

William Crosby: It is so nice when you all nice people come by here to see an old, dumb man like me. [laughter]

Michael Kline: Yes.

Carrie Kline: Now, you know that is not the case.

WC: [laughter] Oh, well.

CK: Can you start by –

MK: I am counting down?

CK: Are you counting down?

MK: Are you going?

WC: Can we start?

CK: Yes. See, well...

WC: Oh, you plugging?

CK: I think today must be the – what is today's date? The 13th?

Diane Rabson: 13th.

CK: Today must be the 13th of November.

MK: I need you over that way more please, honey, if you can.

CK: Sure.

DR: Like that.

CK: We are here with the Steamboat Museum trying to learn about life during the steamboat era.

WC: Oh, yes.

CK: We are over at the home of Mr. William Crosby. Is that correct?

WC: Yes, ma'am.

CK: Are we rolling?

MK: Yes.

CK: Can you say, "My name is," and tell us your full name?

WC: Who?

CK: Say, "My name is," and tell us your name.

WC: Oh, no. I can't say your name.

CK: Yours.

MK: No, just say, "My name is William."

WC: Oh, my name is William Crosby from White Stone, Virginia. Yes, sir.

CK: What is your date of birth then?

WC: Oh, I will be eighty-seven on the second day of January. My birthday is second day of January.

CK: Let us see. What year would that have been?

WC: Oh, Lord have mercy. Child, that happened so many years. [laughter] I'm eighty-six years old. How many years would that be? So, how do you even come up with that?

CK: Well, we get the idea. You are about to be eighty-seven.

DR: He was just reciting some of Rudyard Kipling's poetry to me.

CK: Yes.

DR: I am counting down again.

WC: You getting things straight? It's so nice when you all nice people come by here to see an old, dumb man like me. [laughter]

MK: Yes.

CK: Now, you know that is not the case.

WC: [laughter] Oh, well.

CK: Can you start by...

MK: I am counting down.

CK: Are you counting down?

MK: Are you going?

WC: Can we start?

CK: Yes. Let us see. Well...

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CK: Can you say, "My name is," and tell us your full name?

WC: Who?

CK: Say, "My name is," and tell us your name.

WC: Oh, no. I can't say your name.

CK: Yours.

MK: No. Just say, "My name is William."

WC: Oh, my name is William Crosby from White Stone, Virginia. Yes, sir.

CK: What is your date of birth then?

WC: Oh, I will be eighty-seven, on the second day of January. My birthday is second day of January.

CK: Let us see. What year would that have been?

WC: Oh, Lord have mercy. Child, that happened so many years. [laughter] I'm eighty-six years old. So, how many years would that be? So, how do you even come up with that?

CK: Well, we get the idea. You are about to be eighty-seven on the 2nd of January.

WC: Yes.

CK: Will you just tell us about your people and where you were raised?

WC: I was raised in Ditchley, Virginia over in Northumberland, on the other side of Calvary Church. Answer that honey, I won't mind, it's because I don't know who's that.

MK: Do not worry about that other one. Just let it run.

WC: For Crosby, I guess?

DR: No, it is for the little girl that was here this morning.

WC: Oh, yes. She's gone. She's gone to work. What else we were talking about a little while ago?

CK: Well, let us just warm up these cameras one more time. Let us see. Yes. So, yes. Just take your time. Just tell us about your people and where you were raised.

WC: Yes. I was raised over in Northumberland County. My mother and her family were born down the last end of Bluff Point. You all have gone down to Bluff Point? Have any of you been at Bluff Point?

CK: No.

WC: That last end of Bluff Point. That's where they had the (hollow ball?) at. I'm the oldest Black that goes to hollow ball. Has a hollow ball. Been there for over a hundred years. I go there and they'd give me a ticket there. I've been going there for the last four or five years. That's where my family from. One was three. My (Mama Sue?) and then my grandmother, after slavery, gave them five acres a piece down on Diamond's Creek. That's where I was born and

read, down on that creek. Then they moved up from there after not far up in Ditchley. That's not too far from where you see – you all have been down that road that said Ditchley?

CK: No.

WC: Going towards Wicomico?

CK: No, because we are new.

WC: Oh, you all are new here. Everybody here new?

CK: Except for Diane.

DR: Yes, I have been out there.

CK: Yes.

WC: You've been there. You know where Ditchley is.

DR: I do.

WC: Right down on that hill, that's where I was born and bred at. We all used to go to Crisfield to pick berries in the spring of the year. We'd go to Crisfield, pick berries, and we'd get some money to buy clothes to go to August meeting and all. So, mama looked at me and said, "Boy," said, "All your brothers dead and your sisters are in Baltimore. I don't know what I'm going to do with you." Said, "But you can always go to Crisfield and pick some berries." Then she said, "Well, I think I'll just have to take you." So, I was five years old. So, she took me. After we got into Crisfield, we decided that we were going from Crisfield to (Fruit Linville?). There were more berries there than was over there in Crisfield. So, we went over to (Fruit Linville?) and my mama said, "Now, son, I'm going to set you out." I used to sleep with the women and all because I was nothing but a baby? [laughter] She said, "I'm going to put you out on under this tree and that's where you got to sit until I get ready to go back to the house." I was sitting over there with them little old pants on and up here to your – bugs would bite me and everything. I decided I wanted to do like my father showed me. I went down and started picking some berries, five years old. So, this Black come over and said, "Boy, what are you doing in my strawberry patch?" She said, "Now, if I had a switch, I'd whip you for what you just did." She said, "You messed my berries up." I'd put four of them into little crates of berries, four of them. She said, "Let me see them." I started crying, and so she looked to them and didn't see nothing but ripe strawberries. No green ones, no nothing. She said, "Boy, who showed you how to do that?" I said, "My father showed me how to do it." She said, "Well, I'll tell you, I'm going to let you pick until these strawberry seeds are over. Then I hope you'll make enough money to get a suit." I did make enough money to get a suit. She called my mother and said, "I've got some money for you for this boy. I want you to take him over to [inaudible] and let him buy himself a suit for August meeting." Mama said, "Boy, what did you pick? I told you not to pick these berries." I said, "You didn't tell me nothing." "But I'll whip you when I get sent." "Don't whip the boy. Let him – [laughter] I'm going to give you the money." So, she gave her the money. The mama

said, "\$18." \$18 then was a whole lot of money. She said, "Boy made \$18 off of berries." She said, "Well, we'll go over to strawberry." We got in this truck and when we got to the strawberries, I saw a train there with steam coming out. I couldn't understand because I used to drive oxen and see oxen. We didn't see no train down where we lived at. I said, "Mom, what's that?" She said, "That's a train." I said, "Where did that steam come from?" She said, "Well, they got coal in it and they're running by coal." I said, "All right." Then we went inside and bought this gray suit. I bought a suit. Mama said, "I don't want no long pants. I want short pants because this boy but five years old." She said, "I don't have no short pants for that. I just got one pair of long, one pair of shorts." She said, "Well, that'll cut them off when I get back home." That's what she did. From that time until she had died at 102, she never wanted me to get another suit. I got my suit myself. I used to work down just the factory where we used to tell me the steamboat, come in there. I worked for twenty-five cents a day and fifteen cents a day, whatever it is. But it was my money and I had a little tobacco bag. Any of you ever seen a Duke's Mixture tobacco bag with string in it? Have any of you seen that?

MK: What is it?

WC: A tobacco bag. You have a bag with a string in it, see? That would be old Duke's Mixture, an old cheap tobacco. Well, I had one of them bags and so, I'd put my money in that bag and drop it down on my waist and on my breasts. That's the way I did it. I did that at the time that mama never knew where my money was coming from. I worked for twenty-five cents a day, fifteen cents a day, ten cents a day. I worked some days for nothing. [laughter] But that's the way we did and we just worked it out. At that time, people were gathering in Ditchley just like they're gathering there now. Although, there's not going be more people there now than there was then. That was where the boat used to come in. *The Piankatank* used come in there and the *A. Brook Taylor* used to go in there and them different boats would come and just the factory. That's what you all want to know so much about the fish boats, don't you, and the passenger boats, don't you? Huh?

CK: Yes, all those steamboats.

WC: All those steamboats? All were steam. Everything was steam. Now, we had down in Ditchley, that's where the boat used to come in there for it to go to Baltimore, or go to New York, wherever we wanted to go. Then she'd leave there and she would go on up the creek there further in those other little docks. She'd pull in there because people couldn't get around most then. They had to go on the ports. Then they'd go on up the Eubank's wharf. They had a doctor and she'd go and see them around all day long. Then at night they'd go on to Baltimore. Yes, I said *the Piankatank*. *Piankatank* used to be in this display. Every time she'd blow that whistle, that would scare me to death and I'd run. [laughter] I didn't like to hear that sound of the whistle. I used to go with them. I used to go down with my grandfather and them because they lived down in Bluff Point. Then I moved on up to this. They're from Bluff Point. Then we had people gathering there and obviously they go there now, but more people now than it were then. Oh, my mother-in-law was born and bred down in Bluff Point, right down there.

CK: The phone keeps ringing. So, I do not know if we should pick it up. Do you want to answer it one more time?

WC: That's over to Ditchley.

