, and they started going to Richmond then. But when I was a child, I went there when I was nine years old to Richmond. But most of the travel was Baltimore. It was very few who went to Richmond. Baltimore was a wonderful place. It was settled by Germans. They had these big markets with everything. I remember the first time I went to the market with my mother, and it was like – I can't describe it because I didn't understand at that time. But it must have been a big roof and people had stalls all along and the floor was sawdust. The man had on white shirts and then they'd have a straw cuff that came on up to here to keep him clean. They had things to waste.

MK: Scales?

OMWH: Yes, scales everywhere hanging down and they'd weigh. They had cheese and meats



and sausages. The German people always had good food. They were the ones that first settled there. It was very interesting to go down to the market. I went there with my mother and I was real little. Later, too, when I remember my first visit when I was quite a small child. The men had those that have straw hats. They called them boaters, I think B-O-A-T-E-R-S. They wore those that had a black bandana around. They had clean shirts and these cost to keep them clean. You could get most anything you wanted to eat there. They brought it in from the country, I think, Maryland. As I said before, after the Civil War, and I think before the Civil War, people from Northern Neck, women, widows who couldn't make a living would sometimes start a boarding house in Baltimore. The people from the Northern Neck would always go to those boarding houses. The houses were row houses joined together. You went in and it was very dark in there. I guess, well, there were lots of nice houses. They had marble seals and windows and always lacking the power. There was a mirror going from the floor to ceiling and a window on each side with marble seals. It was pretty dark in the buildings. But at that time, on our first one, I guess there were gas lights. But light, of course, they were electric. But the people who ran the boarding houses, in the back of the house, they had a little bit of backyard. It had a high board fence, more than six feet tall, I guess, to give privacy. All that was new to me when I first went. I'd never seen anything like that. They had beautiful, beautiful parks there. The street cars paid for the upkeep of the parks. They ran right much between the street cars. They had just beautiful flowers like pansies. When they'd be not blooming, they'd have something else. I don't know whether it was every night or once a week that they had – I don't know what you'd call the place, but in the park for band. They would come and give free musicals. They were Germans. Most of all of them were Germans. My memories of Baltimore as a child were more of the street cars and the parks and the music that they had in the evening. In that part of Baltimore – I don't know whether you want here about all of them.

MK: Yes, yes, yes. You are right on it now.

OMWH: They all had white marble steps that would be joined together the houses. But you could look down in the evening, women all would come out and sit on a step to get cool. Then they'd have a park. They had lots of parks there with the music. The steps were scrubbed every morning because it was disgraceful to ever see dirt on the marble steps. I don't know whether any of them are left there now or not. Are you familiar with the city?

MK: I think there is still some marble steps, but I don't know if they keep them as clean as they used to.

OMWH: I doubt it. They had good shows there. They always had good entertainment. I've heard that the theaters and the actors, they would try over a new play or something in Baltimore. Because Baltimore, they weren't all that complimentary. If they didn't like the play, they would hiss and let the actors know. So, they tried out there to see if everything was okay before they went to other places.

MK: Did they have anything like a showboat that brought the theater to this part of the country?

OMWH: What you mean? The theaters?

MK: Yes, any floating theaters. Did they have any theaters on boats or showboats or...

OMWH: It's not. The showboat was a boat in itself. It was a big house. I had written all that in these books, but I can't tell you the measurements without checking. But the actors lived on the boats.

MK: What are you describing now exactly?

OMWH: The floating theater? Or do you want hear that?

MK: Yes, please.

OMWH: Or would you rather hear more about Baltimore?

MK: Well, you were talking about theater and that reminded me of the floating theater. So, yes. Go ahead with Baltimore and we will come back to that.

OMWH: Well, Baltimore had lots of theaters. They'd have a drone and I can't remember the names. But they were always some good, for that day and maybe they're still good, actors and plays and music. The people from Northern Neck enjoyed all that too. There was a place to shop. You got your clothes there and there's a lot of things that they didn't have in general stores down in the country. There were all kinds of things like grapes. You could get a good amount of good grapes from Spain. I remember them because I got some every Christmas morning. Baltimore, they had everything like that. Fruits of the season and all, where in the country you had to have peaches when they're ripe and so on. Grapes when they're ripe but you didn't have them all the season. Ice was an important thing that all these steamboat wharves had, I guess all of them did. Another did at Reedville. It had a big house for the icehouse. They brought the ice down on sailing ships from Kennebunkport. You know the name of that place in Maine?

CK: Kennebunkport?

OMWH: Yes, I think that's it.

MK: So, the ice all came from Maine?

