Carrie Kline: That is rolling?

Michael Kline: Yes. Maybe we could start out by saying, "My name is –"

Edwin Veolo Hutt: My name is E. V. Hutt, owner of A To Z Antiques, Tappahannock. Good enough?

MK: We never ask people their age. But would you give us your date of birth so we could put things in perspective here?

EVH: February the 15th, [19]18.

MK: February the 15th.

EVH: 1918.

CK: 1918.

MK: That was the year of the great influenza, I guess.

EVH: I don't know about that. But that was during the World War II ended.

MK: Maybe you would like to start off. Just tell us a little bit about your people and where you were raised.

EVH: I guess that's right. My ancestors came over from England. One of the captains on the *Mayflower* was a Hutt. I don't know. Did that follow it up back or it didn't?

MK: Yes. Tell me more about that. He was on the *Mayflower*?

EVH: They were deeded a piece of land in Westmoreland County over where my home place is from the Queen of England on Nomini Creek.

MK: What sort of a place was that? Was that a good deed to get?

EVH: It's listed in the courthouse, so I guess the deed stands.

MK: Is it nice land? Was it a good thing to acquire?

EVH: Well, all land over in that area, I guess, were considered good farmland. If that's what you're referring to with timber growing. Yes. Not swamp land. It's high enough elevation. Some of the land on that deed is still in the family. It's never been out of the family.

MK: Well, about your own people, your parents, and grandparents, where were you raised then?

EVH: We were raised right there. Insofar as I know, all of them were born at home up until my

children were. I was born at home.

MK: Born at home?

EVH: Yes, sir. Weighed fourteen pounds.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: That's what they tell me.

MK: Did the doctors travel in those days or how was it you could be born at home?

EVH: Always had midwives. The old midwife used to work for me that delivered me. Of course, the closest doctor was about seven miles from home. But my father was a doctor from Vermont and she helped him a lot because he didn't have but [unintelligible]. The children did most of the sewing for him. You'll have to ask the questions because I…

MK: Oh, you are doing great.

CK: This is great.

EVH: [laughter]

MK: Tell me about your childhood and growing up there on the place.

EVH: Well, my mother lived up above Colonial Beach. It took one day going up there, and one day coming back with a horse and buggy. A little later on we got a car, but that didn't speed up traffic much. Because the roads had so many mud holes and things in it, that stayed stuck most of the time. Then I went to a public one-roomed school for a while. Then they transferred, put school buses on and we went to Montrose. We had to leave home at a quarter to 7:00 a.m. to get to Montrose, which by the way the crow flies was about six miles. But we had a little round detour to get there.

MK: The school?

EVH: Sir?

MK: The school?

EVH: Yes, the school was at Montrose when we went to the high school. It was just a one-roomed school I went to at first.

MK: Tell me about the one-roomed school. Tell me everything you can remember about that.

EVH: Well, we had desks that accommodated two people who sat at the desk. The teacher lived next door to us, so we'd get together in the store. My parents ran their own merchandise store.

So, we'd get together in the morning down there and walk up to school. I thought she was the most beautiful girl in the whole world.

MK: Who was that?

EVH: (Daisy Abel Jackson?) was her name. She was about nineteen years old, just out of school. That was the first assignment she'd had.

MK: Your teacher?

EVH: The teacher I had, yes.

MK: She was beautiful?

EVH: Yes.

MK: So, you did not have any trouble with your attendance? It does not sound like that.

EVH: Oh, no. The attendance was perfect.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: Of course, she always came up home and ate one or two meals a week with us. She was living next door with a family. I never saw her after she left until about four years ago. She lived at Oak Grove, which is nothing but twenty miles from home. Of course, one teacher with seventh grade, you didn't get so much in. But my mother was a schoolteacher before she was married, so I guess she helped us some. But most of us went to school, got put back one grade when we went up to the school where the high school was.

MK: In addition to being beautiful, was she a good teacher?

EVH: The best teacher in the whole world in my eyes, I would say. [laughter]

MK: What did you like about her teaching style?

EVH: Well, she just was a fine person, I guess. Of course, she was living next door. Our store was on the corner and where she boarded was on the corner too. It wasn't nothing but thirty-five or forty yards from our store. So, I saw her every day.

MK: Can you talk a little bit about the store and how it got started?

EVH: Well, my father and uncle opened up a store when my uncle was seventeen, I think. My daddy was probably nineteen. It was a country store. They carried everything, hardware, and everything you could name, fertilizer, farm machinery and all, you went right out to the store. Of course, we opened up at sun up in the morning and closed at 10:00 p.m. We'd have to lock the door at 11:00 p.m. to get the people out by 12:00 p.m. on Saturday nights. But if you didn't

get there at 11:00 p.m., you never got in on Saturday night.

MK: What was the big attraction?

EVH: I didn't find out. It was a store in the country. I guess that's all it was to it. But we had people who'd come fifteen miles to deal there. I guess they had a better selection than most stores had. But I swear to God, if I ever got out of that, I'd never go to another store. So, when I got married, I told my wife she either bought groceries or we didn't eat. I've only been in to get groceries about three times when enough snow was on the ground and they couldn't get out or something like that.

MK: That was enough store for you?

EVH: Boy, I was glad to get out. The worst part, we had a post office in there and I had to work every Christmas day. That's the only good thing Roosevelt ever did was when he closed the post office up on Christmas Day. Or the best thing he did anyway [laughter] insofar as I was concerned. You had to get down there and had the mail ready to go at 10:00 a.m. Supposed to be back at 12:30 p.m. Well, I was running behind during the holidays. So, I got out at about 4:00 p.m.. All the boys I went to school with were off.

MK: Was it a big social event at the store on Saturday night?

EVH: Damn if I don't think it was every night. [laughter] You'd have forty to fifty people sitting around there in the evenings until you closed up.

MK: What doing?

EVH: Nothing but chewing the fat, I guess, most of them. Because they'd come to the store, they would have bought anything or not that didn't have any bearings on it at all. It was just a get-together place. All country stores were that way. But that was the only place in the community that they had to go.

MK: How was the store stocked? How did your father and uncle get the goods for the store?

EVH: Well, the goods, most of the things that we bought came from Baltimore. We lived on head of Nomini Creek. Well, we could go down to Mount Holly and get on a boat at 6:00 p.m. and you wake up in Baltimore. They'd wake you up if you went to bed. I think very few of them ever went to bed. But they had on the boat, cattle, horses, chickens, eggs, and everything. You'd wake up in Baltimore, you'd go off and do your shopping and get on at 6:00 p.m. and be back down home the next morning at 6:00 a.m. So, your transportation wasn't the worst in the world. But everything was brought in on the water. At times, when the boat would come in and the salesman that sold us hardware would get in home about 4:00 p.m. and he and my uncle would drink booze until the time to eat that night. He'd spend the night with us, get up the next morning and write the order, leave at 12:00 p.m. and go to Kinsale. He only called on one account a day. He told me he never called on two accounts a day. It's a little different from today, isn't it?

MK: One account a day.

EVH: One account a day. Well, it took him an hour to write the order most of the time. An hour, a hour, and a half.

MK: The rest of the time was a social call?

EVH: Oh, yes. Yes. Sure.

MK: Was this during the [19]30s?

EVH: Yes, during the [19]30s. Yes. [19]20s and [19]30s.