DR: If I can find it.

WC: Just over there. See if it's – that's all. Let it ring.

CK: Because this is too good to get on. He says just let it ring.

WC: Yes, let it ring. Let it ring, honey.

CK: Just a minute. I had turned this off for a minute because I really wanted to get everything you said just perfect.

WC: All right.

CK: I love how you are telling it.

WC: Oh, [laughter] well that's Bluff Point is the place where we were bred at and up into Ditchley too.

CK: So, you were talking about the steamboats and *the Piankatank* and the wharf. Tell me all that again.

WC: All right. The steamboat would be *the Piankatank*. That was a nice boat to come from Baltimore down to pick up people. That was a great thing. Just the only way you could get to Baltimore then by *Piankatank*, see? She had about five stations, they stopped her. Then she'd go waste down to that station, five stations and she would stop there. The people there was a great thing in the summertime going to Baltimore on *the Piankatank*. They would feed you on the boat, see? They would feed you and all the fellows would – that was a great thing. Great thing. I never did ride on it because I wanted to stick close to my mother. I never did ride on that *Piankatank*. I used to go down there and go aboard there because we'd ship our calf and everything would be shipped down there. Cows or calf where you would ship them away, you shipped them down on *the Piankatank*. We had one in Ditchley. All around, there would be wharves in all those places. You have everywhere there was a group of people, they docked there. So, that was a great thing. Great thing. They would ship the cows and pigs and whoever they had to ship away to Baltimore, they'd ship them on *the Piankatank*. That's about all I can tell you on them.

CK: Was it a loud boat?

WC: Huh?

CK: Did it make a lot of noise?

WC: Oh, yes. It made a lot of noise. We could hear the whistle blowing all the way up from the

land, and we knew when the boat was going to come in. It would be a great thing. That's how come we have so many people from up in Essex County that didn't have nothing like we had down in Ditchley because we had the fish factory there. The fish factory was a great thing. Because, well, they would hire some almost three, four hundred people. That was good. It wasn't a whole lot of money, but it was some money. That's where we used to have them come down there and they'd come down just the factory and they would work there all the summer. Then the fall year, they were able to send their children to school and do what most of Black people would do. That was a great thing. My father, he did practically everything. He would fish boat on them and then he used to butcher pigs and then he was a barber. Never went to school in a day in his life, but he could do all those things. Then he was a carpenter too. He used to work on houses and get things straight and seven feet tall. Did you all see him on that magazine?

CK: No.

WC: Huh? I think there was a magazine he was on. They'd been getting my stuff out there.

MK: Seven feet tall?

WC: He was seven feet tall. He rolled 2,200 pounds on a two-wheeled cart. You ever seen those two-wheeled carts? Did any of you ever seen them? Not a one-wheeled but a two-wheeled cart. Huh?

MK: Yes.

WC: You've seen it, yes. He rolled 2,200 pounds. One of the other two men could raise the handle up. One of the two men there could raise the handle up. That stayed at (General?) Fish Factory for years until they sold the factory. They just sold the factory and tore it down and all. I had planned to get there. They had his picture and all. He was a little man like this woo. [laughter] Seven feet tall, Lord have mercy. He would pick me up, if there was something heavy and all, he'd pick me up. He said, "Well, I'm going to pick you up and put you on the other side then. I'm going to get over there when I get there." [laughter] I had a lot of fun with him. I loved him to death. I just loved him. So, after he died, I was down at (Captain Randolph Lewis?) right down this creek. Then mama called me, and said, "I believe Charles is gone." I went up home and I went in the woods where we used to hunt and sat down by a tree. I said, "I can't stay here." I haven't spent but one night there since he died. I buried him. I sold my horse and buried him because I had a horse that I didn't want to sell, but I sold him. The name was Donna Day. He was born just about Donna Day. He put his house almost all eight miles on.

MK: What was your father's name?

WC: Charles Crosby. Charles Crosby. He didn't have but one name [laughter] as I know of.

MK: Where was he born?

WC: He was born in Wicomico down on Remo in that area. You ever been to Wicomico?

MK: No, sir.

WC: That's going from here before you get to Reedsville side. Wicomico was a great town. From here to Wicomico would be, say, a good ten or fifteen miles. But they'd come all the way from there on Sundays. The only time you'd get the haircut then was on Sundays. They'd come all the way from there down to my mother's home. When she'd leave the church, sometimes she had twenty people to feed. [laughter] You would get a haircut then for fifty cents. [laughter] So, they didn't make no money, but that was a little bit of money for him. She'd feed them and then they'd walk on back up to our Wicomico. That was a very good way of just being able to kill them off. That's what they would do. Every weekend, they'd have a bunch come down. Sometimes, they'd bring the old bootleg husky and the old man used to like to drink some of it. He'd drink [laughter] that with them and have fun. They had a lot of fun with him. Because he was a wonderful man to everybody. Of course, nobody wanted to get close to him if he got mad. So, he was wonderful. [laughter] They looked after me after I went fish boating on account of my father. I found out that if you good, you can be good and your goodness will pass on to your children. I used to get jobs on account of him, because he was such a nice man to people. He was a nice man to everybody. He killed hogs. He did everything. He did everything that was done by hand. He did it.

MK: Could he build a boat?

WC: Huh?

MK: Could he build a boat?

WC: Oh, yes. He'd build a boat. Yes, my God. I told you everything done by hand, he could do it.

MK: Tell me about how he would build a boat.

WC: Boat? I didn't fool around the boats much with him because he'd build skiffs. He wouldn't build no big boats. He'd build skiffs up for people and he would lay them out there and say, "Boy, get out the way. Don't mess with me now. Don't [laughter] do this." I didn't hang out with him. But when I used to hang out with him most is when he was hunting and butchering. When he'd do butcher work, I'd hang up with him then. But when he came to building, because he didn't like nobody to touch nothing. His tools just so and didn't want you to put your hands on them. [laughter] But Lord have mercy, didn't I love him? I just loved him to death because he never whipped me. He should have whipped me a lot of times, but he didn't do it. [laughter] We used to play together. We'd hunt together and everything. We used to go hunting. He kept good dogs. All his dogs got to be just so – but he didn't have no dogs would follow anybody else. His dog wouldn't follow nobody but him and me. But nobody else. I said, "Father, how you do that?" He said, "Well, I've got a way of doing it." He said, "I don't want my dog to follow people, because they'll be doing one thing and I want to do another." We used to have a lot of fun that way. We'd hunt together, fish together. That was a long time getting over here. That's how come I moved down to (Fris Bay Neck?) down to Captain (Morris barn?). Because after he

died, I knew he wasn't going to come back. We buried him down. He was around he was around sixty-five. He died when he was around sixty-five. A camel buried him down there. Well, he didn't take no medicine or nothing like most people take today. He wouldn't take no medicine. He just lived until he died. That's the way he did. That's the way he wanted. That's the way it was. We just loved him. All right. You want to know something else?

CK: Tell me more about who would have worked on those steamboats?

WC: Huh?

CK: Who worked on those steamboats?

WC: Oh, most of the people that worked on the steamboats were from city. They were people that would be in Baltimore. They had their own workers. Then when we get to the dock, when they come down the dock to load that boat, we would have the boys from the factory would have two-wheeled carts. They would go and they'd load everything aboard the boat. There are certain places the people that worked on the boat would tell you where you want to put the things. That's the way it went down. It would be a quite good crowd. But the cows and things that we ship, we'd have a little pen inside the boat for them. When I stopped to think about it, that was a lot of fun. But at that time, it had frightened me because when the boat would blow the whistle, that would frighten me. The boat would, "Boop!" Good God almighty, [laughter] I'd knock on the boy. I'd run and holler. [laughter] Just think something was going to catch me. That was a great thing though. We didn't realize how great that was to the Northern Neck until things start breaking down and people doing different things. Because the crowd would call and things. But that was a great thing to have that boat to come in there and bring food and everything else in there. Ms. Eubanks and them was running the store there at that time. One big store there in Kilmarnock. (Mr. Shawn Brent?), he would sell clothes and things. I stayed in the house with his family. Mr. Brent did. That was like you're going to Calvary Church? Did you all go by Calvary Church?

CK: Not yet.

WC: You haven't gone. But that would be the last two-story house on this side. Calvary Church would be on the right-hand side. I stayed down there. I went there when my father took sick because he was farming there. After he took sick, I went up there with him and I moved right in. (Ms. Natalie May Brent) fell in love with me. They were the people that started (Bussell's Squares Factory?) and all those factories. They came from England here and they still got the land down here, right down the last point of that. I haven't been out in the last four, five years since I've been a little sick and all. But because the girls don't live here now, they live in the northern part of Virginia, Ms. Morgan and all. But I've got a safe there. Did you see that safe in that room?

CK: Not yet.

WC: It's a safe in that room is over nine hundred years old. Ms. Natalie May Brent gave it to me and says, "Crosby, I want you to keep this safe." Said, "No dear," said, "Go on, put it on the

trailer," and said, "Put on the dump pile." Coming up the road, I looked at it. Let's look at it here. You want to see it?

MK: Well, we are all set up right here. Let us finish here and then we can go look at it.

