

**BAYSHORE CENTER AT BIVALVE
DELAWARE BAY MUSEUM**

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION

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TIME:
SUBJECT: LIFE AND WORK MEMORIES – PART II
NARRATOR(S): Louis Peterson, Dr. Michael, Chiarappa, Dave Patterson
LOCATION: Louis Peterson Home
INTERVIEWER: Rachel Dolhanczyk, Curator of the DB Museum
TRANSCRIBED BY: Molly Graham, Patricia Moore Volunteer DB Museum
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Rachel Dolhanczyk: Hello. Today is May 10, 2013. My name is Rachel Dolhanczyk. I'm the museum curator at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve. We're here at the home of Louis Peterson, along with Doctor Michael Chiarappa and Dave Patterson. Mr. Peterson, if I could have you just introduce yourself.

Louis Peterson: Well, I'm Lou Peterson. I don't know what I can do. I've lived here in this town all my life so far since I was about three years old. Mom and Pop moved over here when I was three years old. My brother wasn't walking yet. He was still crawling.

M: What year were you born?

LP: 1935.

M: Where were you born?

LP: I was born in Bridgeton Hospital. My parents lived in Cedarville. Grandpop and – well, Dad was born in Newport. In this book here, I can show you where they lived along the roads in Newport. Most of them were born in Newport. Pop and Mom, after I was born, had just moved back to Delaware and lived with Grandmom and Grandpop over in Cedarville, next to the Presbyterian Cemetery. Anyway, they moved to Port Norris and lived in a house they rented off of George (Barry?) there on Brown Street. After Freddy was born, they moved over here to what we call the Block House. That was the house that people by the name of Block owned. It was down at the end of the road. [We] moved in there in the fall of the year. I remember, even though I was that young, I had my third birthday in the Block House. And when spring come, it was time to go up the Bay, and Pop didn't want Mom down there alone, so we moved up to where the main road crossed over. There was a double house there. And they rented half a house. I never left. Mom and Dad moved up here when I was eight, and this is as far as I got away from home.

M: You mentioned your family in Delaware and then coming over to Cedarville. What did they do? What line of work were they in?

LP: Joe Newcomb – Joe and Danny Newcomb. Well, I can go back further than that. When Joe and Danny Newcomb was first getting in the oyster industry, in the oyster business, they hired Grandpop to plant a ground of oysters.

M: Who was your grandfather?

LP: Aaron Peterson.

M: Aaron Peterson?

LP: I have always envied my grandfather's name and tried to emulate him as much as possible because his reputation was, if Aaron Peterson said it, it was so. He couldn't read nor write – he couldn't read nor write, but he could count. At any rate, Joe and Danny – there was oysters found over on the Delaware side, but they couldn't get them unless somebody was over there. So

they hired Grandfather to go over there and buy a house and live there and take out a license and stuff, and they could get the oysters and bring them over here, put them on the Jersey side. That's when Dad met Mother, and she's a (Leipsic corn cracker?), and Pop's a South Jersey [inaudible]. So – [laughter] Anyhow, when they got married, it was in the Depression time. My mother's father was like a sharecropper.

M: What was her last name?

LP: Her name was David. Last name was David. Her name was Edna Mae David. Her dad's name was Harry David, and he was bound as a boy to a farmer. Mom and Pop at that time got together and went out – they went down to Maryland, down to Saint Michael's, and was caretaker down there for the man that owned the farm that Grandfather sharecropped on. Eventually, he got sick, and Mom and Dad moved back up to Leipsic. And at that time, I was just born – or I wasn't born yet. Mom was just getting that way. Grandfather was killed when the porch roof fell on him when they was remodeling the house, and they was going to fix the farm up so that Pop could take over the lease or whatever it was. There was too much interference with Grandfather's brothers-in-law and stuff like that. When Pop decided to put a crop in one field – “That's not that field. That field is a cornfield, so you put corn.” Pop says, “I don't need this.” He says, “I'm going back to Jersey.”

M: Your grandfather, Aaron Peterson, was hired by Joe and Danny Newcomb to move from South Jersey over to Delaware, establish residence, so he could harvest oysters over the Delaware waters.

LP: And buy them.

M: And buy them.

LP: And bring them over here.

M: So Aaron Peterson was over there, and that's when your father, who was –?

LP: Fred Peterson.

M: He met your mother, who was the David.

LP: Yeah.

M: She had a connection down to Saint Michael's, I take it.

LP: Yeah, the connection to Saint Michael's was – let's see – Register. His last name was Register. I don't know what his first name was. Him and his brother was big landowners, and they farmed them out on shares and stuff of that nature. Now, when he got old, he told my grandfather – he says, “Harry, why don't you take this farm off of me?” Grandpop told him – he says, “I can't do it.” So he said, “I'll fix it up so you can.” But it never materialized because Grandpop got killed when the porch roof collapsed on him and rolled. He went out to close

shutters on the front of the thing so the windows wouldn't get broken. While he was there, they had loosened something up on the roof, the carpenters had, and the roof just come down on him and squashed him.

M: Aaron Peterson moved to Leipsic, Delaware?

LP: Yeah.

M: Fred, your father, how did he meet your mother?

LP: He met my mother through my mother's brothers. She had some brothers that was about Pop's age, and they used to hang – they got to hanging around and hanging out together, and actually, if you want to know how it come about, they used to have a silent movie show every so often at the schoolhouse. One night, her brothers brought her with them and was with Pop, and they watched a movie together. Then, of course, Pop – that was all done with Pop. I mean, poor guy.

M: So, how did ultimately your family –? Aaron Peterson moves over to Delaware to work for Joe and Danny Newcomb. Then ultimately, your family comes back over here. Does your grandfather and your father come back over? How does that all happen?

LP: Well, Grandfather had come back – I never got it clear too much, but Grandfather owned a big house there next to the Presbyterian Church on the bend in Cedarville going north on the right-hand side. There was a pretty big house there. I don't know whether he had bought that before they went to Delaware or not. Anyway, when they come back, they came back to there.

RD: What year was that?

LP: Well, it was around 1935. I don't know exactly. Because it was when they came back to Jersey, I was born right soon after. Pop came back to Jersey and the – now, get this, if you want togetherness, Grandpop and Grandmom owned a house there in Cedarville. Now, Mom and Dad had a room in the house, Grandpop and Grandmom had a room in the house, Uncle Aaron and Aunt Esther had a room in the house, and Uncle Earl and Uncle Dory, which was the last ones home, still lived in the house.

M: Who was that? Uncle Dory?

LP: Uncle Sam. Yeah, Uncle Dory.

M: What was his last name

LP: Peterson. He was the youngest. Samuel was the youngest.

M: Because I've heard the name Dory used before.

LP: Well, Uncle Dory was named after Dory Ericson.