MK: Was there not Prohibition?

EVH: But Prohibition, I knew every bootlegger that was in the area. One of the officers one day asked me, "How do I know?" I said, "Well, anybody can figure that out who was a bootlegger." "What do you mean?" He said, "By the amount of sugar they buy." They'd buy fifty pounds of sugar and three cans of Red Seal Lye. That was the ingredients they used with whatever they used, corn or wheat or barley or whatever it was. That Red Seal Lye would make it work in a hurry too, don't you think it wouldn't.

CK: Diane, could you pull that lamp towards you just a little bit? Thank you.

MK: So, that was the tip off, huh?

EVH: Yes. Of course, I used to do a lot of hunting. I knew where they all were.

MK: They all were?

EVH: All of the bootleggers. They had to put the steel down by a stream because they had to have water for the cooling. You'd put the mash in and it'd come out in steam and then go through this coil. The coil was down in the stream and to cool it and turn it to water and that would run it out. That was the process that they used.

MK: It sounds like there was plenty of it in circulation then.

EVH: Oh, plenty of it. You'd get all the whiskey you want.

CK: Did you have to worry about walking up on someone when you were hunting?

EVH: Well, we walked up on a steel. They knew because we didn't make any effort to be quiet. It wasn't like prohibition officers were. Yes, they'd tell me, "You walked by my steel yesterday." I said, "I don't think so." They said, "Yes, you did." They tell you just what time it was and everything. You might not have known where it was. You might have walked by and not seen

it. But they did most of their operation at night because they had to have a fire. The fire would give off smoke. But we paid the boys up on – we couldn't pay them up on Friday because you wouldn't have nobody to work on Saturday. We didn't pay for them until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. We always had three or four bootleggers that were waiting for them to get paid.

MK: The boys?

EVH: The men that worked for us.

MK: What did you have them doing? What did you hire people to do?

EVH: We had a big farm. I would say a farm operation. We had a tomato cannery. Of course, you use a lot of people in the tomato cannery during that season. I'd say we'd have a hundred people working in the factory and picking tomatoes at that point. Then we had farm machinery and fertilizer, which all took a lot of labor. We kept about twenty here the year round. Then they'd fill in when we needed them.

MK: What would the maximum number be then?

EVH: It would be really hard to say because working in the factory and picking tomatoes and all, I'd say somewhere around a hundred, 125, something a little like that.

MK: These were all local people?

EVH: Well, yes. They were all local, yes. I don't think we ever hired any of them, but they had people come here from away from here. They called bohunks. Now, don't ask me what a bohunk is. But they're roamers. They just go from place to place. They don't have any particular home. Other words, it's a crude form of the Mexican help coming in here now. A funny thing happened, one day we were down in the factory and my uncle came down. He used to ride a horse down there. So, he went to get his horse, his horse was gone. So, he called up the sheriff's department and they caught the man with the horse in Montrose and they put him in jail. So, he wrote a letter down home to us on toilet paper and told the people sorry he stole his horse. But he was trying to get back in someplace close to Baltimore. There was some kind of distribution point they went at from. So, I asked my uncle what is he going to do about it. He said, "Well, let me think about it some." So, he went up [laughter] there and paid the guy's fine, gave him money enough to get back to Baltimore. [laughter] Told me he wasn't going to do nothing about it. But I thought that was right funny.

MK: A bohunk stole his horse?

EVH: They call them bohunks.

MK: Bohunks.

EVH: Now, don't ask me how you spell it or anything more than that. My English is very limited. I kept taking the first year of English for quarter of my senior year at VPI. I didn't think

I was going to pass it then.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: But I got a good professor and he called me in the room. He asked me one day, he says, "You had time at this thing?" I said, "Yes. Because I don't know much about it. I don't think I'll ever learn anything about it." He said, "Well," he says, "I want to ask you one question. That's it." He said, "What do you need on this course to graduate?" I said, "I need a D." So, he wound up by giving me a B. But he would have given me an A, I understood later on if I'd asked him for it. But all I wanted to do was get out of there. I could handle the math and all that stuff. But when it comes to English, I wasn't there that day.

MK: I think you speak beautifully. You got it.

EVH: Well, my vocabulary is very nominal. I never understood why English came in, but it does have a place. I know that now. I didn't really learn it until one day I was supposed to write a letter for the Boy Scouts. I told the judge, I said, "Judge, I can't write that damn letter." He said, "Yes, you can do it." I said, "I haven't written a letter in sixty years." He said, "What?" I said, "When I left school, there's two things I wanted. I wanted a chauffeur and a secretary. That's all I wanted. I'd make the rest of it." Up until then I've been very fortunate on the secretary part. That chauffeur hasn't showed up yet.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: [laughter] But if I go anywhere, most of the time it's with somebody else and they do the driving. I just don't like to drive. But (Truff?) was writing that letter and I told him what I wanted to put in. He wrote it just like that. So, he said, "I'm going to read it to you." I said, "Fine." He said, "No, it's not either." He said, "You haven't expressed yourself right in this position." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "That word." So, he wrote down six other words, all of them meant the same thing. But one, how much more emphasis you put on it? Well, I never understood none of that stuff.

CK: Well, you choose good words when you speak.

EVH: Huh?

CK: You choose good words when you speak.

EVH: I don't know about that now. [laughter]

MK: I am trying to imagine how they had the farm and the store and the cannery.

EVH: Yes.

MK: How was it laid out? If you were going to explain to somebody who had never seen it before, how was it laid out?

EVH: It was all handled into one little office about half as big as this place is right here. Of course, I asked my uncle one day, I said – we used to pass the, you don't know what I'm talking about, but something looked like a check. They called them a due bill. Otherwise, if you brought ten dozen eggs in the store and say the ten dozen eggs that it would bring $5, you'd get $2.5 worth of groceries. At that time, they didn't want their money back. They just wanted something to show that they had $2.5 due. When they come to the store the next time they could deal up. So, if they come to the store, and got a dollar's worth, you just wrote on the back of it the tenth month, the fifteenth day, $1. You subtracted from a two and a half and that left you still had $1.5. So, I asked my uncle one day, I said, "(Willie?), I want to know something. You told me what you made last year, how you know how much money that you got out in due bills?" He said, "I don't have any idea. But I know one thing, they'll come back." I guess they did. Already some of them got lost. But if it got lost, they'd make it good anyway.

MK: So, how was the operation laid out? Where was the house? Where was the store? Where was the cannery?

EVH: They were over right there. Well, the store was on the home place because then the triangle and the road come together here at the store was right here. The home was up on the hill about three hundred yards I'd say. Of course, we had a path going from the store to the house across the field.

MK: What did you grow in that field?

EVH: Whatever the year was. What we grew mostly was tomatoes, corn, and wheat. We'd rotate it when fall would come around.

MK: Then where was the cannery? Was that on the place too?

EVH: Well, it was on the place right across the road from it, which was about three hundred yards from the store too. That had to be on the stream of water too because you had to have water for the boiler.

MK: What was the stream?

EVH: You had to have steam in the factory to dry the equipment. So, you had steam engines instead of electric motors. Of course, you had to have steam to cook it that made a stew.

MK: What was the stream of water?

EVH: Well, that was for the…

MK: Yes, but what was it? What was the name of it?

EVH: That didn't have no name.

MK: Just a little creek.