OMWH: Sailing boats would come down and bring the ice and they'd fill the icehouse. Down here, the people originally in colonial days they cut the ice and one of them put it in. The icehouse was like a deep well. But a lot of the water down here was salt water. You couldn't use that. I guess they got it out of ponds or something. When I remember, we bought the ice from this. We went down to the steamboat wharf and the icehouse was connected with it. My father would get blocks of ice. They would cut in different block sizes that you wanted or would fit your refrigerator or they called the iceboxes. They'd put the ice in the top of refrigerator. Yes. Well, they called it the ice box. Then underneath it, they put a big bowl to catch the water when it melted under the ice box. Then it had shelves inside like the refrigerators. You'd put your food in there. What else do you want?

MK: You are doing great.

OMWH: I just don't want to ramble along. Just ask me some question.

MK: Could you talk a little bit about the floating theater that came here, please?

OMWH: Yes, I could.

MK: Yes, please. What was it called?

OMWH: It was called the James Adams Floating Theater. I have an account of it in that book. Somebody in the Reedville book, too, I think. I know I've got in that one. It came in summer and I don't know what month. But it seemed like it must have been August. Anyway, it was warm weather and everybody looked forward to it. It was like a houseboat. They had a stage and in the back of that they had rooms for the actors and actresses for the bedroom and also for the dressing rooms. I don't think they had breakfast until almost lunchtime because they were up so late at night. But they had plays. The one that came down here was James Adams Floating Theater. The main manager was Charles Hunter, H-U-N-T-E-R. He wrote and arranged different plays. The way they would suit the plays, they always had the heroine, of course. Then they always had a bad character.

MK: A villain?

OMWH: Yes. They had the villains and then they had the good guys. Before they started it, they had a real anvil. A-N-V-I-L. Right? You know how you shoe horses? You know about that, don't you?

MK: Yes.

OMWH: They had that and this man would strike it. I don't know how he did it, but he played. It was called an anvil chorus music. He played, had a band, I guess. Then the man that hit this anvil and you see this box fly. Then after that, the curtain would go up and you'd see the different plays. It was like in a theater. It had rooms on each side for dressing and then coming on stage and all that. Then the actors and actresses were mostly, I guess from New York and places where they couldn't get very good jobs, especially in the summertime. They would live on the boat. When they get to where they'd stop like Reedville for instance, some of them would go out and buy food. They bought it from local like chickens and vegetables and all that. They said they had very good food on the boat. I don't guess the actors and actresses got very much money, but they got free meals. I guess they had a place to stay and eat, anyway, in the summer. The floating theater was like a big houseboat. It had – what do you call those boats? Tugboats. I don't know whether they had one or more tugboats. But that pushed them along and pulled them, whatever they did. They'd come in usually Sunday evening and they'd stay a week. Then they'd move on to the tributaries. Like they'd come in here at Cockrell's Creek, and then they'd go up the Coan River and all the different tributaries. They'd stay, I said, from Sunday to Sunday, so a week. The plays, well, I told you what they were like. People wouldn't like them now, I guess. The churches, some of the very religious people, objected to the floating theaters

and they wouldn't go to them. But I think the majority of people went and enjoyed it.

MK: Your family went?

OMWH: Yes. My family did all went. My father used to row down. It was a short distance from our home. We used to just row down there in a boat. I don't know. We always looked forward to it. It was something different from what we had. They also had Chautauqua and I had all about that in one of these books I wrote. They would come, I was supposed to be – I can't think of the word. But they were supposed to be educational and help you educationally more than entertainment. But what they did, is they had a big tent. I have a picture of that in one of these books. It was opened at the sides right much because it was so hot and they had the seats, all of it. You used to buy your tickets. My father always bought the ticket for the whole time, I think. I don't know whether it was a week or three. I think it was a week though. It had in the afternoon, (those days?). It was more cultural than the floating theater, but not as entertaining. They'd fuss if they'd tickle. Did you want to repeat anything?

MK: It was more cultural, you say?

OMWH: Yes. It was more cultural. They had lectures about different places and things. Then after that they'd have a little entertainment. Like if they were talking about the Harlem, they would have Dutch dances in the costumes. They had costumes of different countries and music. Of course, they had music. On the floating theater, too, they had a lot of music. But I liked the floating theater better.

MK: Where was the Chautauqua? Where did they come from?