WC: Yes. All right. I was bringing it up the road on my trailer and a boy named (Hubbard Chase?) said, "Crosby, what you got there?" I said, "I've got a safe here." "A safe?" "Yes." He said, "Man, you come up Ms. Natalie May Brent." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to throw it in a dump pile." He said, "Oh my God man, don't throw it in a dump pile. I'll fix it up for you." It was a little shaggy then. A lot of people have asked me about that safe, a lot of people. A lot of people have offered me money for that safe, but I won't sell it because Ms. Natalie May Brent, she was a mother to me. We'd go down that to that place down there where they still got that house down there. When somebody said something to her, she didn't like. It was 1928 when I was driving by here. I said, "Ms. Natalie, why you always getting me to take you down there? How about Helen and Morgan and them?" I said, "You don't have but one bed down there now." Because we moved the beds out in the wintertime and move it on up to her house. She said, "We don't need but one bed, boy. You and I, we are going down here now and we going to stay here for two, three days." We stayed there two, three days and I would go there. Well, I used to really enjoy throwing the shells in the water, oyster shells. I'd pick up the oyster. You ever seen the oyster shells along the shore? Have any of you ever seen that? Oyster shells would be around the shore like this? I could see them in the water. She said, "Boy, you get some great kick of that," when I used to drive her out there. I used to drive her down there. I said, "Why you want me to take you down?" "See, because you drive just the way I want you to drive. I'm not going to heaven with my eyes wide open." So, [laughter] she said, "I'm going to heaven. When I go to heaven, I want to be asleep." I would take her down there to the – they had a nice lot of land down there. I don't know if they got all that land down there or not. They had about 25 or 30 acres of land right down on the water. That's where the first started (Bussell's Squares Factory?). That was one of the first factories that was started down there. I don't know when did it start there, but it was going on in my time.

MK: What kind of a factory was that?

WC: Fish factory like my boy fish at now.

MK: Can you describe it? How it was set up and who worked there?

WC: Oh, that was a big factory. It was set up by men. They had people to cook there. They would cook up the fish scrap and stuff when they'd bring it in on the boat. Well, one's down here, then another one down here, right here on this point. That was (Peck Humphrey?) and them. They had it. They all done sold out now and gone and people that's building up there. But they had a factory down there. So, I could go down there, I would go down there to that factory to you. But I don't know if you can get down there now, because people done built up around them and you can't get around to them now. But they had a factory. There were three factories down here on this creek. That brought in work for people and things. They would have cut fish. We'd cut fish in the spring of the year. You'd cut herring. I don't know if you ever heard talking about herring fish? We used to cut them fish and they would have to row in them

fish. They would ship that all out. That was a great thing. Selling that to all the stores. Then we sent some to Baltimore and whoever they wanted to ship it to. But now they don't do that no more. They don't work on the fish like that. I haven't seen a shad in a long time. They used to have big shad like this. That would be a nice fish for people. But those things have gone down. I reckon they won't hardly come back. But that's the way we used to do it and eat them. We'd have shad roll. Any of you ever eaten rolls? Huh?

MK: No sir.

WC: Never eaten a roll. That's the finest thing that is. My boy is on a fish boat. If he had some here, I would show them to you. But people grab so many and bring them up here. He like a bunch of women, and the bunch of women gets his stuff most of the time. [laughter] I don't bother very much. But this has been a live place all through this area. I didn't know how alive it was until I started going with a girl named (Esther Thurston?) that was teaching school down here at the high school. So, she said, "Crosby, what do you all get a day?" I said, "Well, we get \$2 a day." She said, "Now we still up in Louisa near Charlottesville," said, "We don't get but \$1 a day." Said, "You all get more money than we get up here." I said, "No." Well, we had a factory. I said, "We got the factory here and we get \$2 a day." Then I said, "When you're oystering, you make good money because you oyster, and you get so much bushel for your oysters and all." She said, "Lord have mercy," said, "You all are living in heaven." We all said we get that \$1 a day right on too [laughter] the one in summer up in Louisa, Virginia. Have any of you all been to Louisa? Huh?

MK: No, sir.

WC: You haven't been to Louisa. That's above Richmond. That's about thirty-five to forty miles above Richmond going up towards Charlottesville. I used to go up there with her. She's the girl that kept me up there when I got to say they were blowing off until I was able to walk and all. I was going with her. Then I was a single man and I was going with her and she was a single girl. She was teaching school down here at White Stone. I started going up with her and I used to have a lot of fun up there. A lot of girls was up there until she said that I wanted every girl I saw. I didn't want every girl I saw, but I wanted part of them. [laughter]

CK: [laughter]

WC: We laughed about that a lot of times. [laughter]

MK: Can you tell us about the school at White Stone?

WC: White Stone? I went to A. T. Wright. After, it is a shame too, they tore it down after Professor Wright stopped. But that was the only school down in this area for Black people. They tore it down and it hurt me to my heart. (Dorothy Callau?), the girl that works at the union and the people that really worked there. So, (Mr. Dunley?), he took up what Professor Wright did after he died. So, he said, "Crosby, you are picking crabs, isn't so?" I said, "Yes." He said, "If it wasn't for you picking crabs, a lot of these girls couldn't see him sending children to school." I said, "I know that." He said, "We have children graduate from this school and they

have done a lot of great things but to never come back to help these children. You were helping them. How many girls you got?" I said, "I've got 16." He said, "You got 16? Every 4:00 a.m. every morning you pick them up." I was picking crabs down there where I lived there. They let me run a crab house down there. That's how I come I'd be up here when they said that "That's the end of your crab house. You got too many women around there and it's the end of your crab house." I came up here there and then bought this piece of land. That's how come I'd be up here. I never go back down there. I loved them and I used to go there and see them, and I see Sandy up here. Now, he's right by the Episcopal Church up here and all. But I never go back there. They sold that place, the Lord have mercy. Because when they bought it, they didn't pay nothing much for it. They bought it after flood. We had a flood come in here and washed out everything. They rowed the boats from down there where the water is at, all the way here to this road. We had a flood here. I'm going back now, to what, seventy-five years ago. We had a flood that just took everything down on the island and everywhere around. Then the flood come here and then the people start running away from here and all. But we always have had plenty of food to eat here because we could always have fish and crabs and things like that that was good for eating. We enjoyed it. Everybody that come here enjoyed it. You'd take them over to that shop there. I specialize in crab cakes over there. You all ever eaten crab cakes? Huh?

MK: No, sir.

WC: Never eaten a crab cake?

MK: No.

WC: If you just waited tonight, come by and I'll pay for it. I'm going to see if my daughter got to have some crab cakes over there. Because we got a young fellow that's a doctor. Well, he's just finished. Dr. Norris's son, he just but finished his time in this big – he was the head of the largest hospital they had in New York City. His name was Jimmy Norris. He comes all the way down here to get some crab cakes for my daughter and soft-shell crab. I wonder if you all ever eaten no soft-shell crab, baby. Have any of you all ever eaten soft crab? Huh?

MK: You have, have you not, Carrie? Once or twice.

WC: Huh? Have you eaten them?

CK: Yes, I have.

WC: You have eaten them?

CK: Yes.

WC: Do you like them?

CK: I like crab cakes better.

WC: You like crab cakes better?

CK: Yes.

WC: [laughter]

CK: What about you?

WC: Me?

CK: Yes.

WC: I don't bother with them too much. I can eat fish anything. But it's nothing new to me because I was born on it. I'll tell you the truth, crab cakes are better than soft crabs to me though. Because you don't want have nothing but meat, and a good meat too.

CK: Yes.

WC: It's my thought. She makes such crab cakes and things. Since I've been here, I specialize in fried chicken. Then I have a special sauce that's been going good for me here. It's what I'm going to do this year because I've got two boys. One was a policeman and the other one got his master's degree. We're going to try to get that rolled in pretty good this year, if everything goes well.

CK: What is it like working in a crab house?

WC: Huh?

CK: What is it like working in a crab house?

WC: Oh, I worked one winter for (Mr. Kriegel?). He was a white man, lived down White Stone. I said, "Mr. Kriegel, what do you all do in the summertime?" He said, "I don't do anything here." He said, "But I tell you, I've got a rig here that a man used to – I bought it for him. A boy named (Jim Dennis?)." He said, "But he drank too much whiskey, I decided I'm going to just put it up here in this house here and I'm going to give it to you." I said, "Mr. Krieger," I said, "You don't know what you want." He said, "I'm going to give it to you down at Captain Brown's house down there." Captain Browns was a Mexico dealer at the time. He gave it to me and he said, "I'm going to show you a lady that will fix it up for you and get you straight." That was a federal lady. (Mr. Joe Bright?) I'll tell you would have bought this land down here that he was principal of school. He told me that you can come on in my school and start selling. I started selling from Tappahannock all the way down. I did it 43 years. I know a lot of people in Richmond, and Doug Wallen and all those people that was people who were there. I used to come in there and that's how come I built up the stuff and all. This house and all were built from there. Yes, my lord. I was from one end of Richmond to the other. I just loved it. (Hirschler Codin?), Hunton & Williams, Brandon & Russell, I can just name on and on them big wheels, and Allen & Allen.

CK: Who are you naming?

WC: Huh?

CK: What is it that you are naming?