M: I know of Dory Ericson.

LP: You know Dory Ericson? Well, I knew him too. He was a close friend of Grandfather's, and he was a captain on the (*Josiah Newcomb?*), But when Dory was born, Grandpop and him was – when Uncle Dory was born, then they named him for –

M: After Dory Ericson, because Dory Ericson was part of the Hinsen clan.

LP: Part of what?

M: The Hinsons. That's how I know of Dory.

LP: Yeah, well, everybody is connected.

M: The minute you said Dory, I was thinking of Dory Ericson, so the minute you said Dory, I thought. "I wonder if he's referring to Dory Ericson," and lo and behold, you were. It wasn't far off.

LP: All these old captains and stuff, I can remember most of the time. Anyhow, they rented a house a short time in Cedarville to get out of Grandmom and Grandpop's house, and then to get work in Port Norris, they went to (inaudible). Now, how Pop found work was there used to be a store there in Bivalve. If you didn't have a berth, you went and sat in that store. If a captain was short, he'd come in there, and you've got a berth, and you got your breakfast and dinner and stuff as you went. That's how Pop was working for Norman Jeffries when I was born. The very night that I was born, Pop would have been up the bay on Christmas Eve, and it was snowing to beat the band. It snowed all day, and Norman had sent two boats out to harvest oysters, and Pop was the only white man in a Black crew. But he went there, and the captains worked late. They worked past quitting time. It was almost dark when they got in, and the other boat beat the boat that Pop was in. The crew was mad and wouldn't even tie the boat up. When they got in, they just walked off the boat, and Norman had two boatloads of oysters. So when they tied up, he said that he would double their pay, which was two dollars a day. He would double their pay if they would unload the other boat that was laying in there first. So Pop stayed and unloaded that boat. Of course, oysters were kept in the hold then; they wasn't on deck. So they got the oysters unloaded, and they unloaded. Well, then, Pop missed the trolley back to Cedarville. So he had to wait and take the bus. When the bus got in, they was loading Mom in the car to take her to Bridgeton to have me born. I mean, that's the way things go. I mean, that's the way –

M: And this was Christmas Eve?

LP: This was Christmas Eve. I was born at four o'clock on Christmas morning. Anyway, the thing of it is, Pop was sitting in there. He'd been out in the cold all day in a snowstorm, and all this, that, and the other, when he went in that hospital, got in there in the heat, he went to sleep. The nurses were having a fit. [laughter] Anyways, that's my birth. That's the way I was born.

M: When you mentioned the store, is that Newcomb's Co-Op that they used to wait around in?

LP: Yeah.

M: At the old Co-Op store?

LP: Yeah.

M: That's the store that if you wanted to work –?

LP: Now, I don't really remember exactly that much. I was too young when that store was there. But I do remember how you went in it. You walked down the track and stepped up on the walkway out in front of the shucking houses, and you entered the store going south. You entered on the north end going south and went in, and there was quite a thing. I don't know. I can't remember the name –

M: That might be the Thurston and High. It was in the bottom of the old sail loft. That building is going north and south because it is going towards the mouth of the river. I think I know where – I was just trying to – there were a couple of Co-Op stores, a couple of ship chandleries there where the oystermen – I was just trying to figure out which one.

LP: Well, I really couldn't tell you that because I don't know. I was very close to Pop, and I tagged along from the time I can remember wherever I could. If he was in the garden, I was in the garden, and so forth and so on.

M: Your father, when he was working – he got a job working for Norman Jeffries. Your grandfather had worked for Joe and Dan Newcomb. I'm curious; what are your memories of Joe Newcomb?

LP: Well, he was quite a character. You wouldn't think he had a dime to his name. He used to come down there to pay off. He always paid off in cash. He liked kids, but he used to come down there from his garden to pay off Friday afternoon. He'd been working in the garden, and he had corn. So he always had his shoes, the toes of his shoes cut out – regular lace-up boots, but he cut the toes out of his shoes right straight across his toes. He'd come down there to pay off, and he'd have money bags hanging out of his back pockets. He'd have money bags in his front pockets and carrying all the stuff down there. He'd go in back of that store there where Old Mead used to keep the store. He'd have a building in there; the floor was all sloped down and caved in, and everything else. Where he was, he had a desk in there. He'd lay out one-dollar bills, five-dollar bills, ten-dollar bills, right on up. He'd stack his coins up: pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters. He'd sit there, and he'd write – you'd hand him your slip. He would write that off/. He would multiply it out. He always counted the paper first – wet his fingers. Put that one down. Wet his finger. Put that one down. He never got two. Anyhow, when he got it all done, he would mark paid, and he'd give you the money. That's mostly what I remember about him. He certainly was – as far as I was concerned, he was a nice enough man. I'll tell you a story about him if you want.

M: Well, I know he was somewhat controversial at times.

LP: He liked kids. He had a relative that didn't have a lot of money. And he went to Salem and went in one of the stores there, and he was buying clothes for the kids. He had his shoes on without any toes in them. He had his bib overalls on that was dirty from the garden and a straw hat on. He was in there, and he was going down – the clerk was going down the store behind him, watching him. He was picking this up and putting that up and putting that up and putting that up, and the clerk asked him – he says, “How are you going to pay for that?” He says, “I'll pay for it.” Kept getting more. After a while, he had a big stack of clothes for all these kids in this family. The clerk told him – he says, “Mister, how are you going to pay for this?” He says, “I would pay it in cash, but now I'm going to tell you something. You're so concerned over how I'm going to pay for this; you go put all of that stuff back on your shelves. I've got the money here to pay, or I wouldn't have come in here.” He walked out of the store. Now, that's a story that's told about him. I never seen him dressed up or anything like that. I know that when he died, the (Moore?) got his money because he didn't leave a will. [inaudible] didn't get it. He had no children of his own; he was married to a (Moore?). His wife and my grandmother were very close when they lived in Port Norris and stuff like that. So it was a friendly kind of thing, for sure.

RD: His wife was Annie?

LP: Yeah. Herb Moore is a great-nephew – I don't know what Herbie was. Had the blacksmith shop there on – when they took off, he had a –

RD: Banks and Moore. His son, Steve Moore, has, you know, shared things and information.

LP: Anyway, old Herbie was quite a character. I worked with him out [inaudible]. Called him Hammer Herb. He had a short temper. If things would go wrong, he'd have a hammer; he'd just beat on it. [laughter] So anyway, to make a long story short – I don't know. I can't make a long story short. If I keep on babbling, I'll have you here until tomorrow morning. Would you like a cup of tea?

RD: I'm okay.

LP: My wife made tea, and there's [inaudible] up there.

LP: Well, don't be shy. Do you want a cup?

RD: Or maybe just a glass of water is good.

LP: A glass of water?