EVH: It wasn't no creek at all. It was up about two hundred yards of spring came out to the bank and that started a stream. Then all the way down the stream, most springs would feed it.

MK: Now, was the cannery, was that constructed as a cannery or was it some other building that was taken over?

EVH: No. It was built to be a cannery, which was very small to start out with. You had it on here and you had it all beyond. Most we ever canned a day was 2,500 cases of tomatoes. That's during the war.

CK: A day? Was that a day?

EVH: That's right. 2,500 cases a day, twenty-four cans to a case. But they kept me home to operate the cannery and the farm machinery. They told me they wanted to can all we could. So, we had priorities on getting some things. But a lot of things you couldn't get during the war that just wouldn't to be had.

MK: Like what?

EVH: Anything made out of iron was hard coming by. Everybody had a stamp that you could buy food by. Everybody got so many, I think one pound of sugar a month. Of course, we didn't have any meats at that time. We didn't have no refrigeration. Unless somebody kills them. But we weren't supposed to kill any cattle off of the farm and eat it. They were always supposed to go to the market. The government took what they wanted of it. It's really hard for anybody to realize what the American public did during that war. They sacrificed a lot for the boys overseas. We couldn't get any welding rods. So, one day the boy working on the garage came, they asked me how many coat hangers we had at home. I said, "I got a few." He said, "I want them." He was using those for welding rods. Damn few weren't good at welding with them too, I can tell you that.

MK: So, the cannery was laid out like a big kitchen or how was it laid out?

EVH: Well, you had a long shed, I guess it was sixty by a hundred, that the fruit was brought and put in. The washing machine went right down below that and scald it. Then it went on tables and endless belt carried them around and around. Then they went up to the filling machine. From filling machine, they went into the capping machine to put the tops on them. Then they came out and they were putting these crates and then lowered them down in water and cooked for so long.

MK: Wooden crates?

EVH: No. Metal.

MK: Metal crates.

EVH: I reckon it would about hold – probably fifteen cases of the metal case made about nine hundred to a thousand pounds. You had a hoist that picked them up. At first, we did it with a chain and horse by hand. But later on, when we got – when I started working in the factory, we didn't have no current in the factory at all for lights or nothing. If they worked at night, they worked by kerosene lamps.

MK: It is so hard to imagine life without electricity, the whole industry without electricity.

EVH: Well, it just wasn't there to be had. Then finally, Northern Neck, VEPCO, I don't know Virginia? I don't know what it was called, and it was called something. But anyway, they came in a mile a home and they charged us $1,000 for them to bring your line up to hook up to the store and the house.

MK: So, you had electric at the store?

EVH: Well, we didn't have electricity at the store, first. We had what they call carbide lights. You all know what those things are? It's some little chunks of stuff like this, look like it's bluestone. Had a big tank in the ground, five-hundred-gallon tank in the ground. Then it had a top on it. In that thing, you would pull this carbide up, a hundred pounds or two hundred pounds of carbide in there. You had a little thing you adjusted that would let it feed down and hit the water. When it hit the water, it turned off the gas. That gas would go into pipelines that go into the store. You've seen these little old lamps, the ones that got these little cloth-like things on them. I'll show you one before you leave here. But that's the way it was. It kept going in there if you didn't cut it off. But then it would just escape in the air if it got too much pressure. The pressure would raise the top up and let it go out. But softest, nicest light in the world.

MK: You could read it?

EVH: Oh, yes. But when we built a house that my son is living in now in the twentieth, they had a Delco plant at home. It generated thirty-two volts. But before then we had about a lamp in the house. A lot of people didn't have that, they read by the fireplace. Of course, there was damn little bit of reading done too. In the area that we lived, insofar as I know, in that area and miles around, it was only one paper I ever got. That was the *Baltimore Sun*. We got the *Baltimore Sun*. Came in by the post office. Then later on, *News Leader* and *Richmond Times Dispatch* started road and they'd bring them around.

CK: People sit around by the fire then at night?

EVH: I told you they did. All the men came to the store at night. You could tell who was going to be there unless they were sick. That was all. Everybody came to the store at nights in the community.

MK: Was there a checkerboard set up somewhere? Did they have horseshoes?

EVH: Oh, hell yes. Horseshoes outside too.

MK: Now tell me about the horseshoes.

EVH: Now, what you want to know about that?

MK: Well, I want to know who was the best pitcher.

EVH: I can't tell you now, but we had some right good ones. But we didn't have horseshoes like you take horse. We got the shoes that the horses half wore out or wore them off on the side. I was right old before I ever saw a horseshoe like they use to pitch with. Of course, we had about six to eight sets of them around. You'd have four or five games going on at a time. Checkers, they played that all the time.

MK: So, it was an entertainment center.

EVH: That's all it was.

CK: What is that?

EVH: The store was an entertainment center at nights. Of course, bad days, rainy day is the same way. If you want to get through the store there on some rainy day, you'd have to shove your way through the crowd. That was it. It had a big center in the store. Ours was fifteen by about sixty feet. The center wasn't in that. But they had benches they sat on. I had no chairs. Some of the benches were five or six feet long and about that tall.

MK: Well, you mentioned that everything came by boat.

EVH: Yes.

MK: But you did not tell me much about the boat.

EVH: Well, in your way of thinking of what a boat is, I guess you think a boat was for people. These boats were work boats. They had what they called stake rooms on them, where the people – if we got on a boat tonight, down we had a room. Maybe ten or fifteen rooms on the boat. But you'd hear cattle hauling, raising heck all night long. But that was just the way of life. People didn't mind it.

CK: What did they do all night long?

EVH: Oh, they drank whiskey, was one thing they did, most of them. They maybe would play checkers or such a matter as that. But you didn't have any radio and you didn't have any TV or anything like that. So, you generated your own, just like you did around the store. Then they had what they call a floating theater. You ever hear of them things?

MK: No.

EVH: It was a big boat and it had an auditorium on it. I guess it's set up by a hundred, two hundred people. They would have a play each night for a week. They would start coming in the most from down at Norfolk. They'd go to Washington and then they'd come up on the left-hand side of the river going up and on the right-hand side down. They'd stay a week at a place. They had a different, I guess you'd call it a play or something every night. Well, that was a big thing when that come around.

MK: Did you ever go?

EVH: Oh, yes.

MK: Do you remember any of the plays you saw or what they were?

EVH: None.

MK: This was a fun thing to do.

EVH: Oh, yes. Everybody else went, so you went too. Of course, never seeing anything like that. In the churches, our church we had a room off to the side there and they would have plays in it once in a while and things like that. But you don't have none of that now. TVs done taken charge.

CK: TV is taking charge, you say?

MK: Huh?

CK: TV is taking charge, you say?

EVH: Oh, yes. Sure. It's almost got to be the point now. If you've got three kids, you got to have four TVs in the house.

MK: [laughter]

EVH: One for each one of them too, you know?

MK: Yes. They are not likely to all want to watch the same thing at the same time.

EVH: That's right. Yes.

MK: So, I am trying to get a picture here of this farm and store and cannery that were located how far from the steamboat?