WC: I was naming the fellows that I used sell to. Big companies I used to go in there and sell to them. They were like Allen & Allen. That's another big company. Brandon & Russell and Hunton & Williams. They were big companies down on Broad Street. Most of them was on Broad Street. I used to go down and sell to them and we secured. Then after he cut me loose and wouldn't let the law ball, I used to go there to the city hall. [laughter] So, I didn't do that for...

CK: Tell them that story you told.

WC: What?

CK: Tell them that story about you getting a ticket that day.

WC: Oh, yes. I was there with (Mr. Britton?). He saw me on the street one day and he said, "Son, come on by to city hall." I said, "I don't want to be over there." I said, "You all mess with a man. I haven't got no license." He said, "You don't need no license. I'm there." I'd start selling there. But this day, this man saw the boy sitting out on my pickup and he said, "What you got on there?" He said, "I've got oysters and crab meat and different things." He said, "Well, where your license?" He said, "I haven't got no license." He said, "The man that's doing it, he's inside." He said, "Well, I'm going to give you a ticket." So, he gave him a ticket. I come out and the boy was crying. I said, "What you are crying about?" He said, "The man gave you a ticket." I said, "Oh my gosh." I said, "I'm going to see Mr. Britton." I went back and saw him. Mr. Britton said, "What in the hell is he doing giving you a ticket? Man, there are old fellow right up selling dope up and down the street and you here trying to make a living." I said, "I don't know but I'm just showing it to you." He said, "But you aren't going to pay no fine and he isn't going to give you any other ticket." I said, "Now, what is he talking about? He's got to be crazy." So, he said, "Go upstairs and see the judge." I went upstairs to see the judge, and the judge said, "Boy, where are you from?" I said, "From Lancaster County." He said, "Do you know Ms. Brown?" I said, "That's where I stay at." He said, "My God, give (Doreen Jane?) a love to him." He said, "She's one of the prettiest women in Northern Neck." I said, "Yes, she's a beautiful lady." He said, "What are you doing up here?" I said, "I'm selling the car. I sell some seafood and things." He said, "Well, there isn't nobody going to give you no – you aren't going to pay no fine and you're going to continue. So, you just go back home and cut up the pair of pants from – just take a knife and cut it all up inside and out [laughter] and come up here Thursday with them regular pants on." That's what I did. That Thursday, I went back up there and he turned around and said, "Look at the him. That man got fifteen children." I didn't even have no wife, didn't even have no girlfriend at that time. He said, I got fifteen children, and all is young. "Son got to be ragged in order to feed his family, and this man want to give him a ticket." He said, "Let me tell you something, don't you ever give him a ticket as long as you live." I never did get no ticket. [laughter] I took him a quarter washer and then took him a splitter quarter washer, that's all. I sold there forty-three years and I [laughter] didn't get no

ticket. That's luck. That's luck. I didn't do it. But they were all nice to me, real nice to me. I used to sell it to the city hall. I'd run down in the city hall, just like you run [laughter] down the room. [laughter]

MK: Said what? City Hall thing what?

WC: I used to run down the city hall, going on the elevator, go upstairs and downstairs and all in them rooms and they never bothered me. It's all the way you treat people and they know you and they don't bother you. They looked for me to come on every Thursday. I tell you, those places I used to go into was real nice too, out in the Mechanicsville. Lord have mercy, this lady, they're all in Mechanicsville. She loaned me a brand-new car to come home. I had my clutch went up on me. My children then were babies. I tried to get up that hill. You know where that that school's there on your left-hand side after you get up the hill? You ever go that way anytime there? There's an old school there. That lady lived beyond that school, down that road. I went there and got her. She said, "Crosby, what you are doing up here this time of night?" I said, "Well, it isn't night yet." I said, "But my clutch is going up on my car." They used to keep pickups there for them to deliver things to the customers. She said, "Crosby, now, these are some bad times. Merry Christmas times and I haven't got a pickup on the land." She said, "But I've got a brand-new Chevrolet here." I said, "Ms. Williams, I can't handle that." I said, "That's your brand-new car." She said, "I handled it. Why can't you handle it?" She said, "Boy, it's cold and I'm not going to stand out on the porch." She said, "Here are the keys to that car." She said, "Leave your key in your car and I'll fix it up for you." That's what she did. She owned that drugstore there in Mechanicsville too. She fixed it up for me and she called me. I went back up there and I said, "Ms. Thomas, how much do I owe you for this on Wednesday?" She said, "Nothing. Boy, you know I won't charge. You here long, got mine and you got a family. No, my god, I told you nothing." She said, "I've got money and so, you haven't got no money so I'm going to give you that." I got back in my car in a brand-new clutch. When I laid it up, it still had that clutch in it. That's it. I had a Dodge at that time. But they had been good and kind to me, People are kind to you if you're kind to them. That's the way I found her. Because the last year when I went back there and we went into her drugstore and my daughter didn't have time, "I don't have time. You always want to see this and see that." I said, "Yes, I've got to see this. I've going to see Ms. Thomas." I said, "I'm going to see Ms. Thomas." I went in there and the girl asked me, she said, "What do you want to see?" Now, you've got to answer the things out at the door there. I said, "Well, I'm going to see Ms. Thomas." He said, "What do you want me to tell her?" "Tell her that Crosby is out here." She went and told her. She came down there running. We both stood up in that place and cried like babies. I hadn't seen her in a long time. She said, "Boy, why don't you come back up here and stay with me?" I said, "Ms. Thomas, I got a family down there. [laughter] I can't come here and stay up with you." I said, "Where are your children?" She said, "All mines are gone. The girl that you love so well says she's down in North Carolina and she's done having children and one thing and the other." Said, "I'm just here by myself." Said, "We could go to church every Sunday." I said, "Yes, ma'am. But Ms. Thomas, if I was single, I'd come up here and be with you. I would stay up here with you." But I wouldn't want to stay up there too long. [laughter] We had a lot of fun though because Ms. Thomas was a wonderful woman. Wonderful woman. I found a nice lot of people in Richmond, you all. Nice lot of people. People that will do things for you. That's what I call nice people.

MK: Is it that way around here too?

WC: Oh, well they treat me nice, but not nice as they should treat me. They treat me nice because I treat them nice. But the people in Richmond and all through them areas like Allen & Allen and Hunton & William and Brandon & Russell, those people, they put their arms out and grabbed you. That's what I call real nice people. If you got something, you got it. If you don't have something, you don't have it. Allen & Allen, he's got a beautiful home down here going down Windmill Point. But he never forgets me. He comes down here and at Christmas time, he always looks after me. We are really friends, good, strong friends. Friends that I love. That's what keeps life moving. When I told them my eyes was leaving me and I wouldn't be able to come up here anymore like I'd been coming and I said, "I can get somebody." He said, "Oh, nobody else in this building." He said, "We put \$9 million in the building this year right across 9th and Main." You know where he's building at? 9th and Main, you all ever seen it? 9th and Main. So, anyhow, he said, "I'm going to give you something for coming up here. How many years, man?" I said, "Forty-two years." I said, "Well you've been giving me a gift every Christmas. Every Christmas." He said, "I'm going to continue to give you a gift as long as you are alive. Now I want to give you something you told me you all were adding in an addition to your church." You'll see it when you go up to Calvary Church. Didn't you say you are going up to Calvary?

CK: Yes.

WC: Huh?

CK: I expect we will go.

WC: Come up there Sunday. I'll be there. I'll be glad to introduce you.

MK: We will go with you.

WC: Huh?

MK: We will go to church with you.

WC: Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

MK: What time?

WC: Oh, 10:00 a.m.

MK: Shall we pick you up?

WC: Yes, pick me up. Because I'll tell the man you all are going to pick me up.

MK: What time shall we pick you up?

WC: Around 10:10 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. 10:30 is all right if you don't have time. I'll be glad to. Are you coming up?

DR: If I can.

WC: If you can.

DR: If I am here in the county.

WC: Huh?

DR: If I am here in the county, I will come.

WC: Oh, yes, in the county. We'll be glad to have you.

DR: Thank you.

WC: Glad to have you. Yes. Then Ted used to come up with me too.

MK: Can we get back to talking about the Northern Neck here? We were particularly interested in the crab picking houses. Can you describe how many people worked and what they did? Did they sing when they worked or what –

WC: Oh, my Lord.

MK: Tell us what it was like in the...

WC: In the crab house? Crab house, the oysters or the one. Oysters and crab house, they would sing all the time. Mostly would sing them hymns. Most of them belong to church anyhow. They'd sing the hymn, but there aren't no more oyster houses around here now. You know that, don't you? Huh?

MK: That is why we are asking you about the old-time ones.

WC: Yes, sir. They don't have no oyster houses around here now. The old people that used to shuck their oyster and all, that's sad too because that's where I'm going fix that house up down the hill there, that red house down the hill there. You'll see it when you go out here. That's where I used to shuck my oyster and things down there and I'm going to start it back again. But all my boys that's in the police department, he wants to do it. See, the children no more, do no work like nothing there. But that's where you make your money. Yes. They could pick up and carry it up there and everybody knew them because I had them around Richmond for a long time. They were good, clean-cut boys. They could make good business. But I don't know if they're going to do it or not. You know how children are. They tell you one thing and do another. But there's money in seafood and it's going to always be, as long as people can eat it. Yes, sir.