RD: Thank you.

LP: Anyway, I don't know where I'm at in my storytelling.

RD: Mike, is that a typical Joe Newcomb type of story?

MC: Somewhat, yeah.

RD: I know you've told me.

MC: Yeah, it's interesting. That's not surprising.

LP: Anyway, that's the story of how we got – he went to Port Norris to get work, and he was raised in Port Norris part of the time. One of his playmates used to be (Fritzie Warren?). Warren Lumber.

M: In Port Norris, there?

LP: It was pretty neat to go with him over to Port Norris. He'd say, "Me and Fritzie used to play cowboys and Indians out in that field. I mean, that type of stuff. He moved here to Heislerville, and he lived here the rest of his life. When I was about three years old, he never went anywhere else. One of the things that – he was very honest, Pop was, and he was a happy man. He was known for his smile, his laugh, and his happiness. He could play several – well, he could play pretty near anything he picked up by ear. He liked little ditties, and he would sing. He would sing things to us and pretty near anybody that came to the house or eventually be singing a song.

M: Lou, do you remember Martin Taylor from Dividing Creek?

LP: No.

M: There were a number of Taylors from over the Bivalve, Port Norris area. He died. I mean, he had a heart problem. He was in the Coast Guard. But once, when I was interviewing him with a bunch of other people – and I don't know whatever happened because I wasn't controlling the recorder, but he sang a song about Bivalve, about sails. He was talking about the red sails on the – which was the famous boat now that had red sails?

LP: Was that the one he mispronounced, *Jacoby*?

M: No, wasn't it the (*Jacoby*)?

LP: They called it the *Jacoby* or something like that.

RD: I can't think of it.

M: Yeah, it's escaping me right now. (Neil Johnson) maybe? No. But nonetheless, I didn't know if you had ever heard any songs sung about Bivalve when you were growing up.

LP: No, my earliest memories are on the river or stuff, was Sunday afternoons when the men were sailing out; we would all go down. Mom would take us kids, and they didn't have a car. The neighbor would get her in the car, and we'd all go down to the river and stand outside of F.F. Easts Shucking House or Stoweman's Shucking House down there.

M: At Maurice River.

LP: (Inaudible) on the wharf. And the sails – they would be getting underway, and they would go up to [inaudible] or up the bay or wherever they was going to stay for the week. The boats would be going in and out, and they would be close. Them fellows knew where their boats were. Mom would say, “There’s your daddy. Wave at your daddy.” Well, I couldn’t tell which one was daddy or which boat he was on, but I would wave anyhow. That would be the way they were, going out. But I remember the sailboats going in the river and stuff of that nature.

M: That was every Sunday night?

LP: Every Sunday afternoon. They’d come down Friday afternoon, and they went back Sunday afternoon. I don’t know whether Pop – I think Pop went up the bay with Grandpop on the *Jenny Chance*, I’m pretty sure.

M: On which boat?

LP: The *Jenny Chance*. Grandpop had bought the (*Jenny Chance* when they lived to East Point lighthouse. When they moved from Port Norris to the East Point lighthouse, Grandpop had a sloop called the *Pearl* [inaudible]. While he was living at the lighthouse – I don’t know how it come about exactly – he bought the *Jenny Chance*. Her name was *Jenny M. Chance*. I got the tonnage and everything else down there. That’s the boat he took to Delaware. I was always under the impression that Joe bought the boat for him and let him pay for it out of his profits, so he would have a good boat to freight with. That was my impression. Whether it was true or not, I don’t know. But when he went to Delaware, he had the *Jenny Chance* because his boys – his kids went with him. Uncle Jack, his oldest son who lived down the Little Creek, and Anna and Walt – Aunt Anna, my Dad’s sister, and Walt Canzioner had gotten married in the lighthouse, in front of the fireplace in the lighthouse, in 1922. ’22? Yeah. Anyhow, I’ve got that all down there on paper. I can be sure of that. I’ve got the church records and everything else. But anyhow, Uncle Walt and Aunt Anna, and Uncle Aaron and Uncle Jack, and all of them went to Delaware with him. So I would assume that they was his crew on the *Jenny Chance*, but I don’t know that. I would just assume that. And the old *Chance*, they laid in Leipsic Creek. That’s where her birth was. And Pop’s memory was, coming up Leipsic Creek when you come around the David farm – he said, “That was the most beautiful farm you ever wanted to see.” He says they had it down in winter wheat and stuff like that, and he said it was just beautiful because the farm went clear down to the creek. Anyway, but laid up there. I have the deed. I have the survey of the Register farm that my grandfather was – it was 250 acres altogether if I remember right. They farmed that with mules and horses.

M: Did they farm in the summer and oyster in the winter? Is that how that worked?

LP: Grandfather David didn’t. He had dairy – I don’t know how many head of dairy, but he had a dairy barn, and he was just a farmer. But Grandfather Peterson – if you look on the old census and stuff like that from way back, they started way back as yeomen and then the oyster industry – got into it as captains of boats and stuff like that. That gave them something to do in the

wintertime. Basically, that's how the oyster industry really got started, was farmers went out there in the wintertime, making an income.

RD: You said your grandpop lived at the lighthouse.

LP: Absolutely.

RD: What did he do?

LP: He was the custodian. He got a dollar – I don't know if it was a dollar or two dollars a year for living there. The history that they have down there is not accurate. It was 1920 when they moved there, and I can show that through the census and Uncle Dory's birth and Uncle Aaron, the things – what had happened – that's the old railroad station. From Thomas Burley to Andrew Ericson. That's the land that the lighthouse is on. That's a picture of the [inaudible] house. There is a picture of the 1690's John Woolridge map, showing all here the East Point. That was land off East Point. Now, 1920, lived in the [inaudible] place, the old [inaudible] house. That's still there. That's a recent picture.

RD: That's located on the main road from Haleyville to Port Norris?

LP: Right. Number 649.

RD: I must have passed that house.

LP: You absolutely did.

RD: We drive past it all the time.

LP: The lady who was in there attended my brother's church over to Port Norris, and he is the pastor over there, and she just died. She said I live in [inaudible] Peterson's house.

RD: Do you know the house number?

LP: No, I don't know the number, but that was a double house. Now, there are two reasons they moved, but the basic one is Uncle Aaron had so many kids, and Grandmom had so many kids, that the kids was sick all the time because one would get it and pass it on, so they decided they would move to East Point.

RD: Is this something we could have a photocopy of?

LP: Well, I can give you one. This is not exactly accurate now because it's something I began some time ago, and I found out that – well, for one thing, this ditch that went up behind the thing was actually dug. It was dug – the ditch served as a berth for the *Pearl*, and [inaudible] later, the Sea Scouts used it to [inaudible] their skiff up for storage in the barn. Now, people don't remember the barn, but I remember the skiff and the barn. I used to play in it. I have, in one of these books.