EVH: Well, we had two places that the steamboat came in. Our merchandise came in from Baltimore. I've had seen in the store as high as two hundred rabbits hanging up that were trapped and killed. We'd pack them in barrels and sent them to Baltimore. Now, what they did with them when they got there, God only knows. I don't think you would eat one today. I reckon

some days they'd stay in the store three or four days before we sent them out. There wasn't no – just whatever temperature it was outside. We had one room where we put stuff like that in, that we never had heat in. Black walnuts, sometimes we'd have four or five wagon loads of those going there at one time. Most of the time we sent from three to five wagons down to the boat landing every week taking stuff and bringing it back.

MK: I am trying to imagine how many wagon loads of tomatoes would be in 2,500 cases.

EVH: Well, I don't know. What I've seen is high as fifty wagons in line to get unloaded at a time and sometimes just stayed there half a day or a day before they got unloaded. That was during the season. Tomatoes getting ripe by the sun and the moon. They ripe just about better by the moon than they do by the sun.

MK: I did not know that.

EVH: When the full moon comes, tomatoes get ripe and they won't ripen good when there isn't no moon. They just halfway ripen. But when that moon gets full, the vines going to turn red with tomatoes. Now, I don't know whether you know it or not, but they tell me the moon controls the whole world. I reckon it does in a lot of respects. It has a lot to do with the growing and stuff like that, I know that. Colored boys used to work for me, used to tell me that. I said there's all a lot of hog wash. But I found out they were right and I was wrong.

MK: So, you might have to wait half a day to get your tomatoes unloaded.

EVH: That's right. You waited your turn and that was it.

MK: I do not see how there were enough hours in a day to do what people had to do.

EVH: Well, I tell you, during the war, one week my daddy didn't like for us to work on Sunday. That would contradict his religion. We had tomatoes that week and we didn't finish working up all we had. We had probably a hundred baskets. We worked Saturday night until 10:00 p.m. and quit. They said they couldn't work no longer. So, we just set that on the basket aside. So, we started the factory. They started picking them. Some of them picked on Sunday, but very few. Very few people at that time believed in working on Sunday. But we opened the factory up at 12:05 p.m., five minutes after 12:00 p.m. Sunday. We closed it at about 10:00 p.m. Saturday. We had people working on that around the clock. I don't think I got ten hours of sleep the whole week. We still didn't can all the tomatoes. I had one piece of tomatoes on my own, ten acres. We didn't pick a tomato for five acres of it. It just was they were more tomatoes than we could handle, that's all. We just didn't have the help. The help wasn't there. When you started working people past fifteen hours a day, they get cross. But the peelers were the ones that prepared the tomatoes. We had one old colored lady there. She was kind of the big mouth for the organization. I walked and said, "Sally, you got to do something. They're all getting cross as hell." She started singing some of these old religious hymns. I'm telling you, for an hour they'd sing religious hymns and do twice the work they would if they weren't singing. You'd think it was the church you were going to when you'd hear them sing. That's all they sang, was religious hymns.

MK: That must have been something to hear.

EVH: Yes. You ever go to what they call these holy roller churches?

MK: I have been to some of them.

EVH: It's just some around now. But it isn't like they were much like it was when – during the war, when the boys lived four miles from home, he came in and said, "You need somebody else to help with work." He said, "We got a preacher that would like to have a job." I said, "Why do you need a job if you're preaching?" He said, "Yes, but he doesn't get paid like you think he does." I said, "How does he get paid?" He said, "He get the collection." He said, "Sometime, the collection isn't over two, $3." Church would be full of people. It was right across from our church. It wasn't over two hundred yards down the road across. So, I said, "Bring him on down here." So, I told him, I said, "It's going to be hard work. It's hot too because you see all that steam loose in the factory, nowhere cool." I said, "It'll be over a hundred degrees." He said he could stay. So, we had put him dumping buckets to come up on a thing in that for these buckets of tomatoes that had been peeled. So, he did a good job at it and all. So, one day he said, "Mr. Veolo, I got a boy coming down to play the piano or the organ at the church." I don't know which it was. I think they had a piano. I don't think they had no organ. He said, "He needed a job too because he isn't going to get paid nothing. Folk coming down here and he's going to be here two weeks." I said, "All right, bring him down." So, he did a very good job. So, he and the preacher said, "You ought to come on to our church one time." So, I had a date that night and this other boy went. I was telling him about they want us to come over to church. So, we drove up and it had a door on the side. The church went right in like where the pulpit was taught. So, we pulled up that door. We didn't do much but make fun of what was going on. But those people would get there and they'd get all hepped up and they'd roll all over the floor, boy. That's where they got the name, holy rollers. So, the preacher now said, "Now's the time we going to take up collection." So, two of the elders walked up and they got the plates in the door. Next thing, somebody tapped on the window and here was the preacher outside. He was taking up collection outside. So, I got after him the next day about what he did. "So, we put some money in our – well, we put in." But he said, "You know one thing," he said, "I get some more money from you white people outside [laughter] than we do on the church on the inside. But that church is still in operations today.

MK: What is the name of it?

EVH: We just call it the Holy Roller Church. But it's got a name. I don't know what it is. It's at Nomini Grove, Virginia is where it is.

MK: Nomini Grove.

EVH: Between Montrose and Warsaw. But I'll tell you one thing, the colored people can sing, don't you think they can't.

MK: So, they would sing on the…

EVH: Oh, yes. The funny part about it, this little boy played the piano and organ all the way whole time at church, soft. When the preacher was preaching, he played it. But he played the jazz music all the way through. We thought that was the funniest thing in the world. He was jazzing every piece he played. He was good. He played in some band up in Philadelphia. That's where they came from.

CK: What did they sing in the cannery? Can you remember which songs they sang?

EVH: I know one of them was Jesus, Lover of my Soul. I don't know. But they were the old hymns. They weren't the hymns like you use today. If you could find one of these old hymn books. We might have one at church, but they just sang those real old hymns and all of them knew them. Of course, I'd say seventy-five of them couldn't read and write. The old midwife that lived with me when I first started working in the factory, when they'd peel a bucket of tomatoes, they bring them and dump it, they put a token in it. So, then these smart inspectors came around and said the tokens had plenty of germs on them, we couldn't use them no more. So, what we did, we numbered the buckets and had one person just to tally them as they come up. Put a one down when they come up. I went down, and she said, "Mr. Veolo?" She used to kind of peel off to herself, a little small lady. I always said you'd call her a witch. She was a little about seventy-five pounds. I said, "Hey Lucy. They tell me you are a witch." She said, "Boy," she said, "I will tell you one thing, I'll be the first one to ever spank your bottom. If you don't shut up, I'm going to spank it again." But she was a nice, old soul. But she told me, she said, "I might have to quit peeling them because you aren't paying me no money today." I said, "Hey Lucy, I can't do it." She said, "Yes, but how do I know how many buckets?" See what they had, they had a little old tobacco bag. I don't know where you know the tobacco bag. You buy a back of tobacco that cost five cents. It had a little drawstring on it. Well, they always had them pinned on to the apron. They put them things in there. Of course, any store in the Northern Neck, if you went to the store and you had those tokens that we'd give, they would take them for money. At the end of the year or whenever they wanted the money, they'd either bring them over home or we'd go over there and get them, and pay for them.

MK: So, it was a kind of script?

EVH: I'll show you one of them. No, they're metal things. Some of them were copper and some of them were aluminum, I think. White metal anyway.

MK: Where did you get them?

EVH: We had them made. I don't know where we got them from, but you could have them made up.