CK: What was it like all day working in the crab house or the oyster house?

WC: What it was like working in there?

CK: Yes.

WC: Well, it was always singing and happiness in the crab house. When I opened that crab house down there and all, they would always be singing and happy. Then the main thing, but it too, just like Mr. Krieger told me when I worked down there that winter with him and he gave me that rig, he said, "You brought more love than anybody I ever seen in my life. I want you to always have something like that." He gave me the rig for me to do it with. I used to have something going up the old. So, one lady that was real religious, one day when she come down there, I put her apron on and I put her dress on over top and I was walking around [laughter] in it. She going to switch and tow me up. I had to get it off. [laughter] Ms. Taylor, she's dead now. Who's that?

Unknown Male Speaker: [inaudible]

WC: Oh, Leroy?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes.

WC: Yes. Bernardino shop?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes.

WC: Well, Leroy.

Unknown Male Speaker: Huh?

WC: We got something going here now. I'll talk to you later here. Yes, do. Yes, I'll be over there praying. All right then, boy. Yes, daddy, close the door tight here. Yes. Yes. We used to have a lot of fun with the gang. We always had a gang going. But you don't have no gang no more. I wonder what's going to happen to people. It's something to think about. The young people, they don't want to pick no crabs. They don't want fool with no oysters. It's money in it. Now, my sister used to do it, but she's too old to do it now. Her gang that she's with, I don't know what's going to happen to it. Or somebody will start rolling.

CK: Can you sing us one of the songs that people sang while they were working?

WC: [laughter] I'm not much of a singer, honey. I love to do no singing. [laughter] Let me see what song they used to like to sing. Lord, they could sing those songs. My sister is a great singer too. Lord, have mercy. Child, I'm not much of a singer. [laughter] I love to do no singing.

MK: How about just give us a few bars of something.

WC: Huh?

MK: Just a little bit, just a little flavor of what it was like.

WC: Lord have mercy. *Working on the Chain Gang*, they used to sing that sometime too.

CK: How does that go?

WC: "Only a shanty, in old shanty town where the roof was so slanty, it almost touched the ground." I used to sing that song. "There was an old shanty in an old shanty town. The roof so slanted it almost touched the ground." I forgot them old songs. [laughter] That's true. I did sing those songs though, different songs. I never didn't do no singing. I just always had fun with the girls. I didn't want to do no singing. [laughter] I can't give you no singing songs, honey. Yes, sir. Because I never did no singing. But maybe I could get one up from my sister. Would you all like me to get one and send it to you?

MK: No. We will go see her sometime. Where does she live?

WC: She live over in Ditchley. She lived on the other side of the Calvary Church.

MK: Her name is?

WC: (Eliza Nut?). When you are going towards Reedsville, you'll see a sign that says "Ditchley." She'll be knowing that you all are coming and when you turn right and go down that hill – because she used to sing. She used to sing on the things, the church and all. You turn down that hill there and that would be the first house on your right-hand side. You can't it. It's like D-I-T-C-H-L-E-Y, Ditchley, you see that. It isn't far down there. Go down there and she would be happy to see you all too, today.

CK: Well, we might just do it.

WC: Huh?

CK: We might just do it a little later on. Yes.

WC: Yes. I'll call her and tell her that you are coming down there and get her to sing some songs. She sang all the time. I never sang.

CK: Well now I...

WC: She'd be happy to see you.

CK: Well, now speaking of work, I am still thinking about these big steamboats and all the people it would take to run them. Now, were these all-white people working on the boats?

WC: Oh, no. There'd be white and the Black. There'd be white and the Blacks.

CK: Doing what now?

WC: There'd be white people and the Black people. There would be both working on that. The Black people would be trucking the stuff in and out and all. The white man, he'll be doing the pilot work. We had one white fellow who came from England here. Well, they thought he was a Black man, but he was a white man. He married a black girl down here. He married my cousin. So, she was down there at the dock, waiting for her coming in Ditchley. Because if the wind wasn't blowing right, he couldn't dock up there. Everything was done by wind. It wasn't done by motors and things, by wind. The man that owned the factory said, "Hey, lady said everybody was gone. Why are you here?" She said, "That's my husband over there on that boat and I've got a bucket of food for him." She said, "No, that's Liston Davis." She said, "Well, that's my husband." [laughter] They fired him after that. After he come in, he was fired. He died in Baltimore on the streets. They just didn't have him no more.

MK: Why did they fire him?

WC: Huh?

MK: Why did they fire him?

WC: Because he was married to a Black woman. He was married to a Black woman. That was the law then. You weren't supposed to marry a Black woman. That was before I was even born now. If I was born, I was just a baby. Yes, sir. I never didn't know him. But my mother didn't know him. My sister, the one that I'm sending you all to, she used to know him well. Liston Davis. But he came here from England and he married. None of you all have lived in Middlesex. Did any of you all ever live Middlesex?

CK: No.

MK: No.

WC: You all know where the Oyster Festival?

DR: Oh, I do.

WC: Huh?

DR: Urbanna.

WC: Urbanna?

DR: Yes.

WC: Well, going down to Urbanna, you see a house there with a fence around it. You ever noticed that? Huh?

DR: Yes.

WC: That was that was this man's daughter. Liston Davis's daughter used to live in that house there. I didn't know that. Well, when I was selling in Richmond, he was teaching at Union then at that time. The boy's dead now but his wife stopped in here about two years ago. She's still alive. She was from Mathews County. She told me, said "Crosby, I haven't seen you in a long time." I said, "No." I said, "How's your husband?" "He's dead." He was much younger than I was. But she had one boy, and that boy is dead. You can't miss that. When you go down there, go into Urbanna, on your right-hand side, you'll see that house that had a nice white fence all the way around it. That was a doctor that lived there. (Dr. Tony?) is what I think. I never didn't know him well.

CK: Now, in these boats, was it white people working in the kitchen and waiting on the tables? Tell us about that.

WC: Oh, no, no, no, not on those boats. No, they didn't. No, no, no. They were all Black on the boats that would do that.

CK: Doing what?

WC: All Black was working on waiting on the table. When I was out there fishing, there weren't no women out there. There was nothing but men. The men, they worked. They could cook too, I'm telling you. We had some boy, little brother out here, right the other side of that hill. He wouldn't tell you nothing though. But he knew everything. Tell you, turn to district, on this side, going down the hill there where she can go down and see my sister-in-law. On the other side is a boy named (Julie Taylor?). Now, he would tell you, because he cooked on boats a long time. He's the first boy that got on them troll boats and started cooking. He made a lot of money on troll boats.

CK: Did he cook on steamboats?

WC: Oh, steamboats too. Oh, he used to cook on everything.

MK: What is his name again?

WC: Julie Taylor. You tell him if you are stopping there, tell him I sent you. You'll get...

MK: We are going to gather you up and take you along with us.

WC: Where?

MK: When we go to see him.

WC: All right. When you all go to see him, then I'll go down with you.

CK: So, tell us about this.

WC: Huh?

CK: Tell us about this working in the kitchen and serving. Tell us all about that.

WC: Oh, when you work in the kitchen, there's the cooks over here, your table there. He set the table up for you and you eat. My God, that was good eating too. Julie will tell you all about it. He was one of the oldest cooks around here now. One of the oldest ones. We were in Wildwood, New Jersey. This man came up town that was on a troll boat. He said, "Hey, you all got a cook on the boat?" I said, "Yes, we got a boy, but he's not working on those. He's cooking now. I see he's working in the boats." He said, "Well I need a cook." My boss, Steven Smith, was with us. He said, "That boy can't stand them seas and things." He said, "They are going on them seas and they stay sometime a week at a time." Because they were trolling for fish. He said, "That's dangerous and all." I said, "I'm going to tell him." I said, "He's a man like the rest of them." I took the man down there to the dock. This man, I'm talking about Julie Taylor. Julie was asked and he said, "I want to go." He went out there with them and that boy paid for everything that he was buying out there. But he made some money. He used to come down at Norfolk. He made some money out there. Let me tell you something, he could cook too. Cook everything. Now he's home. He's eighty something years old or maybe he's close to ninety.

CK: What did he cook on the steamboats?

WC: On the steamboat? Oh, well, there you cook what food is there. Sometimes you have whatever you want to cook. They had plenty good food, and all the fish boat had plenty of good food.

CK: What do you mean good food?

WC: I mean, like chicken and turkey, anything. Whatever it is. They'd go to the factory. Then they'd go down there and they – whatever the men want. He did that when was cooking for us and pies and cakes and everything. Oh my God, child, he had food going to bed. Man, when you're pulling something with that blood run out your hand, [laughter] you got to have good food in order to do that. But we had a lot of fun doing that. We raced, and I don't know, it just was a lot of fun. Our boys don't do it now because they got machines to pull the nuts and things in. But then we didn't have. You had to pull it the hard way and Lord have mercy.

MK: What do you mean, pull it the hard way?