RD: [inaudible]

LP: Anyhow, it tells you in this that, in order to have access to that lighthouse, they dug that ditch that I have written about in there. But the lighthouse looks nothing like it did when I was a kid. Inside, it's not – anyhow, it's in here. I just come across this since I wrote that. But the Sea Scouts had a large skiff in there. It had multiple [inaudible] in there and bullpens and they had sweeps in there, and us kids would go in there, man, we was great pirates in there. It was amazing. I mean, there was one of them that had a raised deck with a [inaudible] on the back, so you stood on it and steered while the other guys [inaudible]. Well, I can't find exactly what I want in here, but anyhow, I know it's in here in this –

M: Lou, we were wondering, could you tell us a bit about your work as an oysterman and waterman.

LP: Well, how long have you got?

M: Rachel, do you want to get some of that information?

RD: I think so, yeah.

M: What was your first –? What year did you –? I assume you worked with your father.

LP: Dad started taking me when I was eight.

M: When you were eight?

LP: Eight years old. When I was eight years old, I was – by the time I was nine years old, I was steering the old *Tommy* down the trotline catching crabs.

M: Oh. What was the *Tommy*?

LP: Well, the *Tommy* was a scow. Let's see. I've got some personal notes that I got off Uncle Aaron somewhere. When I talked to Dad and Grandpop and Grandmom and them, I wrote down notes of their memories. When I started putting this stuff together – well, I don't know what I've done with it, but they're here somewhere. Anyhow, Uncle Aaron, in fact, during the Depression, bought a boat from over to – it was an inboard scow. She was about, if I remember right – I don't know. I'm kind of confused now, but I think she was twenty-eight feet. She was wide. She was supposed to have an engine in her, but she didn't have one. They rode her. Now, Uncle Aaron rented it off of Tommy-somebody from over to Port Norris to tong out of for – I think it was seventy-five cents a week or something like that. Pop didn't have a boat at that time, so him and Uncle Aaron both tonged out of that scow.

M: Was it similar in shape to a Garvey?

LP: Exactly. It was like that one out there in the yard, only wider. It was wide enough. It was six-foot wide or better because when they built the house on it, you could put a double bed in it longways across it for people to sleep in. So anyway, Uncle Aaron bought a Model-A engine off of Howard Lupton over in Dividing Creek. And he brought it down there, transmission and all, on the front bumper of a Model A. He was a big strong man. I don't know if you've heard tale of him, but he was a huge man. His feet was so big he couldn't buy shoes, so he went barefoot the whole winter. He did.

RD: Yeah, that's a great story

LP: You could see him walking around in the snow, and he was a huge man. He lived – the last I knew of him – in a trailer between Port Norris and Dividing Creek, on the road that runs between Port Norris and Dividing Creek. But he come down there, and he just picked it up off the bumper and left it there. Well, when they put it in the Tommy, they put it in transmission and all. They just put everything in the boat – clutch, transmission, and all, and then they had a universal right on the back of the transmission, and that allowed the engine to lay down.

M: Flat.

LP: So it wouldn't burn bearings out because it had the dip system to oil the bearings. Then they put a – well, it was a piece of wood across the engine bed, and they put a thrust bearing on there for the shaft to push against, so you didn't push against your transmission. Are you following me now? You had this across there, and the shaft pushed against what would you call it? A spawl or whatever it was went across it. That universal joint took the pant legs off my Pop one time. He was working on it, had the engine in gear, and that's the way it was. But they run that engine in second gear. You ripped it in gear. You didn't use the clutch. Had it [inaudible], and they sawed the handle off of the gear shift so it wouldn't stick out of the engine box. You had to rip it in second gear. You had to jam it hard, and it would just slide in gear with the engine idling. I hated that. That tickled my hand. He said, "Push it, push it," and I'd push it, and then you'd rip it in gear. When you come in, you'd just shut the engine off. You didn't use reverse. To turn the thirteen wheel – I had a wheel out there like it for a long while. Had a tow on the back. Of course, when you ripped her in gear, you had to run back and grab the tow. And then, when you come in, you just more or less gauged your drift, shut your engine off, and drifted in. That's the way it was. But that was my very first impression of her, and it was pretty great because Dad got me up real early one morning to go with him. Uncle Aaron had a car – he come down later – walked down to Matts Landing Road. Grandpop came out [of] the railroad track, and we walked down to Ackley's Driftwood Marina down there, where she was tied up. Walked out on the water, and Uncle Aaron come out there with us, and she was sunk. She had been laid down aside, and the wind had blown, and the splash of the water – the sea had [inaudible] in her and sunk her. So they got a hold of the bow line and stern line and got her up to where her gunwales was clear of water, and then they got in her with an oyster shovel and slided the water out of her. When they got the water out of her, then I don't know what they done, but they got the engine to run, and they went to work.

M: So they board that boat down at Matts Landing, and you mentioned a trotline, so they crabbed out of it as well, I assume.

LP: Well, where Pop crabbed the trotline was from number nine over to East Point. Here is a picture of that cove, similar to what it looked like when I first started. Here is Elder Point, this is Fowler Island, this is [inaudible]. Now, that wasn't really big enough to get the *Tommy* through when I started going, so this was all here. Pop crabbed according to the wind and tide. If there wasn't enough tide, there was usually wind. This is Anders Ditch. So he used his tongs in here or worked in here and crabbed. You had to have your crabs into Matts Landing by noon to catch the truck for Philadelphia. You had no refrigeration or things like that. You used to come around – come around here, you'd just go ashore here, and I'd have to hold the boat in gear against the bank, and Pop would get out and cut some reed with a sickle using big old tall hampers – that big at the bottom, that big at the top. In the middle, he would put a little bit of that wet reed and then pack the rest of your bushel up with crabs – fifty cents a bushel.

M: So you'd use that marsh grass as sort of a bed for the crabs?

LP: Yeah, to keep them damp and stuff like that. It was bad for this reason: you couldn't cut that without cutting your hands because of the sharpness of the grass.

M: Saltgrass.

LP: Then you had the trotline, all salted down with [inaudible] that you drug through your hand to keep it tight. So your hands were smarting right good when you got done with it.

M: They were crabbing between Anders Ditch and Elders Island?

LP: Yep.

M: In that area right there?

LP: Right in there. Now, you had to set according to the wind.

M: But they never used crab pots. They used the trotline.

LP: Wasn't even legal. It wasn't legal until they used pots in the Delaware Bay sometime after '55. I was married.

M: That's right.

M: I didn't realize that. Yeah, I knew they were trot lining up until – did you know Clem Sutton?

LP: No.

M: He was a trotline crabber. He was out of Greenwich. He was further. So you're using the trot – it's pretty tricky using the trotline, isn't it, at times?