OMWH: Well, I can't tell you where they came here from. But there was a place, I guess it was in New York named Chautauqua something. Have you ever heard of that? It was a town or something. I guess that's where they started. One man told me about it, that they had to go from place to place as best they could, I think. Because there never was a train down here or anything like that. They hadn't started having the automobiles very much. He said he took them. I guess it was a workboat, a big boat, real hot, down to the next place down the bay. He said they almost died of heat. I don't know if it took long on a day or not. They'd go from place to place on the water wherever they could. I didn't like Chautauqua much. I guess it certainly did some good.

MK: It was more formal?

OMWH: Yes, it was more cultural. It was supposed to been very cultural. I don't remember anything I learned from it. But it wasn't good as floating theater, but it was supposed to be more educational and cultural.

MK: The floating theater was?

OMWH: More of entertainment.

CK: How did the Chautauqua people travel?

OMWH: I think they went from place to place any way they could get there. Because this man told me about it, that he had a big boat and all the people, he carried them down to the next place on a river or somewhere around. I guess they just went not too far apart, the places where they'd stop. Maybe say if they stopped at Reedville, then maybe they'd go to Kilmarnock or on down like that, down that road or bay. Then later when it first got Ford cars and everybody go on the road and they used to travel, they'd get a local man to take them from one place to another.

MK: Did the floating theater have a minstrel show?

OMWH: Yes, it did.

MK: Can you describe that? I have never seen one.

OMWH: No, I can't because I never stayed to it. It was after the main play was over, then they had a minstrel. I never got to stay out. I guess my father took me home then, I guess. Actors and actresses, I don't think they got paid very much, but they had plenty to eat. They could go swimming or fishing from the boat if they wanted to. I did research on this one James Adams Floating Theater, which came here. The main actors came from S-A-G-I-N-A-W, Saginaw. Would that be in Michigan or somewhere?

MK: Saginaw.

OMWH: I can't tell you exact right. I think it was Michigan, I think, but I'm not sure.

MK: I think it was.

OMWH: That then Charles Hunter, the ones that are the main ones, Charles Hunter married James Adams' sister. Her name was Beulah Adams. It's a picture of her I have in this book. I have one right there. I called her the Mary Pickford of Chesapeake Bay. I don't guess you all even know who Mary Pickford was. But Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Sr. were both some of the first motion picture actors. They were the first and famous for that. But this Charles Hunter, he was the main manager, but he acted also. Beulah Adams was always the heroine. The James Adams, who owned it and all, stayed on a yacht and he didn't come close to it. He stayed out somewhere in Chesapeake Bay. But he left it all up to his brother-in-law, Charles Hunter, to manage the boat, especially the plays. Of course, they didn't have anything that wasn't acceptable in the plays. It was far different from now, I guess back then. It would be very boring to people now.

MK: But it was family-style entertainment?

OMWH: Yes. Any member of the family could stay there, the children and all. There was always the villain and the heroine. The good guys would overcome the villains and that type play. There was one called *East Lynne*, E-A-S-T L-Y-N-N-E. I think that was the name of a play that they had in New York or on a book or something. I can't remember all the titles. I remember one of the songs was, "You Wore a Tulip and I Wore a Big Red Rose." [laughter] that

kind of song. When I first remember it was maybe near the end of the First World War. That's when I first remember them. Or Edna Ferber who wrote *Show Boat*. I guess you're familiar with that because they made it into a play and everything. She spent some time on that boat and Charles Hunter helped and all. She wrote that book. It was famous and I think it was entitled, *The Show Boat*. It had always been called the floating theater, but after that play came out and all in New York, the boat came back, it was called the showboat. It changed from floating theater to showboat because Edna Ferber had made it famous. She got material off that particular boat. Down south, they had these riverboats and all, something like that, that maybe they had plays. But this was first one, and maybe the only one, that ever was in saltwater. It had to come up Chesapeake Bay, then go to the tributaries.

MK: Now, when it came to Reedville for a week, did the actors mingle in the town at all?

OMWH: No.

MK: Did they get acquainted with the townspeople?

OMWH: No. Well, there may have been a few people in the stores and worked to round them off or something, but they didn't as a whole mingle. No. They didn't have cars then, so they couldn't go in them unless they hired a horse and buggy or something. It ended when it got better roads and trucks took the place of the freight boats. People went to cities for entertainment. It ended in 1930s, early [19]30s. That's when they had better roads and people carried the freight to Baltimore and different places on trucks rather than on the boat.

MK: Was there a lot of excitement in the town when the boat was coming in?

OMWH: A lot of people went down to watch it come in. Yes. It was on a Sunday, but I never did because I was a little girl. But a lot of boys, I think, and other people went down.

CK: To do what?

OMWH: Just watch the floating theater come in. They'd be there to watch the boat come and when they tied up and everything like that. It was always on a Sunday night. They didn't have a play then.