MK: So, it had your name?

EVH: Oh, name. Yes, Neenah Packing Company owned it.

MK: What was it?

EVH: Neenah, N-E-E-N-A-H.

MK: Neenah.

Diane Rabson: I have one of his labels.

EVH: Yes, I got some here. You can get some if you want them.

MK: So, that was the label of the tomato?

EVH: Factory, yes.

CK: But then when they stopped using the tokens, this midwife said she did not know how she was getting paid?

EVH: Well, she said she wasn't getting paid. She told me she wasn't getting no pay for me. She couldn't work for nothing. She was sincere. I tried to explain to her that the government came along and said we couldn't put them in no more. She said, "The government hasn't got nothing to do with me and you working."

MK: So, how did you resolve it with her?

EVH: Oh, finally she took my word for it. I told her I'd pay at the end of the day. But she didn't peel them in any way because if you could have three hundred peelers like her, you wouldn't have to work but one weekend at the factory, you'd make enough money. Because she would peel away. If you got ten cans from her, you wouldn't get over four cans from the most of them in the factory to a bucket.

MK: She was fast.

EVH: She wasn't fast. But tomatoes, when she got through peeling, you never knew the skin to come off of it. But the rest of them would cut them just like that and squeeze them and half of the juice would pop out of them and they'd lose about half of them. But wasn't much you could do about it.

MK: Why did you think she was a witch?

EVH: Well, everybody told me she was a witch. A lot of people believed in witches when I was small.

MK: They did?

EVH: Yes.

MK: What was it about her that –

EVH: Well, she was just small and she was a little different. She always was clean and neat and all. But I don't know why everybody told me she was a witch. So, I asked her about it one day.

CK: What was a witch?

EVH: Oh, you see Halloween, that thing riding around on a broom? Well, that's what they called a witch. I asked her where that broom of hers was. She said, "I'm going to use it on your bottom." [laughter]

CK: [laughter] I wonder what people meant when you say they believed in witches. What do they think people did?

EVH: I don't know. But that was just an old expression that they used at that time. They swore to God that some of the people were witches. I don't know.

MK: But she was the one that birthed you. She was the midwife?

EVH: Yes.

MK: So, she probably made her own medicines and had her own.

EVH: Well, yes. But when you didn't have no doctor, she just took the place of the doctor. That's all there was to it. If you called a doctor, you didn't get a doctor. You might not get a doctor until tomorrow if you call the doctor over home during the daytime after they got telephones. Because he was over there in his buggy on a run that he had and didn't no doctors have no office at the house there. I remember the first doctor came back and set up an office. There wasn't no drug store to carry medicine. I show you some of the containers that the doctors had in the office with pills in them. That's one right there. That's a pill bottle. They would go to a drug store. All the brown ones like it in that size, some of them were bigger and some of them were smaller and some of them may be about that tall. But they had a little bit of medicine then see. But all of them was brown. Now, don't ask me why that is because I don't know.

MK: Well, this is all so interesting. You have got my head spinning. I do not know where to…

EVH: Well, I wish I could help you to screw it on, but I can't. [laughter]

MK: [laughter]

EVH: Because I take for granted, just like the boy and I or my grandson and I, I take for granted that he knows the things that I know, which he doesn't. He knows a whole lot that I'll never know too. But that don't count.

MK: Now your cannery, the Neenah?

EVH: That's out of operation.

MK: Is out of operation.

EVH: All of them. There were canneries, we had a whistle we would blow in the morning from the boiler. You know the steam whistle? Like you use on a railroad track. You've heard this whistle blowing on the railroad track. Well, everyone had one. I could start to blow mine in the morning and seven of them would answer me back. I could tell you the difference between the whistle of each one, which one it was. That's how close we were together. I owned half interest in that factory and I owned a half interest in one, two and a half miles up the road. About two miles up the road from it, was another one. That book there, she's got that book. I'll show you how close they were together. They're just like they were like flies. The transportation was the big thing that held the people back. We didn't have no bridge cross right behind Grove over here. If you wanted to go to Fredericksburg later on, they put a ferry cross here. I remember the first time I went. The thing would roll that high over the water. I was scared to death. They had a rope that went under the bottom and it pulled it long backwards and forward.

MK: So, people did not have the transportation to get…

EVH: Yes, that was it. Yes. We brought them by horse and wagon. We had no trucks. When I went to VPI, somebody asked me, one who lives in the Red Line over there, somebody asked me, "How far was the closest railroad from home?" I said, "Sixty miles." That boy, they said, "Well damn," said, "You're telling us a lie boy." I said, "No, I'm not." They said, "There isn't no place in the world that will tell you about the railroad in sixty miles." But railroads couldn't compete with the boats for the freight because you didn't have to dig that rubber and put those railroad tracks down and all that was there.

MK: Sixty miles from the nearest railroad.

EVH: We were about that far from Fredericksburg and that far from Richmond, that were the two closest railroads we had. Yes.

MK: With a team and a wagon, how long did it take you to get to the two wars? Which were the two wars again?

EVH: One was Kinsale, K-I-N-S-A-L-E. The other one was Nomini Ferry. But Nomini Ferry was an awful set of hills. We had to go up and down. So, most of the time we went to Kinsale. The boys would leave, they'd load the wagons up this evening, tomorrow morning – what do you want?

MK: I want you to not jingle the keys because it is picking up on the recording.

EVH: [laughter] Oh, I'm sorry. So, anyway, they'd load the wagons up and they'd leave home before sun up in the morning. They would go to Kinsale and unload and load back up. It'd be after sundown when they got home at night. Each one of them had a lamp on the wagon for light. It wasn't nothing but ten, twelve miles.

MK: Ten miles. The wagons would be full coming back.

EVH: Well, sometimes we had more going out than we'd have coming back. Sometimes we'd have more coming back than we would going out. But when we put the order in, when that salesman come down home and we took the order, we knew how many wagons we would have send to bring that order back.

MK: You could count on the delivery date.

EVH: The boat? Oh, yes. The sun come up, that boat was going to be there. Well, the boat was just like the buses used to be. They ran on a schedule and the river was full of those boats. Lumber cut here had to be taken down to that place and put on to send the Baltimore. That's where you sold your lumber.

MK: How long was the wharf?

EVH: How long was the wharf? Well, I'd say probably 150 feet long, something over like that.

MK: At Kinsale?

EVH: Yes. The boats would pull right downside it. They had plenty on that unload and load it. Sometimes we'd get a hundred tons of fertilizer in. Well, you couldn't put over two tons or a ton on a wagon. So, you had to send the wagons over there right often.

MK: How many wagons did you have on the farm?

EVH: I'd say we had about seven to eight.

MK: Seven or eight what?

EVH: Wagons. Something of the like of a truck but they pulled it with the horses. Two horses to a wagon. But when they come up in the hill, now over there where we load them, they'd have what they call a snatch team that would get onto the front of the horses that you had and help pull up the hill.

MK: That steep, huh? The hills were that steep?

EVH: Oh, yes

MK: You had to have help, a snatch team.

EVH: The road between Montrose and Warsaw was built with convicts when I was going to school. They didn't have one piece of equipment on there except horse-drawn equipment. They moved all that dirt. The convicts, that is two hundred in a camp, and it took two years to build that road about five miles.

CK: What did you say? Snatch team? What was that word?