LP: Oh, I didn't think so, but nevertheless, Dad only crabbed or anything like that when he couldn't get a market for oysters or something of that nature. He was a [inaudible] more or less.

M: A [inaudible]?

LP: Well, he would do whatever he needed to do to make money. That's what he would do.

M: Did he probe for snappers?

LP: No, he didn't, but Grandpop did. Well, what he mostly probed for was diamondback turtle. [laughter] Grandpop was an amazing man. He knew where to look for diamondback turtles in the wintertime. He knew where to find eels in the wintertime. He knew where to go find some clams. And when I was little, the East Point Bar – you used to be able to go out there with a fork and dig all the [inaudible] you wanted out there. You won't find one today. I don't know what happened.

M: When your grandfather eeled, did he use the old split oak eel baskets for that?

LP: No, he used a spear.

M: Oh, he speared them? Wow, OK.

LP: Anyhow, apparently, he didn't keep them alive. Other than that, I don't know what it was. I got a spear out there. Anyhow, he used a spear.

RD: You mentioned that with the crab, you'd get it on the truck, and the truck would go to Philadelphia. Do you have memories of the railroad, the West Jersey B&O Railroads?

LP: I sure do. I smashed many a penny on it. [laughter]

RD: Yeah. [laughter] What do you remember going out on the train? What were they shipping?

LP: Now, I didn't see this especially, but it was just the people that, when you talked to them, told you that. Old Roland Butcher was an old man that fought in World War I and was gassed. He had a government pension. He did much more than just walk around [and] talk. He told me there used to be farmers lined up from Matts Landing railroad all the way out here and turned down the main road in Heislerville, waiting to ship beans, watermelons, hay, and stuff of that nature. There were two sidings at the Heislerville Station. I don't ever remember, as long as the train run, those sidings being empty. This is looking south. Here is the station. Now, this was raised. See that log there. That is as high as your steps on your train. The well was over here, and the town used to go down there and cart their water from there because they was afraid of disease in their own wells. This here, you can't see very well. This was a postage stamp. This is where they sold the tickets, in here. In the back part was where your freight was. This is the train being turned around, coming down the track. This was the Y. The Y went out here. They turned around. They couldn't run the train right down to the shucking houses because the train would be on the wrong end of the cars. They couldn't get out. So, they would do their drilling

on the siding and push – or they would pull up here on this curve. It was pretty long. Then they would go down the Y and turn around, then go in and push it, push them down. That was the two ways that they drilled.

RD: How many trains a day were there?

LP: There was only two. One in the morning and one in the afternoon, and they cut that out to one around 1950. I've got the daughter of [inaudible] Lunchroom up there in Leesburg. She wrote an article about the railroad and how the men worked and when they quit running down there and stuff of that nature. But when I used to go back, this was gone. The only thing that was there was the well. Henry Anderson, my old fishing buddy, grew up down there, and he used to tell me about it. When he was little, he was afraid of it because when the loci come down the curve and the track, it was aimed right toward his house. He didn't like it much.

RD: Were the trains long? Were there a lot of cars?

LP: Well, not right down here in the track, they wasn't. They might have had five or six cars on it. You only had two oyster houses down there. Then they'd have to go up to the Sand Plant, and they'd do the drills from the Sand Plant and stuff, and then they'd join up with the track up there – it wasn't in Bricksboro.

M: Port Elizabeth?

LP: Yeah, it was somewheres up in that way. Well, that's got the train tracks on it.

M: You [inaudible] right there. But it goes off and comes up and hooks up, back up in here.

LP: Maurice River railway went up in there. But this is your old Y here, where they'd turn around, and they'd back it down. I got this because my son-in-law was mayor of Maurice River Township, and he was asking me how it was when I was a kid because there was supposed to be – you see, this is gone now. This is all gone. This is [inaudible], past the flats. This is the (Boiler Reach?), (Fried Meat Harbor?). This, when I was growing up and tonging and stuff, was so deep you couldn't reach it on low tide with a twenty-foot. Now you can't get across all that water without hitting the bottom. The old range light used to be in here, and I remember the range light and the boathouse. You used to try to catch owls. There used to be barn owls that would go in there and have a nest every year or so, and I wanted an owl for a pet, and I would go in there and try to catch [one]. We always had a saying. I don't know if you ever was familiar with a barn owl or not, but they can move their head right quick, and we always said you could catch a barn owl because if you walked around, maybe you'd twist his head off [laughter]

M: [laughter] You had an owl as a pet, you said?

LP: No, we tried to catch one.

RD: Your son-in-law is the mayor, you said?

LP: My son-in-law is Andy Sarclette. He's the mayor.

RD: Was he surprised to learn how much the mouth of the river has changed?

LP: He's not surprised because he knows, but you see, all this was salt hay marsh when I was growing up. A couple things – Sandy washed this out and washed the road out, and it was clear up – the bay water was coming clear up to here. That's the reason they was in such a hurry to get things done down there, and they raised the railroad bed up about two or three feet.

M: Lou, when this was being used for salt hay or was being harvested for salt hay, who harvested it here?

LP: Thompson. Lawrence and Lester Thompson. Their father had leased the rights – the hay rights and farming rights – off of the Cadwalader Estate. This was all Cadwalader, all up in here, up into –

M: To Philadelphia.

LP: (Skunk Hill?).

RD: What's the name?

M: Cadwalader. Cadwalader from Philadelphia.

LP: They were intermarried with the Whartons. Up there in the Wharton Tract. General Cadwalader.

M: Lester, and who was the other Thompson?

LP: Lawrence.

M: Lawrence. Lester and Lawrence Thompson. And they leased it from the Cadwaladers. Wow. I had heard about the Cadwaladers controlling a lot of this property here.

LP: Well, our dock that we had down to the river, you could lease bank all of the Cadwaladers for a dollar a foot, so that's what we did. Every year, we paid them a hundred dollars, and we had a hundred foot for a parking lot and the dock.

M: Were they based in Philadelphia, I take it? Or the Philadelphia area?

LP: I don't know where they was based. We paid ours to Lawrence Thompson, and his was right across the street. All we did was go over and pay him a hundred dollars, and he done the rest.

M: Did you always work on smaller boats? Were you more of a tonger, a crabber? Or did you work on the bigger oyster boats?

LP: Well, I worked on mostly the smaller boats, but that's Dad's boat. Now, you don't see that picture very often for the simple reason all you see is when she's wrecked and thrown up on the bank.

M: Oh, I've seen the *Henry* – I've seen that photograph, yes.