WC: With hands. I remember when it first started off, we were down here fishing and we left here and went up to Delaware. When we got up to Delaware, they had started having the blocks to pull that net and stuff in. We went on that and the old man ball Tim Smith, the old boy, same old man, he didn't want the boys to beat him doing nothing. Because you don't race at that kind of thing. All you got to do is pull in that. He started pulling it to try to get in there fast and cut that finger right off. His line caught him and cut the finger off. He didn't understand that the line was pulling the things in. You understand me? Your line pulls it in, not you. All you got to

do is keep it tight. But he didn't know no better. My boss said, "That's why you cut it?" I thought I was racing him. I said, "You don't race nobody." [laughter] They thought they still was a racing time. Man, oh my Lord and oh my goodness. But young lady, I'm going to tell you all, Julie can tell you a whole lot more than I can tell you about this here. He's good at it. He is really good at it.

CK: So, he would cook on a wood cook stove in the steamboat?

WC: Oh, yes. They'd have a wood stove and then sometimes have coal or whatever they want. He cooked on that troll boat there and they just loved him on that boat. He cooked on a troll boat a long time. I'd be glad to go by there because he might not have said nothing to you if I didn't.

CK: Good. That would be wonderful.

WC: Yes, that'll be wonderful.

CK: Now on the steamboats, where did the Black people eat?

WC: Oh, well they had the table down here. They'd have a table here and up there would be for, well, the boss men whether Black or white. They would have a table up there for them. Because sometimes they would eat when they had time to eat. But the boys just down here would eat all day, every day. Anytime they come by, they see something, they'd want that and they'd go on and eat. [laughter] Same thing when I was rowing the dry boat. When I on the dry boat, I had a certain time. I'd get my breakfast in the morning at 4:00 a.m.

CK: Dry boat?

WC: Yes.

CK: What is that?

WC: That's a little boat that's a little long. Just longer than this. You'd have that on the deck of the boat. Then when you find some fish, you go up along, looking down, you find them fish. They don't do that no more now because they got the airplanes do it. When they come down, you spot them fish. Then you'd tell the captain what the way the fish is working. You'd go and tell the captain about it in that little boat. Dangerous thing to do. Only time that I was scared. we were going up to Atlantic City from down New York. We were going up to Atlantic City. I looked in the shoulder and I saw this color. I could see the color on the water down. I said, "Captain, what's that color there?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, I'll tell what I want you to do." He said, "When I get up a little closer, I want you to just get in a dry boat and row on in there." That's what I did. When I got in there, it was a whale. That whale missed me for just about that distance. If his tail had struck that boat, like he come up there, boom, I would been gone. [laughter] He said, "Back up Crosby." I backed up as hard as I could and [laughter] I turned around to come on back right there before we get to Atlantic City. I said, "My God." He said, "Boy," I said, "I'm not going to send you in there." See, the whale came up there. They didn't know I was even around. I don't reckon he did. He didn't tell me he did [laughter] know.

When he comes up to me, he whipped that tail. That tail would've killed me right in that boat. But I was lucky enough to get out of the way. I went and rowed on back to the boat there. We got fish after that run up in Atlantic City. Boy, I said, "Man, I wouldn't row that boat." But I wanted it because I want that money. When you want money, you're going to stay there and do your job. You had to row that boat. Then when you get to your fish, you were right in the middle of your fish. You hold them line the nets up so the fish can't get out from under. That was your job, showing fishes, holding that net up on both sides of that boat you got.

MK: Now say that again. How did that work?

WC: When you find the fish, you go up there and you'd tell the captain basically everything. He'd go around to catch the fish. Then dry boat would go right in the middle of it. You put some on this side, some on that side of your dry boat. Then you keep on until you get it up tight. When you get it uptight, then you can sit down. Boy, they're going to turn over and they aren't going hold no more than that. You don't put the hold no more than stuff knowhow than you want. It's good. It is what you learn how to do and you get paid for that. When the other boys make \$100, you make two hundred. You understand me?

MK: Yes, sir.

WC: When they make \$100, you make two hundred. But that's a dangerous job. Then you got to row that boat. Wherever you see a bunch of fish, you got to go over there and find the best of the fish. Then you'd tell the captain, "Come on over." He'd come on down with the boats with all the men in it and they'd go around it and make a circle. That's how they were catching it. But don't do that no more. No, no, no, no. They got the airplane in the air to do it. They started that in 1925. Last time that I did it was 1925. I rowed that boat. I liked it because when they make \$100, I make two-fifty, sometimes \$300. You like that money. [laughter] It's why you're doing it.

CK: How long a time are you talking?

WC: What?

CK: That you would make all that money?

WC: Oh, that would be about three, four months. Three months the highest. You make that money and that's why come I build that place and all on that money. You make good money out there. We always did make good money down this way because we had that fish boat with the things going for us. This is hard work. You leave your family and you don't know if you'll ever see them anymore, but you leave them. [laughter] You get used to it. My father did it. He sifts sand all the time because he was tall, you see. He could get that net. Oh my gosh. Yes.

CK: He did what all the time?

WC: He used to like sifting sand. That would be the net we called sifting sand. Where one man could get up just a little teeny bit of it, he'd get up a whole pile and boom, old boat. [laughter]

He was strong. I often think about him because he was strong and he liked to do that strong work. I never did get that big. I stayed small. [laughter]

CK: How far back can you trace your family? How did this seven-foot man – where did he come from?

WC: Well, he came from that building that we are still worrying about. We got a building out there that they still don't know how they did it. He came through there and then he came on up through Richmond. A lot of people come in that gang there. The man from England I think had them as boys.

CK: Had who?

WC: The fellow from England, I think had him. They left them all up in different places in Northumberland. Hey?

Unknown Male Speaker: What is going over there?

WC: Who is this?

Unknown Male Speaker: William.

WC: William. How are you doing, William?

Unknown Male Speaker: I am fine.

WC: Oh, yes. That's my grandson. Yes.

Unknown Male Speaker: How are you?

CK: Hey. So, you were saying where your father came from, who his people were. Explain that again now?

WC: I said they come out – William, that gang that come here from United States and you know the big building they still worrying about how they build that building out there. Where would that be?

Unknown Male Speaker: The World Trade Center.

WC: Huh?

Unknown Male Speaker: Talking about the World Trade Center?

WC: Yes. No, there's one – what country would that be?

DR: You are talking about the one in Ethiopia?

WC: Yes.

DR: That they do not know how the building was built.

WC: That's right. That's where their father came from.

DR: Ethiopia.

WC: That boy is getting high too. How tall are you now, son?

Unknown Male Speaker: Six.

WC: Huh?

Unknown Male Speaker: Six feet.

WC: Six feet?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes.

WC: But he not as tall as my father. He plays basketball and everything and I'm happy for him. That whole gang of Crosbys was big people and strong people, he, and his brother. [laughter] He told me about the time he went to Baltimore and because they had never been to Baltimore because he didn't go to school or nothing. He left his grandfather there and he went to Baltimore.

MK: Who is that you are talking about?

WC: My father and his brothers and things. Now, he said he went up to Baltimore, but being a strong man, he said, "You are good, strong men, but what can you all do?" He said, "We can do anything." Well, when he first went up there, the man said, "Well, then we're oystering out here and we are drudging." He said, "I want you to go there and get the bottle of water and then we'll take the skiff and bring it back out here." So, they said, "I'm going to pull you. You one of the strongest one of all of them." Said, "Pull. You said don't show off nothing because we trying to find a job here." He said, "No, I won't show off nothing." He went on there and got this bottle of water, come back out there and they rolled it back out there. They were talking to the boss. When they looked around, he had put that bottle of water up on top of the deck. So, the boss said, "Who put that water up there?" He said, "I did, but I don't know why? Why do I put that up there." He said, "No, no, you can't come aboard this boat." [laughter] That man fought them all right there. Said, "Man, we don't want nobody like you here. You get mad, you throw everybody overboard and kill them." A bottle of water was something heavy. He just lifted it up and put it on the deck of the boat. So, they told the boy, "Don't do that no more." Said, "We going to get another job." So, they got another job. This job was the man wanted them to have gloves. My father wore no gloves. They never did wear no gloves. So, they went back to the man said, "I'm going to tell you, I'm going to take you all to the show because it's freezing

weather here and so, you all can buy yourself some gloves." He'd give them money to buy gloves. I said, "Father, what happened?" He said, "We went uptown and saw some girls. We started buying whiskey and stuff so we didn't buy no gloves. The next morning, we went on down there and went on out and the boss man said, "Boys, show me your gloves. It's down four people there, down where they sleep at. That evening came. He said, "Wait a minute here now, wait a minute here. You all got ice all over your sleeves and you mean you all haven't got no gloves on?" He said, "No, no sir, we haven't got no gloves. So, we couldn't find none that fit our hands."

CK: [laughter]

WC: He said, "You didn't find it? No, I reckon you couldn't." He said, "But I'll tell you one thing, I want you all to take that tom up and put it on deck. I'm not going to build you but you all." He said, "Four head of you all and you all can grab me and just kill me. No, sir." [laughter] They had to come back home and get the job cutting wood and sting. [laughter] They couldn't find a job in Baltimore. [laughter] He laughed for that thing a many times, my father did. He had to come back home because he couldn't read or write, so they didn't have no job for there. Yes, sir. He had to come back home and start back fishing and things like he was doing. [laughter] He laughed on that. See, the mother was away. The father had died and the mother was away in Baltimore. What she was doing, sending money home to her mother, but her mother educated her children and didn't even send them to school. So, that messed them all up. But they did all right.