EVH: Well, that's what they called them. But other words like this was the wagon. They had the two horses to pull it. Well, two horses could pull the wagon on level ground good. It wasn't no trouble. But going up a hill like this, you put another team of horses right onto the end of the tongue of the wagon and had a place to hook it. They would help to pull that wagon up the hill. Then they'd go back and get the next one. That's all that man and his team did every day, was just pull them up the hill.

MK: What did that cost?

EVH: Damn if I know. [laughter] It might not have cost nothing. Maybe the boat paid for it, I don't know. But you didn't get nothing for nothing. You paid for it one way or the other. But I'm sure that the boat paid for it. The boat furnished that because there won't no way around here a boat coming up to a place that was level that doesn't the hill to come up.

MK: Well, on this wharf, I am picturing a lot of activity.

EVH: Oh, yes. That was the same thing as the store. This was just a center of attraction. People gathered on the ground after they weren't working. They'd go down to the wharf.

MK: When the boat came in, did it excite people?

EVH: Oh, yes. Sure. They looked forward to that boat coming in. It's like the sun coming up. They cut a lot of wood and sent it to Baltimore too at four-foot lengths. I got some pictures in that room in there.

MK: Four-foot lengths?

EVH: Huh?

MK: In four-foot lengths?

EVH: Yes, that's what they sent it in. If it was so big, you had to split it. But that's the way the rules were of the game. Some of them took the bark off. They had drawing knives that they pulled downside and it took the bark off the wood.

MK: What was that wood for?

EVH: Well, I guess they must have used it for firewood. I imagine because four-foot lengths, I don't know anything else you'd use it for.

MK: Now, these big work boats steamers, were they paddle boats or?

EVH: Yes. Some of them. Yes, some of them were paddle boats. Yes, a lot of them.

MK: Do you remember any of them in particular? Any of those boats?

EVH: I got the names of some of them in there, but shorter was some of them. They were all named after these creeks around here.

MK: Like the?

EVH: Lewisetta. There was a boat that came into Lewisetta.

CK: I need to change tapes. This is so good. That one ended, too, I think. We could just maybe continue on this one, I think.

MK: Okay.

EVH: Let me see if I can find a picture here.

MK: Oh, that would be great.

EVH: If I hunt for something, I'm going to find it. But if I don't want it, it'll be in the way.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: Now, don't sit down where you were because it isn't going to be there.

RB: Shall I stop this?

MK: Yes. Are we running with numbers now, Diane? Have we got numbers?

RB: Yes.

MK: But you were talking about the boats. They were paddle? Where were they?

EVH: Yes. Great, big, old thing, right on that wide, all the way across the back.

CK: What did they look like?

EVH: Well, most of the boats were flat tops because they haul wood and stuff like that on them too. Some of them had upper decks on them like the ones that was hauled where people would go on. But the real work boats, they were just flat, that hauled most of the merchandise. I'll find some of them around here somewhere. But different people would come and get them and they were going to bring them back. Sometime [laughter] it don't get back too. But I got negatives in there that I can get them blown up from.

CK: So, there were steamboats that did not haul any passengers?

EVH: Only certain boats hauled passengers. The rest of them just hauled merchandise like

lumber. They'd load up, this whole boat would be but lumber of wood. We'd have a boat come in that wouldn't have anything on but cans for the factory.

CK: Empty cans?

EVH: Empty cans. Yes.

MK: Tell us about those. Where were they made?

EVH: Baltimore. Baltimore was where we got all the equipment from and stuff for the factory and all. Then when they put the bridge across, then we started dealing more with Richmond because Richmond was – then trucks came along when they put this bridge across.

MK: What year was that roughly?

EVH: That was in the late [19]30s because I got out of school in [19]39. But I think that bridge was built in the latter part of the [19]20s. I think it was. Let's see. I know what went on. I'll tell you. I was about twelve or thirteen years old. So, [19]31, [19]32. That bridge was built along about that time. Because I know they let me stay home from school that day. I was so glad of that. But I couldn't come see the bridge because I had to stay home and get the mail out. I wasn't old enough, so they had to have another man that was old enough. But I knew how to do it, he didn't.

CK: To get the mail out?

EVH: Send the mail out that day.

CK: How did you get the mail out?

EVH: Well, you had stuff that was brought in there that you had to sort out, the letters. Then if you had packages you had to get them. We sent a lot of eggs by mail. Sometimes we'd send ten or fifteen crates a day out there. You know what a crate of eggs is? The bucket was that long, about that tall, and about that wide.

CK: About how long? Show me again.

EVH: About thirty inches long.

MK: Hold your hands up how long again?

EVH: Well, about one and a half times the lengths of that box right there. That'll be better with it. About that wide and about that tall. It had three dozen eggs on each thing, two pallets. This was half of it. You go to any of these restaurants and buy eggs, nearly not like they were then. They had to put them in little cube loads. You stick them down in. But now they have them, but they just set them into a tray like a file.

CK: Then you mail them, you say?

EVH: Yes. They're all in wooden boxes. There weren't any pasteboard boxes. Of course, you'd have to tack them up if they weren't strong enough. You'd always have to go back and retack some of them. But people brought the eggs to the store in baskets and we'd have to crate them up and send them out.

CK: What would happen after you crated them up?

EVH: You put them on the fellow that carried the mail. He carried them out when he left. They went by the parcel post.

CK: How was the mail carried then?

EVH: Well, at first it was carried with horses. Then when I got a little bit bigger, they carried them in the truck. This fella had an old Model T Ford truck he'd take them in. They went up the road. On the Ford, he carried about six miles up the road. Then another bigger road met that road and they took them on to Montrose. From Montrose, they went on to Fredericksburg.

CK: So, not by a steamer?

EVH: No. Most of all the eggs were sent by a parcel post. I don't know why, but that's the way they were.

CK: When people brought you the eggs, was that instead of paying you in money? Or how did that work?

EVH: Well, most of them got due bills for it.

MK: Credit?

EVH: Yes. They give them credit. Otherwise, if they brought eggs, then…

MK: Can you sit a little forward because you are out of the light.

CK: No, that is fine.

MK: I am sorry.

EVH: But anyway, they got them. They looked just like a checkbook. It was no record that was kept on them at I know. Yes, you have one. You all have one. Each one of you has one of these.

CK: Let us see. Can you hold it up and show us?

MK: Hold it in your hand like this. Now, tell us again what those are.

EVH: They're tokens they'd put in the bucket when a peeler peeled a bucket of tomatoes.

CK: Hold your hand just a little bit forward so I can get it with the camera.

EVH: All right. Come and see what I put in it. You're taking the light out of it.

CK: Yes.

EVH: Let me get it right. That's one bucket, it says right on there.

MK: So, I would pick a bucket of tomatoes and you would give me one of those?

EVH: You'd get one of those.

MK: What do I do with it?

EVH: That was the same thing. Just say I was paying five cents a bucket for peeling tomatoes, then the store would give you a nickel worth of stuff for it.

MK: So, I could use it like?

EVH: Cash. Yes. Sure. But then anytime that you were to come up to the store and you wanted to cash yours in, we'd give you cash for them. It's really hard to explain it because it isn't done that way today. Well, out in the coal mines of West Virginia, you got paid that same way for working in the mines. I got token chip from about the western parts of state.

CK: What did you say about the coal mines?