CK: But you say that as a girl, you did not go?

OMWH: Yes, I went. I said a girl, I didn't know about – what was I talking about then?

CK: About going down to watch the boat come in, that was a boy thing?

OMWH: Well, no. That was mostly boys and all who did that. I never saw it come in.

CK: Did you see other boats come in?

OMWH: Oh, yes. I could see the steamboat come in. I've got a good picture of that too. This

one is small, but it's a good one.

CK: If I could not see, tell me what it would look like.

OMWH: What? The floating theater?

MK: No, no. Just a regular steamboat.

OMWH: Oh, I can show you a picture.

CK: Well, what if I cannot see? Describe it in words just so I could see it in my mind.

OMWH: Well, it was a big boat. Let's see if I can find it. This is the picture right here, I think. I'm partially blind, so I can't see much. But yes, this is the picture. But this one's kind of blurred. I think I have it in here too. Do you see that? This?

CK: Yes. Tell me what it was like though from your memory.

OMWH: What do you mean?

CK: What it looked like to see the steamboat come in?

OMWH: Well, it's kind of thrilling because she came in with, I recall it was an honor guard of seagulls. Because people passed their soup, bread, and things out on the water and when it came, it had an honor guard on both sides of seagulls just all around it. It had this heavy black smoke. That's the way it looked when it came. I had a picture in here.

CK: An honor guard of seagulls?

OMWH: Huh?

CK: You saying an honor...

OMWH: Seagulls, yes, because they looked for bread and all that people threw out, food, especially bread, I guess. That's the way I saw it and ask somebody else.

MK: What kind of sounds did it make?

OMWH: When you were on the boat, it made this thumping sound. I have that in there too.

CK: Let us see.

OMWH: Not in this one so much, but a Reedville book.

CK: I see it.

OMWH: It was a poem. The name was *The Piankatank* and the one that came here all the time. But it's a poem. It was written and published in *The Sun* paper in Baltimore. The steamer was Piankatank and some made noise. I don't remember exactly, but it describes it. It made a lot of noise and the calves bleated all night long because they were just taken from their mothers. They kept awake if you couldn't sleep good. But you could look out of the porthole in the stateroom and see the water. A lot of noise on it when they carried the animals, the freight. At first, they didn't have banks down here and people would give the person. I don't know what his duties were, but they used somebody they could trust. They'd give them the money to put in the bank in Baltimore before we had banks.

MK: Oh, before they had banks here?

OMWH: Before they had banks, they did. They'd give the person on the steamboat money to put in the bank in Baltimore. But of course, after we started having banks down here, they didn't do that anymore, I don't guess. But we were very closely tied to Baltimore in many ways.

MK: Did your father make his living from the water?

OMWH: Yes. We had a farm too.

MK: Tell me about your dad and how he got along. What was his name?

OMWH: His name was Thomas Jackson Williams. His father was Thomas Williams too. He went through the four years of the Civil War on the Confederate Army. Then when he came out, he had raised tobacco. When he left to go in the army and all, the whole tobacco shed was full of tobacco. The tobacco shed was there. When I remember it, it was a long building with opening places to drop. They used that for money because the Confederate money wasn't any good then. There was a cousin of my father's people who was lame and he couldn't go in the army. He'd go down there and get some of the tobacco and use it for money until when my grandfather came back from the war, the tobacco house was empty. He had used it all up. [laughter] My grandmother was young bride at that time during the Civil War and she stayed there with just the servants. But I don't want to go back. You don't want to hear any more about the Civil War?

MK: Well, it is not that I do not want to hear about the Civil War. But it is just that the focus of this work is the steamboat era.

OMWH: I guess I spent too much time on the...

CK: Oh, no. Not at all.

MK: No. Not at all. No, no, no. Oh, no.

CK: It is a good mix.

MK: It is a good mix.



CK: I am wondering if you knew people who worked on the steamboats.

OMWH: Well, I knew all them. As a friend or anything, I don't think I knew anybody.

MK: You say the stevedores had a way of twisting the calf's tail to get to them to cooperate?

OMWH: To get them off the – what do you call it? The boards that they let down from the steamer?

MK: Would that be the gangplank or the...

OMWH: Yes. Gangplank. They'd run them up the gangplank like that. People would like to watch them do it. It was very interesting and they kind of put on a show. They were usually Black people who did it.

MK: Did they sing at all?

OMWH: No, they didn't sing then. They sang later on the menhaden fishing boats. But that's another story. I don't guess you want to hear that.

CK: What did they put on a show loading the cattle?