LP: Yeah, that's what did – now this is around 1947. I'm twelve years old. That's my brother Fred. He's ten. We just got off the railway. Just got off the railway in Leesburg. We're getting underway coming down. Now, at this time, she had an old six-cylinder Lathrop in her. It had no generator. It had no starter. You had to crank it. Her fire came from a six-volt dry cell battery fired through this coil. You used to hook that up there. Now, the reason I saved that [is] because I've watched Pop do this many times. She would run backward. She was top [inaudible] fire. So if she fired before she got over, she would run backward. The flywheel was about that thick on the front of her and about that big around. It had a hole that you stuck a rod in that was rounded on the front and flat on the back, and you pulled the crank down in the hole. Dad was always afraid that the crank would get stuck in that and [inaudible] when it started. So what he would do – I don't know how many times – he would turn that over, bring that up, take the crank out, he put it here, hit there, and she'd start.

M: Now, this boat had a round stern, didn't it? It had a round stern.

LP: Yep.

M: Where was that boat from?

LP: Tuckerton, where Dad [inaudible].

RD: And what's the name of the boat?

LP: *Henry Clay*.

RD: Oh, *Henry Clay*, OK.

M: Now, did you take that boat over?

LP: No, I didn't. What happened to that boat – she had [inaudible] winders in her here and under the hatch. Dad's nephew, Joe Cameron, wanted to go up the bay with him, and he was seventeen years old. Dad said, "Okay." He'd quit school. He said, "Okay." So what happened was, when they shut down – or when they was getting ready to eat lunch – or I don't know exactly what time of day it was – it was raining, and Joe had bought a brand new raincoat with his money that he made the week before. He said, "Uncle Fred, give me your grease gun, and I'll grease your winders." He says, "Put them in gear, and I'll go down and grease them." Well, Dad did that. He put them in gear, and Joe jumped down in the hold to grease the winders, and when he did, his raincoat got caught in the pinion gear, pulled him down in the winders, and ground him up. They had a closed casket. Pretty near killed Pop. He went in shock right away.

They said it was something to see. He just looked down there and seen Joe, and just turned around and would have walked right overboard. He just kept walking, and they brought him home. And I was fourteen. I wasn't fourteen. Was I? I can't remember exactly. I was the oldest in the family, so I had to help Mom take care of Pop. They brought him home, and Doctor Butcher said, "If I can keep him alive for a week, he'll live." You've never seen a sight until you've seen your dad cry like a baby continuously.

M: I'm sorry.

LP: Well, after that, me and Freddy was old enough; me and Freddy worked half – when we got out of school, we worked half and got half a man's wage. We only went up one year with him, and he sold it. He sold the boat to a Black man for eight hundred dollars. He never done a thing to the boat, never hauled her out, never [inaudible]. Just took her off the bay and worked her all day [inaudible], come back down, tied her up on the Maurice River side, and let her sink. He let her sink. We come down the river, and Pop said, "They're going to let old *Henry* sink." And they did. So the next spring come; they got her up, took her up to Morristown, up to John Duboise's railway up there, and hauled her out and got her all cleaned up, put a new engine in her, and took her up the bay again. Worked her. Then they brought her back down and let her sink. The next spring, when they tried to do the same thing again, they pulled her out, and the planks fell off of her. They just throwed her away. That's what happened to her. But Pop bought another boat. It was a shad skiff.

M: Shad skiff? Really?

LP: It was Harry Anderson's shad skiff. There she is. That's the one that Pop broke me [inaudible]. She had one dredge; you pulled on the starboard side. This was Uncle Aaron's boat, the *Esther* [inaudible]. She was thirty-two foot. She was the first boat – she was a freight boat, and she was the first one that ever I docked, that I ever held. Uncle Aaron stood behind me; he said, "Take her in." I was about fourteen. I brought her in and tied her up. But this boat here, she would carry about 125 bushel, and we'd never lose her. Pop, Uncle Aaron, and Grandpop didn't plant grounds. They weren't people to lease bottom. I was the first one in the family to lease bottom. Anyway, when I was seventeen, I decided I could make more money up the bay, and that was my downfall. When I was a kid, I had my first boat built when I was fourteen. It was built by Bobby Lee. There is a little white envelope here somewhere, about this big a square. He was named Robert E. Lee.

M: Strange name.

LP: It's a loose white envelope. It's got pictures of Bobby in it. I got it off of her – I got it off of his granddaughter. He was a right little skinny man, very hard-working. I don't know where that envelope is. No, it's a white envelope about half that size. That's how it is when you try to tell somebody something or give them directions [inaudible]. It might be in that. I put this on the computer and got the big picture off of it. You are allowed to look at these.

M: There's an envelope, Lou, right there.

LP: That's it. There he is. He was very, very rough-spoken. He fractured the King's English regularly. He liked a little beer once in a while.

M: That's your father?

LP: That's Bobby Lee. Robert E. Lee.

M: The boatbuilder. The boatbuilder, right?

LP: He built my first boat. How that come to be, he had permission to [inaudible] Whitehead Brothers up and back of a little mill garage in Dorchester between the railroad track and the highway, there was a cedar swamp in there. For five dollars a stump, you could have a cedar tree. So, when I was thirteen, me and Pop and Fred – well, I could shimmy back then right good. I was all arms and legs. We went in that swamp and walked around, and picked out what we wanted, cut them down, and I would climb up a tree, put a bucket on it, and pull the block up. We would pull them logs out of that swamp with block and tackle. We was up there in the [inaudible] water. I bought two logs, and Pop bought two logs. Bobby Lee had a set of wheels, like the electric poles men used, fixed up on the thing. He loaded them on and took them down Route 47 to [inaudible] sawmill and had them flitched. Then we took the flitches and put them under Pop's porch. I turned fourteen that winter. That spring, I took the lumber down to Bobby Lee. Bobby Lee built me an eighteen-foot Garvey for seventy-four dollars. Now, I don't know why seventy-four, but that was seventy-four. I didn't have money to paint it. Now, here's what the old guys would do if they liked you. I took her down to George Ackley, and I had a piece of wood nailed on for creek, and I had some old lines that Grandpop and Pop had thrown away or something to tie her up with. I was going to go down there and put her overboard bare, work her a week, then buy some paint, and paint her. Old George Ackley heard about it down there. He said, "Louie, you care what the color of that boat is?" I said, "Well, no, not really." He says, "Well, I got some real good [inaudible] paint in there I've used off and on. It's not real pretty. As a matter of fact, it's titty pink." I said, "What?" Anyhow, he says, "If you want your boat like that, I've got plenty." So he gave me a five-gallon can of this pink paint. I painted that boat pink, inside and out. When she was destroyed in a storm, she still had that pink paint on her because I couldn't make anything adhere to that paint. I'd paint her green. I'd paint her gray. I'd paint her any color. It would peel off, and she would be pink. That was it. But old George Ackley gave me my first pair of tongs, new tongs. Grandpop, when I got my boat built, had thrown away a pair of twelve-foot tongs. The teeth was real short and stuff, and he just threwed them away, and I grabbed them and [inaudible] them up, and I went down there. My first day of working, my brand-new boat was fourteen a bushel, fourteen years old, fifty cents a bushel. I'm getting ahead of my story. I put the boat overboard. She never leaked. I don't think she got a tub full of water in her before she swelled up. I went down there to go to work. She had all new lines placed in her. She had all nice brand-new galvanized cleats bolted down, all free of charge. George Ackley had done that. I come up at the end of the week, and he said, "Louie, I had Bobby Lee make me up a set of tongs. Now, I ain't got time to try them out. Do you think that you would go down and work them a couple days and let me know whether they're worth the money or not?" Anyway, I took them down there, and I worked them to the end of the week, and they was a pair of wooden-head tongs that Bobby had made. I told him, "George, they work real good, real good." "Well," he says, "you go ahead and use them for a while and check them