EVH: They would pay for workers with things like these also, what they called tokens. Just the same way if you wanted to ride a streetcar. You could go in Richmond and had streetcar and buy so many of these. That each time you get on a streetcar, you give them one of these.

CK: Can I see them? Thank you. So, they are different sizes?

EVH: Yes. Well, now both of those sizes represent a full bucket with us. But then we had one that was out of brass and that was for half a bucket. You either had a half a bucket or a full bucket or you didn't have nothing saved. They didn't make no variations in between.

CK: How did you get paid? How much per bucket?

EVH: All depended on what you decided we were going to pay that year. If we said it going to be worth a nickel, it was a nickel. As the economy went up, the buckets went up. They're worth so much more. Of course, that was the awfullest thing in the world, trying to explain to them that that was worth five cent last year, that it's worth eight cent this year. It's hard for me to try to explain to you how we had to deal with those people that couldn't read or write. I had one

man that worked for my uncle and he always paid him. I paid all the rest of the people that worked for us. This man was somebody that stayed around the house and did the housework and stuff like that. So, Willie was sick one day. He said, "Veolo," said, "You pay (Walter?). I don't feel like coming over to the store today." I said, "All right. How much you want to give him?" So, he told me, "Give him so much cash and take and put so much in the envelope for it to go to the bank." We gave him so much of his money in cash and so much put in the bank for him all the time because he didn't have no expenses. He lived on the place and he ate on the place and he got what he wanted out of the store. It didn't make no difference what it was. If he wanted a dime worth of candy, he got a dime worth of it. If he wanted a dollars' worth of this or that, he just got it. Willie always figured it out in his head just about what would be somewhere maybe fair for him. So, I gave Walter. He told me to give him $5 cash.

CK: Give him what?

EVH: $5. That's for spending change for the weekend. The rest of the money would go in the bank, what he hadn't already got up during the week. So, I gave him a $5 bill and I was busy and I didn't pay no attention to him. He said, "Mr. Veolo," he said, "When you going to pay me?" I said, "Walter, what the hell you talking about? You got the money in there." "This isn't money Mr. Veolo." I said, "The hell it isn't, $5 bill." "That isn't money." Well, it didn't dawn on me. [laughter] I was halfway aggravated with him. So, then it dawned on me. So, I took the $5 back and give him a roll of quarters. When I gave him a roll of quarters, he was happy then. That's what it was. A lot of them were that way when I was small. But that they had a revolt in there. But when we quit using those things, they said it wasn't going to work. Of course, if you were raised with them, you can understand it a little bit better than you'd be able to understand what they're talking about.

MK: So interesting.

CK: How much would people get then? How many buckets could a good worker fill in a day?

EVH: Well, I don't know. But the first day I ever worked, I worked a ten-hour day setting out tomato plants. I set an acre of tomato plants. So, 2,750, I got $1. That was a man's wages at that day. But we had people doing the depression come back from up north where we were paying fifty cents a day. But fifty cents would buy a lot of stuff then though. You'd get two packs of cigarettes for a quarter. I don't know what cigarettes are now because I don't smoke it. But I think it's three or $4. Isn't it?

RB: Yes.

CK: So, is it mostly Black people then who worked in the cannery or?

EVH: In the area where we were, ninety percent of ours were colored. Maybe ninety-five.

CK: Of your…

EVH: Of the ones working in the factory. We had some white people that were farmers. But

very few of them ever worked in the factory for us. They worked at farms and never come to us.

MK: Were those old Black families that had been around for a long time?

EVH: Oh, yes. Some of them were slaves from our family. I remember one of them real well. One of them was a slave.

MK: What was his name?

EVH: Wise. Now don't ask me why he got that name or not. A lot of them would take the name of the huts. Or if you worked for Mr. Jones, you were Jones's.

CK: His name was what then?

EVH: Wise. W-I-S-E.

MK: Did he have a first name?

EVH: Charlie Wise was the one that was a slave. He didn't have any children and he adopted. Well, he took. Well, they didn't adopt people at that time, they just took them in the house and raised them. There were no papers ever on it. My grandma, she used to always have to have some of them around. So, we always had two colored boys that stayed at the house there with us. We had a house over in the yard that they slept in. They ate. We fed all of the help on the farm three meals a day. We had a big kitchen off from the house. We had one girl and my grandmother, they did the cooking. Then we had one girl to clean the house up. It was seventeen rooms in the house. It was a two-family house, my uncle and father. So, we had one girl that just kept the house clean and mama worked in the store.

MK: Two families living in one house?

EVH: Yes.

MK: Tell me.

EVH: Well, I never heard an argument or a crossroad. I didn't know the difference between having one dad and two dads. I'm telling you the truth, we didn't know. When we got so that my dad and uncle had a car, if my brother wanted to use it – my brother always used daddy's car. But I never asked Willie for the car if I wanted his car. I'd just tell him, "I'm going out tonight," and take the car and go ahead on. We never had no crosswords.

MK: So, how many kids were there in this two-families household?

EVH: Well, my uncle had two kids. I had a brother, then I had one sister where she was born on, say, a Monday and my uncle's wife had a child who was going to be born on Wednesday. She couldn't have a child. So, daddy had been to Fredericksburg and had his appendix taken out about two years before and he gotten to be a good friend of (Dr. Pratt?). Well, I don't know. But

they kept him up there thirty days before he came home and he'd go home with the doctor a lot, Dr. Pratt. So, we called up Dr. Pratt and Dr. Pratt said he'd come down and take the child. So, he come down. So, he told my uncle, he said, "There's two things I can do. I can either save the child, or I can save your wife." So, he told him to save the wife. So, he went and told the lady, Willie's wife. She said, "No." Said, "That isn't the way it's going to be." He said, "I want to save the child and if you can save both of us it's fine. If you can't save but one, do that." So, he took the child and in two days' time his wife died. So, they tried to raise his child on a bottle and she wouldn't take a bottle. So, my mama said, "Bring her in here and let me see." So, mama raised both of them on her breast. So, she was thirteen years old when they were going to school, and some of the kids in school told them one day that my sister wasn't her sister. Man, they had a fit. So, they were always putting it off for telling her what happened. So, then my uncle used to take her over to Caroline and see him. So, then he married her sister, the one that – so, he married two sisters. So, they had a little boy and I think I was about twelve or thirteen years old. So, the little boy was taken. He was supposed to go to school that year. I guess he'd been seven years old or was seven. So, he got sick. So, the doctor kept coming down. So, one day he told him, he said, "No, I know what he got. He got Rocky Mountain spotted fever." But nobody had ever heard of that at that time around here. But he died with it. The doctor told me. Willie wouldn't go down. I had to run the factory. I was almost thirteen years, fourteen years old. I ran the factory for two weeks when he was sick. So, I grew up in a herd. So, after that they buried him the day that school opened. The doctor came in the store, he said, "Come here boy." He said, "You aren't going to school tomorrow." I said, "Why?" He said, "You run down." He said, "You in bad shape." So, I had to stay home for two weeks. They wouldn't let me go outdoors. They let me go out on the porch but wouldn't let me go outdoors now. That's the way they did it.

MK: I bet you after two weeks you were really missing the teacher, were you not?

EVH: Hell no. I hated school.

MK: Oh, that was a different school.