OMWH: Oh, I don't know. Black people always are entertaining. They like to entertain. I don't remember if all of them were Black or not, but I think most of them.

CK: Did people give them money for the show?

OMWH: No, no, it wasn't like that. I guess, if you had a few calves that some farmer had brought in and it was just the way they got them on board. I don't know whether you could lead a calf on board or not. They mostly just weaned from the mothers and they were bleating. B-L-E-A-T-I-N-G, I think it's spelled. Making a big noise anyway, and they made it all night long every time I was ever on a boat. At night you'd hear them. Some of the wharves where they stopped, it was dark at night and they went from different places up the tributaries.

MK: Would the boat be all lit up at night?

OMWH: Yes. Yes, I think so. My mother and father were married just up here. They timed it with the – not only my father, I guess other people too – but that particular wedding, they planned it, so they went from the church to the steamboat. On the steamboat, they had bridal suite of rooms for the brides and groom. Of course, practically everybody I guess went to Baltimore on the honeymoon.

MK: So, everybody who was at the wedding jumped on the steamboat too, huh?

OMWH: The who?

MK: Everybody who went to the wedding went to Baltimore?

OMWH: No.

MK: Oh, you mean everybody who was married went to Baltimore?

OMWH: Just my mother and father went on the boat. As I said, they had a bridal suite of rooms for the brides. Others from wedding came down to watch them, I guess, but none of the wedding party went. Just my mother and father.

CK: What time would that have been?

OMWH: They timed the wedding until that. I think the boat usually left about 5:00 p.m. in the afternoon or evening.

CK: So, they had a special bridal suite, a honeymoon suite?

OMWH: Yes.

CK: Did they have it fancied up some way or...

OMWH: Have what?

CK: Did they have it decorated specially or...

OMWH: I never saw anyone. I never heard mother describe it, but I guess it was more dressed up than other staterooms, I guess. Maybe larger rooms. The staterooms weren't very smart and weren't very large.

CK: Did you honeymoon on the steamboat too?

OMWH: Huh?

CK: Did you honeymoon that way too?

OMWH: No. Everybody had automobiles when I got old enough to get married.

MK: Well, this has been wonderful.

CK: Wonderful.

MK: Recounting.

OMWH: The what?

MK: Your memories are very, very clear and good.

OMWH: Well...

MK: We appreciate you very much.

OMWH: I just happen to have a good memory. Yes.

MK: Yes, you do. [laughter]

CK: You bring a whole era to life for us and for the future generations too.

OMWH: Well, I thank you. I'm glad to help. I love the Northern Neck. George Washington and Madison and Monroe were all born in Northern Neck. That's where history started here. Except down at Jamestown, the first colony and that's the Northern Peninsula. There are three for one. The second, Middle Peninsula, and then Northern Neck.

CK: What is it that you really do love about the Northern Neck?

OMWH: Well, I love the nature, one thing. It is so beautiful. When I was young and all, you could go in swimming any way you wanted to at the beach.

MK: Could you start that again, please? What you really love about the Northern Neck.

OMWH: First, the natural beauty of it, the way it used to be. The beaches, a lot of the sand beaches where you could go and bathe in any way you wanted to. Now you can't. They're owned by people and they're all privates. I don't think there's any place I know of that you can just go down and go in like it was when I was young, and I liked that a lot. We had picnics on the beach. In the winter, we had oyster roast and things like that. Then the movies were coming in then when I first remember. I liked the movies. We had a movie hall here in Reedville. Is this going to be published in any way or what?

CK: Possibly.

OMWH: What would it be published in on that?

MK: Well, it will be all published in connection with the Steamboat Museum.

OMWH: Well, where's the Steamboat Museum going to be?

MK: It is in Irvington.

OMWH: Oh, I have this...

MK: The building is already built.

OMWH: I didn't know that. I've heard that they wanted to do it, but I didn't know that they had

done it.

CK: It is scheduled to open sometime in the coming year, probably the first half of the coming year.

OMWH: You mean to go to Baltimore? Are you going to have the boats?

CK: I wish just for people to come to the museum in Irvington and learn about the steamboat era.

OMWH: Well, Irvington and Reedville were very much alike in the way that people were. Very much the same and did the same things and all.

MK: Well, thank you very much for having us and making this time. We really appreciate it.

OMWH: If you want anything else, or if you ask a question, I'll see if I can answer.

MK: Well, you have really covered it nicely.

CK: Looking at your book, it looks like we could spend a long, long time hearing about everything from ghosts to witches, all sorts of things.

OMWH: Well...

[end of transcript]