CK: What do you mean educated them and did not send them to school?

WC: She didn't send my father and his three brothers to school. She didn't send them. She sends them in the woods to cut wood. But she sent her children to school, and her children were postman half white. When they went to Baltimore, they tied up with the girls and they didn't live no time before they were shipped them back dead. [laughter]

CK: Before what?

WC: They had to ship them back down here. They were dead. The girls worked for them and did everything for them. They pretty boys. He laughed about that thing a many times. His mother was Senator Norris. So, you would know Senator Norris's sister. You know how it was at that time, breed from one to the other. Yes, they did.

CK: What is that now?

WC: I said at that time, if a boy was pretty, the women got right on him and killed him. That's what they did. The other boys they weren't too pretty, so it didn't bother them. [laughter] All right, now what else we want to do? Huh?

Unknown Male Speaker: Tell them the *If* poem.

WC: Huh?

Unknown Male Speaker: Tell them the *If* poem.

WC: What's that?

Unknown Male Speaker: Do the *If* poem.

WC: *If*?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes.

DR: Oh, the Rudyard Kipling?

WC: Oh, you all want to hear *If*?

CK: Sure.

MK: Wait a second here. Wait.

WC: What is it?

MK: Turn that faucet off.

WC: But I tell you, I'd rather do *When Earth's Last Picture is Painted*. That's about the prettiest poems that I had yet.

MK: You can do them both.

WC: *When Earth's Last Picture is Painted*. "When the Earth's last picture is painted and the tubes are twisted and worn. When the oldest colors have faded and the youngest critics have gone. Then we find real saints to draw from like Magdalene, Peter, and Paul. We will rest for age of setting and never be tired at all. Only the master shall praise us. Only the master shall blame. No one shall work for money. No one shall work for fame. But each for the joy of working, and each, in a separate star shall praise the things that God see them, and God, the things that are." That's Rudyard Kipling.

CK: Oh, that is beautiful. That is a wonderful poem.

MK: How did you happen to learn that?

WC: Huh?

MK: How did you happen to memorize that poem?

WC: I don't know. I used to stop at night when I was home alone. But you talking about *If* what I sent, but the President and I was here, we used to have poems. Each one of them had poems to

see who could remember poems? I don't know. I almost remember all but one, that twenty-seven- page one, "I've paid your sickest fancies, I've humored your crackedest whim. Dick, your daddy's dying, you got to listen to him. Good for a fortnight, am I? You're going out by morning. Put that nurse outside. You've never seen death yet, Dicker. So, now it's your time to learn. You wish you're going to have my record long before it come to your turn. I'm not counting the yard and the village too, I made myself a million. But I'm damned if I made you. Master at two-and-twenty, captain at twenty-three, ten thousand men on my payroll and forty freighters at sea. Fifty years between us and every year of it a fight. Now, I'm Sir Anthony Gloster, but I'm dying a baronite." What he wanted to do is take his body back to the (Master's Crate?). We fought around Master's Crate the World War II. Oh, and that goes on and on. But that's long one. He said, "I was content to be master, but she said you're better behind." I didn't like that one. "She took the chances I wouldn't and I followed your mother blind." A man following his woman blind. Because there's two women in here. [laughter] Oh, that goes on and on and on. That's twenty-seven pages. *The Mary Gloster*, you ever read that?

MK: Well, what about *If*?

WC: Oh, *If*. "If you can walk in crowds and keep your virtue or talk to King, never lose your common touch. If your loving friend and foes can hurt you, let all men count but none too much. If you hear the truth is spoken, twisted by knaves to make a trap for a fool, give away to them and stoop and build up in worn-out tools. If you can risk all you winning now on one spinning toss, lose, but start against at your beginning and never breath a word about your loss because you'll be a man, my son." That's *If*. You've heard that one, haven't you? Huh? You ever heard that?

CK: No.

MK: No. Never had heard that before.

WC: You all were up there reading on Rudyard Kipling, didn't you? Huh?

CK: You get all this out of books then?

WC: Yes. I'm about to get my books back. Yes. Get all those books. I sent that one to Clinton when he was in trouble. Chuck Rob asked me would I please send him that book. I sent him that poem and I sent it to him. He come out though. I've got quite a few of letters here I got from him. Clinton did. I don't know what he's going to do this time though, but [laughter] you think he's going to run again?

MK: He can.

WC: Huh?

MK: He has not said it yet.

WC: He hadn't. You think his wife going to run?

MK: I hope so. I hope they put somebody up there.

WC: You said something there. We haven't got nothing up there, is we? Huh? What's wrong with him?

MK: I do not know.

WC: Hmm?

MK: I do not know.

WC: He's got two people with him. That girl is extra good. She was the smartest girls on the planet. Then she got that boy, that Black man she got with him. He is a nice fellow too. But it takes a lot of – you got to know what to do. When you do the wrong thing, then you in trouble. Yes. You got to know what to do. Well, did you all want to do anything else?

CK: Can I ask?

WC: Yes, ma'am.

CK: What did they do when people got sick and maybe there was not even a doctor around? What did people do?

WC: Oh, when people got sick?

CK: Yes.

WC: Oh, I couldn't tell you what we used to do. Well, all the old people had a remit for you.

MK: Have what?

WC: Have something to – we called it a remit. They would give you something to get that cold straight on you or something like that. Then sometimes you lose them, but then they work with you. My grandmother and them did. We never did go to no doctor. You stay down there and they would work with you and rub you down at night and all. Then you just ate good, hard food. That was a great thing. Like Dr. Norris, he'd give everybody the same medicine, so there was no point of going. [laughter] Dr. Norris used to be up here. The Black doctor, Dr. Hubbard would be down there. They were all good friends. They didn't have nothing much to work with. Like the time we had an accident down in White Stone and I cut my arm, a great big hole in this arm here and the school bus. He come over there. He didn't carry anything in the house. He came over there with a little alcohol or something and he just wiped it down. That scar is still up there. [laughter] That was done eighty some years ago. [laughter] He wiped it down and he sewed it up and there you go. They didn't play with nothing. That was Dr. Hubbard and Dr. Norris too. They were the ones that didn't play with nothing. They were good doctors though. But they are not the doctors like we got today. We got doctors today. It brings her back to life. How many

that little girl was brought back to life. Huh?

CK: Now you say Dr. Norris was the Black doctor? He was a Black man?

WC: He was a Black man. Dr. Morgan E. Norris. He used to cause me to have to see a business here. He fought hard for his children and everybody else around him. His son and I were just like brothers. We run up and down the road together because I was wild and he was wild. We both were wild. But Dr. Norris's, man, he's got that – I reckon – you see where that boy sold that cement stuff at going back up towards Kilmarnock? You see the man?

MK: Yes, Curry & Curry Pottery.

WC: Huh?

MK: Curry & Curry Pottery.

WC: Yes. That was Dr. Norris's home there. All those two houses there was his home. He had three houses. They just tore one down. That's his son that's doing such a great work in New York for the plaster surgery, Jimmy Norris. He comes down here quite often. His mother always cooked for him the soft-shell crab and stuff like that. Dr. Norris was a wonderful man for all of us. That wonderful man. Aren't you getting a little cool outside, William? Huh?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes.

WC: Turn that stove up a little bit. You know how to turn it?

Unknown Male Speaker: Yes, I know how to.

CK: Where did Dr. Norris come from?

WC: Dr. Norris was born here in Lancaster County. He wanted to be something like most children do. Well, Dr. Norris and Senator Norris were brothers. Because Senator Norris had his family with him and my family was there with him. We were all together. So, Dr. Norris got to the point, we had one school and that was taking care of all the children in Lancaster County to go morning then night. They'd go twice a day. So, he wanted a school. So, he got a sawmill and put it up there where Morgan E. Norris School is at. That where's Jehovah's Witness at now right in front of that road that I used to work down that road. So, anyhow, Dr. Norris, he got this Jim Nickens bought himself a mow.

CK: A what?

WC: A mow and everything. He got it all cleaned up and then he set a sawmill up there on that ground. He worked for that until he got it straight. But when it got to everything all straight and got the place built this, the county said they weren't going to support that until they give it to school to him. So, Dr. Norris didn't want to do that, but he had to do it though in order to do it. But then he went up to the bank Lyndon and got what money he wanted and he got things going

good for him.

MK: The county did what? I am sorry.

WC: Huh?

MK: The county did what?