out and make sure.” So he gave me a brand-new set of wooden-head tongs. Now, all of us had wooden-head tongs made, because out in the cove, out in there between Number Seven buoy and the outside, there is some soft mud out there, a lot of soft mud. If you go out there before the middle of July, you won’t find nothing out there but mud. But you go out there from the middle of July on, and you can just load your boat sometimes with oysters that the mud has moved off of. Now, if you’ve got iron-headed tongs on there, they’ll just dig down under the mud and push the oysters out the top. But if you’ve got wooden-head tongs, you can feel resistance to that mud and just scoop them oysters up off that mud.

M: Would the oysters be under the mud?

LP: They would cover up. Yeah, oysters will live under the mud.

M: Will they?

LP: Yeah, absolutely. You can bury an oyster in the wintertime and go out there in the spring and dig him up. He’ll still be alive.

M: Wow, didn’t realize that.

LP: Now, Bobby Lee didn’t make these. But he did make his own. Now, that’s a set of wooden-headed tongs. Now, Bobby made his tooth bar out of white oak, and his teeth would be [inaudible] in here and drive them through. He knew how to set them so that they would catch. That’s all done here when they snipe the shaft off through the steel. The end of your [inaudible] would fit in that hole, and these would be nailed up here. These come off of an old pair of tongs that Roland Butcher gave me some time ago.

M: You would call this portion what?

LP: The tooth bar.

M: That’s the tooth bar? Your teeth? What do you call this section here?

LP: That’s the (inaudible). Now, Bobby made it all. I think he said he used cement nails for the teeth. They wasn’t this long. His teeth wasn’t that long.

M: You preferred using the wooden heads as opposed to the metal heads.

LP: Well, in the muck, yeah. I had three kinds. I had the barrel heads and key ports, and usually, your barrel heads were the easiest to work because you don’t have any [inaudible] blocking you from closing your tongs. In the picture – but your key port head seemed like you could feel better with them. For what reason, I don’t know. But I had all three kinds. When they closed the Bay up –

M: Can I get a picture of you holding this?

RD: Who did you sell your oysters to when you were fourteen when you went out?

LP: Well, Newcomb Brothers. That came about through Henson, really. What was it I was after?

RD: Can we get a picture of you holding them or talking about them?

LP: But Walt Hinson was buying oysters.

M: Why don't you sit down with them? Just sit there for a second.

LP: Walt (Henson?) was buying oysters, and Grandpop and Dad and Uncle Aaron all went down there and caught a load of oysters. When they went to go up to the buy boat to sell, they said, "Who told you men to go to work?" "Well, you're buying oysters, ain't you?" He says, "No, I'm buying off of my men, and we don't want your oysters. So Grandpop said to Uncle Harry, "We'll go sell them to Joe." So we went right down to Newcomb's place there. Joe come out and looked at them, and he wanted them. He says, "I'll give you so much a bushel for them, but I ain't got no way of freighting them." So a deal was worked out where Grandpop would freight with the *Esther*, Uncle Aaron's boat, and we had a private market, all of us. It didn't last long because Joe wanted them oysters, and they were nice oysters. They were beautiful oysters. He would say, "Aaron, can you take on another tonger? Aaron, can you take on another tonger?" Before summer was out, we was freighting oysters for sixty tongers on the books. Now, what happened was, we was spending all of our time freighting, and we couldn't make any money because he was paying us ten cents a bushel to freight, which hardly bought gas to go out there with. The *Esther* would only carry 150 bushels, is all she would carry. We was making three trips a day, just taking the [inaudible] and going out. So we went up and told Joe, "We can't do this because we can't make any money." He says, "Okay, I'll tell you what I'll do. When you get ready to take [inaudible]." He said, "When you get ready to take on, I'll send Pinchy down with the *Isaac Evans*." So that's what he done. He sent Pinch Gaskell down with the *Isaac Evans*. He was the captain on the *Isaac Evans*. The most oysters I ever shoveled off the *Isaac Evans* was six hundred bushels by myself. I was young and had more muscles than I had brains. We didn't get a chance to go out in the cove in the evening. Uncle Aaron said if I can get somebody to go out with me tomorrow morning, which was a Saturday, I will go out in the cove instead of getting in after dark." So I said, "I'll go out with you, Uncle Aaron," because nobody else wanted to go. It was volunteer work. Uncle Aaron was getting paid ten cents a bushel for freight, but we wasn't getting none for shoveling them off.

M: I want to get one more shot of you holding this. I'm going to get it from this angle now. You look at the camera.

LP: He's going to break that camera. [laughter]

LP: So anyway, to make a long story short ...

M: Lou, I have to go, but I want to come back at some point. This is great.

LP: Well, all right. It's like I told him. You can come back anytime you want. I'm usually around doing something unless I have to go to the doctor or something like that. But you call me up ahead of time, anytime day or night, and say hey, "I want to come over to see you." If I'm not doing anything, it's all right.

M: Sounds good. Thank you. I'll be back. We'll see you again.

RD: Good to see you. Thanks for coming along.

M: Good seeing you, buddy.

LP: Good seeing you.

M: Take care.

M: OK, we'll talk soon.

RD: Yeah.

M: I'll be in touch with you about all those other things, right?

RD: Yeah.

M: If you've got any other questions, I'll check my database for their names or things you wanted – the basket maker. Ask him about the basket makers. He might have some insight about the other basket makers.

RD: We were talking about basket makers. What type of baskets were you using?

LP: For crabbing, we bought baskets off of Mason down in Belleplain.

M: Well, you know that Noah Newcomb was known for his baskets? Noah Newcomb?

LP: No.

M: You know the baskets they would use down at Bivalve oysters? They're very heavy.

LP: Wire baskets?

M: Not the wire baskets, the ones that split up. They'll often say that Noah Newcomb made them, but I can't imagine he was the only guy making them.