EVH: I was so damn glad. I'd even be sick to get out of going to school. I never liked to go to school a day in my life after that teacher left that I had when I started, until my junior year at VPI. Daddy, he couldn't get me to go to school. So, he got the agricultural teacher down. Well, I thought the sun rose was setting in. So, I'd been up here on the [unintelligible] team one year. So, finally, he said, "Well," said, "Go one year." Daddy said he didn't have money enough but he could send for one year. Well, I had saved up enough money. I had saved up about $800. I went to school on $700 for the first year. I went to VPI four years on less than $2,500. I paid all my expenses at it. I'd have a crop of the medicine in the summertime and I'd get enough to go to school on. So, that little boy, he died. So, boy, I guess I loved him better than I did my own brothers and sisters. He and I really got along good. We lived together. Just before he died, we bought the place right across the road from the store. My uncle went down there and I was going down there with him, but daddy wouldn't let me go. So, life isn't exactly like it looks like it is at times.

MK: Well, this has just been great. I wonder if you can tell us, did you ever get on a steamboat

and go to Baltimore yourself?

EVH: Never went myself. Well, after I got big enough to go, daddy always said that he needed me at home, help in the store. The store was a big thing. We opened up at 5:00 a.m. in the summertime, and closed at 10:00 p.m. There weren't no old damn double shifts. You pulled the whole damn shift. But I never worked in the store except at night. I'd work on the farm in the daytime, in the canning factory or the farm machinery. If the sun came up that day, you know that when you ate dinner that night you were going to the store. Daddy's health was bad. He got struck over the head with a catalog cart sweep. That's the thing you haul the lumber in the woods with. He was unconscious for four days. He couldn't stand in the heat. Cold weather didn't bother it. But if it got up to ninety, he couldn't walk from here all across the road there. The way he was affected from it, they said it came from that blood clot he had.

CK: What struck him again?

EVH: Well, it was a piece of lumber about that big around or that square and it's about ten feet long. They come down and you'd pull it up like this with a block and tackle, and the rope broke and it hit him across the head and knocked him out. They said he was out for four days.

CK: What was the name of that?

EVH: Catalog cart. It was the way you'd carry logs to the sawmill. It was two-wheeled affair with horses pulling it or oxen. Most of them were pulled by oxen. But that's the only thing in the world that I ever tried to do, I couldn't do. I couldn't learn how to drive an ox. I could tell them the same thing that the boys who worked for me would tell them, whoa and g and stuff like that. That's the language they knew. They'd didn't do a damn thing but turn around and look at me.

CK: [laughter]

EVH: That's all they would do. I never got them to do anything whether it was to go backwards or forwards. I tried everywhere I knew how. I felt like killing them at times.

MK: But the other guys could?

EVH: The colored boys could just lay right on in the back of there and talk to them. You wouldn't even have to go with them at all. Take them anywhere they want. They'd get them into a place that weren't that wide on each side of them.

CK: How wide?

EVH: They wouldn't have that much difference on the side. Where they could go through, they'd go right through it. When they'd tell them, "Move over," they'd do it. They do anything they said do. But I couldn't do it. They knew I didn't know what I was doing and they just sat there and looked at me. But with horses and mules and things, I'm pretty good with them.

MK: Would you rather work with a team of horses or a team of mules?

EVH: Well, that's a debatable question. Mules will always take care of themselves. You don't have to worry about a mule. You couldn't drive him overboard. You couldn't get him to step into a hole. Horses would. But the mules take care of themselves all their life. But we had some mules at home that were perfect to work. You could get them cultivating corn, put them in that road there, and you cultivate all day long and you wouldn't have to say a thing to them to get them to turn around and come back. We never had horses like that. But we had one mule, you could have two more rows of corn to cultivate and it was ten minutes to 12:00 p.m., he'd go down that row and come back. But he'd holler when he got it back up there and that was the end of it. You were going to take him to the barn and feed him and give him water before he going to work that last row. Oh, I felt like I could kill him many times. But you had to do it that way. He is the only one we ever had like that. But some of them weren't like that.

MK: His way or no way.

EVH: Yes sir. But I'm telling you one thing, you could work with him all day long. Tomato patch, he'd never step on a tomato. Now the rest of them, some of them would fall all over them and do everything else. You'd have to be guiding him with the rope. But you never had to test it with him. He knew what he was supposed to do and he did it.

CK: What was his name?

EVH: The name was George. I remember his name. [laughter] I had a female mule. Her name was (Ms. Liza?). Boy, I'm telling you, the boy that worked here, you better not hit her with a whip or nothing.

MK: Better not what?

EVH: Better not hit her with a whip or anything to make her do anything. Oh boy, he'd crawl all over you.

CK: He was particular?

EVH: Huh?

CK: He was particular?

MK: He liked his mule.

EVH: Yes. Well, that was his team. He worked on that team when we worked him in wagons. He was going over to get stuff to bring back from the boat or getting up hay and stuff on the farm or calling and stuff. He always worked. Some of the older boys that worked there, they'd had their own team and the rest of us filled in with the odd ones.

CK: So, George and Ms. Liza were one team?

EVH: Yes, George and Ms. Liza were a team. Yes. The boy that worked there he went to – all the colored people around home when I was small went to Ambler, Pennsylvania. Well, I thought Ambler was the biggest place in the whole world. I thought it was like New York City. You'd think of New York City because everybody that went away to work, they went to Ambler. Ambler is the back door to Pennsylvania. I don't know whether you know where it is or not. When they went there, it was a little difference. A little country in between. But by the time I went up there, it had all just grown right in. You didn't know whether you were getting that or one and then the other.

MK: Why did the people go there?

EVH: All the colored ones around home went there to work. Now, don't ask me why. I guess some of them went there and they filtered back with them. But all out is here with Ambler, how big Ambler was and what it was and everything else. I thought when I went up there, I was going to see something showing up but those outskirts of Philadelphia.

MK: So, you never really traveled on a steamboat very much?

EVH: No. Well, I went on it, but I never went to Baltimore or anything like that.

CK: You went on what?

EVH: On the steamboats?

MK: Where did you go on them?

EVH: I just went up and down the Potomac River sometimes. We'd just get on it for the sake of saying we went on a steamboat.

CK: What was it like?

EVH: Well, it just was moving and that's about all you could say. I guess probably four, five miles an hour, something over like it. Maybe ten. But it wasn't like being on a small boat. It was very stable. But that damn ferry I went across this river, yes, wasn't stable. Man, you'd look right down, but that would fall off of the water and I was scared to death.

MK: Can you swim?

EVH: I can stay on top of the water a little bit, but I can't swim. All my boys could swim like fish. But I couldn't. I never did learn how to swim.

MK: So, when you finally got away from the store, you were pretty glad to get away from it?

EVH: Yes, finally. I wound up with the whole thing for a while there when I was first married. But then I had to bring in a student in the farm machinery business right well. I had a farm

machinery place in Lottsburg. Then I had one in Montrose and the one at home too. I didn't mind that, but I didn't like that business. We had to weigh everything. I weighed two cents worth of black pepper thousands of times. Everything came loose. They want nothing in bags or boxes when I was small. They came in big containers and you weigh them out.

MK: Just imagine.

EVH: You bought candy in fifty-pound boxes around Christmas time. Of course, we didn't have so much crackers and cookies. All of them came in boxes and you canned them out.

[end of transcript]