WC: The county didn't want to support that school because they didn't build it. You can build something up yourself and if you haven't got enough money to support it, you still in trouble. So, they didn't want to do it. They didn't do it. But they worked things out. That was one of the nicest schools they had around here, Morgan E. Norris. He was a man that worked for all of us. When we tried to do something, he was right there on hand to help us. He helped me a lot. Come down one morning at 4:00 a.m., I was there trying to run him center blocks on this side of the door. I heard that scripting because he couldn't drive no car then because on account of his – anybody like I am now can't drive. So, I said, "Doctor." He said, "Yes." I said, "When you come down here for cold this morning." He said, "I know you'd be down here." He said, "I know you'd be down here." I said, "I come on down here." I said, "In the cold?" It was cold that morning too. He said, "Yes, it's cold. I come out and bring you \$60 I had." I said, "What is that for?" He said, "Because you need it." He said, "You need some money." He pulled \$60 out and gave it to me. I said, "But doctor, warm yourself up something." He said, "Oh no, I'm going to walk on back." He walked on back. He was a very good ways to walk up that where that boy sells the things at. But that's where his house was at. That big two-story house up there. He went on back to how the old people – I'm old too. We don't sleep like the young people do. [laughter] I was down there working for that. I worked there awhile, and I went on back down to (Captain Bronson?) and cooked breakfast for them and come back up there later on and work again. So, we worked together. Dr. Norris would work with you. Very few men to do that. But he was that way for us. Any of his black children that would try to do something, he stuck right with them all the way. Yes, sir. He's got three or four children left behind. Jimmy is in New York. He married a girl from Japan. They did very well. He's had a son that made more money than he ever made. He was a plastic surgery man in New York. So, that's the way it goes. He's quite a fellow.

CK: So, you were talking about this Dr. Norris. Then you were talking about what people did if they did not have a doctor. What about the works? What about if somebody did not like somebody? Are there plants or things that they used to do in the old days?

WC: Oh, well that's going to go on I think until the end of time. Sometimes people don't like you and you don't like what you're doing. You take for instance Calvary Church. Calvary Church has been my church from the time I was born until today. You think for one minute that those people come down and check on my wife up there? Allen & Allen gave them \$5,000 when I stopped to honor the cross of the family. Send it down to Calvary Church. They didn't pay that no mind or nothing. We don't love each other like we should love them. Do you understand me? Huh? We should love each other. Then we can do things for each other. But if you don't love each other, you can't do nothing for them. So, maybe they'll make it through. You never know.

CK: Did they ever put a spell on anybody?

WC: Oh, no, no, no. Spell on? No, no. [laughter] that I know of. Because we never believed in that. No, my lord. You could put a spell on people?

CK: Well, I heard tell that the old, old people used to do some of that, maybe.

WC: I reckon they try to do it. The old, old people used to try to put a spell on them young girls so they could get them. That's the only thing I know. You think so?

CK: What kind of spell did they put on them?

WC: Grab them and hold them and – [laughter] I reckoned they did. They used to grab at them and hold them. [laughter]

CK: That is a hands-on spell.

WC: A hands-on. [laughter] I reckon, I don't know. They loved each other to some extent. If you good, they love you. If she loved you, if you don't love you, there isn't no point in holding her nowhere. She's going to leave you. Isn't that right? Huh?

MK: That is right.

WC: Huh?

MK: That is right.

WC: She isn't going to stay with you. No, sir. But when I was young, I loved women and I didn't care who they were, old or young. [laughter] On Thursdays, I'd always had to cook dinner for Ms. Brown on Thursdays. She'd be in the dining room doing different things. So, she said, "Crosby, I'm going to move this telephone out kitchen here in the dining room." She would call – she said she'd woken him up who would be? Ms. Brown looked at me one night and she said, "Let me tell you something, son, weren't you born on this earth and don't need another damn one like you." [laughter] I laugh for that thing a many times. I wasn't as bad as she thought I was. But then [laughter], she was a Christian. She didn't believe in no foolishness. I would wave my hand up, "Don't tell her I'm here." [laughter] Lord have mercy. Well, time bring many changes.

CK: Many changes. If I could ask you to go back long time. What did they say about the days of slavery around here?

WC: Oh, well, nobody wanted that. Nobody wanted that. Because that was really rough on everybody. They wouldn't want that. I wouldn't want it. You're going to make it until you die anyhow. But I think that would be nice if they could just continue moving ahead. I don't know what this boy doing now. This young man that's our President, but he doesn't look like he's doing what he should do. I don't know. What do you all think of him?

CK: We are with you on that.

WC: Huh?

CK: We are right with you on that.

WC: Yes. I don't think he's doing what he should do. I don't know if his brother was better than him or not. But I never did care too much for this boy. I like Clinton. I like Clinton. Clinton would say he did this and he did that. But I liked him because he could get with people. If you can get with people, you can do something. Isn't that right? Huh?

MK: That is right.

CK: That is right.

WC: When you can't get with people, you can't do much.

CK: You cannot.

WC: Look like me, still this boy moving the head. He is moving backwards. We done lost a lot of men, huh?

CK: Yes.

WC: Them that's gone, it's gone. They aren't going to come back. That's it.

CK: Now it looked like here is a situation back in Virginia where people were being held against their will, and there is water all around them and there are boats. I am talking about the days of slavery. There are boats and there is water. It looked like that might help people get away.

WC: Oh, you mean?

MK: Escape.

WC: Escape during slavery time? They didn't have no boats during slavery time. The slaves never were able to get in the boat. You know that, didn't you?

CK: I did not know.

WC: Now, down at Harding wharf, what I used to – I was born and bred right down there. Uncle Henry Giler was the first minister we ever had in Calvary Church or anything. So, of course, the man son taught him how to read and write. So, Uncle Henry was telling me about I used to – I loved him. He was an old man and I used to like to drive that ox. He'd grab an ox to a buggy and we'd go up to Kilmarnock and get girls and thing. He was telling about the time when the man come down there and told him they are going move him on out. Said, "Now, when we come after you all and we are going send one man up here after you, now you bring all

the rest of them down and get in." They weren't supposed to get in that yard boat like that. So, the next morning, this girl was making coffee for the boss, Mr. Harding. He said, "Why are you so slow?" She said, "Well, tomorrow morning I'm not going to make nothing at all." She wasn't supposed to tell him nothing. You understand me? He said, "Why?" "Because we going to leave here." Said, "We are tired of eating out in (Hoffs croft?) and things like they get." Said, "We're going to leave here." He said, "Oh yes, you go ahead then." But at 12:00 p.m. that day, he went down there to that boat. He bored thirty-two holes in the bottom of that boat. Because none of them could swim because he wouldn't let them swim. That night when the boys come in from work, the one man that do the counting, this Black boy that was there behind the flowers working, he gave them the amount of time he bored a hole through that boat and sticks. He said, "I can't count though, but I'm going to give it to you." He went out in the woods and he count all them out and he cut them things. So, when he cut the sticks so they could have pushed right down through the hole. So, when they went that night, Mr. Harding told them, he said, "Now boys and girls, you all hurry and give me my dinner." Not breakfast, but my dinner. Saying, "I'm going to bed early." He never did go to bed early. He stayed up there at the window looking for that boat to sink. That boat never did sink because this man had bored holes to it. After they got them all aboard the boat, he just took his axe and he cut it down to the bottom and dropped the boat and they died and never knows what happened. Uncle Henry Giler was telling me about that. He was there. He was a little boy.

MK: Now what happened again? He did what?

WC: That girl told the man. He didn't know anything about it until that girl told him about it, that they were going to leave tonight. When she told him that, he didn't say nothing until 12:00 p.m. during that day. He went on down and took his brace a bit and bored holes way up in the bowel of the boat. By boring holes in the bowel of the boat, if they're supported down here, they will soon try to plug it up. But bored with this boat, he was afraid that they weren't going to see that. He sat up there in his window all night long to see them sink, that boat. But it didn't sink. The boat went on out there. When they got out there, one of the soldiers said, "What are you going to do with this boat?" He said, "Cut a hole through it." The man told him to cut a hole in the bottom and let them sink. That was a disappointment with old man Harding because he thought they were going to sink. They went offshore there and they stayed there for three or four days. Then they come back. They lived that winter in the woods. They lived with bugs and everything else they could get. But they made it through that winter. They were living in the woods all that winter and that spring. When the spring of year come, then things started picking up because the man needed them to do a lot of work around there. That was the end of the slavery. They didn't want more slavery. Yes, sir. Uncle Henry Giler used to tell us about that and all and just from one thing to another, how things were. I just loved the old man because he was old and weighed about two-fifty pounds. Big heavyset fella. He was just as nice as he could be, Henry Giler. All his family's gone now. Yes, sir.

MK: But he told you that story?

WC: Yes. He told me that story. He used to tell me a lot of stories.

MK: So, did the people actually get away then?

WC: They got away then. But a lot of them, after they come back – they brought them back ashore after they towed the house up with the old master and everything. They brought them back ashore and they turned them loose. That was right bad. They didn't have no food, no nothing. They had to get what they could eat, what they could find. They lived right down over here where I used to live at, down that Neck. They worked it up from there by working for the people and all. They worked up there. Yes, they made it. You can always make it. Rough times though, but they made it.

CK: Uncle Henry told you a lot of stories about that time?

WC: Oh, yes. He did. He said they lived in the woods and they covered up. When snow came, they covered up with dirt and different things to keep warm. A lot of them died. But they made it. You could always make it if you want to.

CK: There must have been different times when people tried to get away and get free?

WC: Well, that was they were getting ready. They couldn't go far because they didn't have nothing to go on but feet. No shoes, no nothing. [laughter] So, they just went out in the woods and stayed there. You can do a lot of things if you had to do it. That's what they did.

[end of transcript]