LP: Well, that was a little bit before my time. They had them around. But most of the baskets we used for oystering were wire baskets.

RD: What time period was that?

LP: It would be 1948. I started going with Pop during the war.

RD: So, after the war or around the time of the war?

LP: Yeah.

RD: Because Noah Newcomb, his brothers were Joe and Danny Newcomb. That's why I wondered with the baskets, with the two brothers being big names in the oystering industry and then Noah making baskets. You always hear his name, and I assume there were other people, but I didn't know if you knew much. But that was the split oak baskets that they made.

LP: Well, I don't know. I used to take hay over to the rope factory when I worked for Cox on Saturdays. I used to take rope hay over there and unload it at the rope factory, but I don't know anything about the baskets. Well, anyway, that's how we got to buying oysters for Newcomb's, and we bought oysters and worked out there in the bay until they closed it up. I think it was 1955. I can't remember, but I think they closed the bay and stopped harvesting oysters at that time because the MSX was so bad.

RD: Yeah, '57.

LP: '57. Anyhow, I had to go to work in the sand plant.

RD: Oh, did you ever go back to oystering later on, like in the '60s?

LP: I was working at Leesburg Shipyard, and I bought the *Elva M* off of Dan Hines over in Nantuxent Creek, and that was my first oyster boat. She was fifty-foot. I leased bottom. Well, the first year I had her, I didn't. I planted on John Robison's ground and run my oysters. The next year, I leased bottom. Actually, Fenton Anderson's (inaudible) ground out for me. I was trying to get some of Fenton's. He said, "Louie, I got a good ground. Only half of it's good. If you plant it the way I tell you, it'll bring oysters. I've made money off the ground." I said, "All right." So I went to the shellfish committee, and Fenton threw it out, and I took it up.

RD: That's interesting.

LP: The *Elva M* was my first oyster boat.

RD: What's the name again?

LP: *Elva M*. I bought it off of Dan Hines up in Newport before that. He had a little shipyard or something up there. H-I-N-E-S. Or something like that.

M: First name Dan?

RD: But it was the *Elva*?

LP: Elva, E-L-V-A-M. George Gaskell had owned that boat previous to that.

M: That video that you put on CD – what boat was that?

LP: I think that was the *Flora Jackie*.

M: Do you remember seeing that? I still have that [inaudible]

RD: He was showing me some pictures.

LP: I had 250 acres of ground out there when I quit oystering. The biggest boat that I had I bought off Charlie Handy – the *Mary Colman*. When George Jenkins finished – I had sold my boat. I sold the *Flora Jackie*, and I had sold the *Elva M*. They was a lot of oysters up the bay, and he had the *Mary Colman* for sale. She wasn't in very good shape, and I went to George Jenkins. Banks won't let you have any money; see how it goes to the oyster houses. So I went to George Jenkins, and I asked him – I said, "Will you loan me twenty-thousand dollars to buy the *Mary Colman*?" He says, "I'll do better than that." He says, "I'll buy your boat, and I'll fix it up." He said, "I want your oysters." Well, [inaudible] was down there then. George was buying for Hill Boone. I had worked for George – I don't know when it was – but he liked my oysters and the way I did things. He says, "But I want your oysters, and you can pay for it out of your oysters." So, he rebuilt the *Mary Colman*. Repowered it. I put the machinery on it, and I had 250,000 dollars in it, borrowed money when I got done. And I run 185,000 worth the first year I operated her. The second year, a lot of them died, and then the third year, they all died. I broke even. It cost me six thousand dollars to plant, and that's what I made. About that time, George had retired, and Hal Bickings had took over his job. Well, Steve Fleetwood was supposed to have had his job, but he was under Harold Bickings. And Harold Bickings come out here and said Hill was a little bit concerned about that money, and he says, "You must be." He says, "It's a terrible contract that you got. Will you sell your boat and the grounds to Hill if he'll just say, 'paid.'" I said, "Absolutely." So I just got out of the oyster business until I retired. When I retired, I bought – I had saved some money. I bought a burned-out boat over to Fairton that had been a party boat and rigged her up, and went back up the bay. I only worked her one year, and when the next year come, I was sick. I had some things. So I couldn't work on her to get her ready to go up the bay, and I told Kitty – I said, "I can't do that. It's too expensive to keep a boat without working it." So I put her up for sale. I think I had twenty thousand in her. Seems to be the going price. But I paid four thousand for her and fixed it up. I paid for her the year – I paid the four thousand dollars back the year I was fixing her up and everything. But I sold her to Warrenton Hollinger over there to Bivalve. When I sold her, I sold everything. I told Kitty, "If I keep them grounds, I'll be back in it again. [laughter]"

RD: So, what year did you retire from oystering?

LP: '82. Maybe it was '82.

M: You were in the upper bay, then?

LP: Yeah. They died real bad. After that, I was up the bay quite a while. I run Wayne (Robinson's?) boat for him – captain – up the bay. And who else was it? Somebody else. But I was in demand.

RD: That's good, yeah. We have some tongs on display. Some of them, I don't know who donated them. I didn't know if any of these were yours or if you knew –

LP: I can't say by looking at them, but I think they're Pops' tongs.

RD: If you look at the next picture, I have a close-up. This page here.

LP: No, they're not Pops'. Because Pops' was [inaudible] shape. I'll tell you where they put them.

RD: Wait a second. So these. These two aren't –

LP: No, those are clam tongs.

RD: Yeah, those are. OK. That's what I thought.

LP: I'll tell you what they done with Pops' tongs. I took them over there. They had their house, their things in Dan Henderson's house in Bivalve. That's where they was meeting. They took them tongs – Dad took care of his stuff, and when he got done with his tongs, he oiled them with linseed oil and pine tar and a dryer, a Japan dryer. You mixed Japan dryer with it, and you painted them and put them up in the shop. I knew I wouldn't have any use for them after he died and stuff like that, so I took them down, and I took them over there to the historical society. They took them off the truck.

RD: Which historical society was this?

LP: Over there where the *Martha Meerwald* is. Right there. They took them off the truck. They put them up in Dan Henderson's garage. The guy said to me – up overhead in Dan Henderson's garage – he says, “Them tongs are like brand new.” I says, “Certainly, they're good tongs.” I wrote down the year they were made, what they were made with, who built them, and why they was built. They was built to catch oysters on the mud out there in the cove. I've never seen them tongs since, or heard anything about them, or heard anything about Bobby Lee.

M: I wonder if we could track them down.

RD: Because I'm wondering, was it a different – was it the Mauricetown Historical Society or the Port Norris?

LP: At that time, they was meeting in the old Post Office there where Dan Henderson's wife was, and they was using things, and they had their display out in Lowell's store out in Port Norris. Whatever outfit that was.

RD: Would that have been where I work?

M: That doesn't sound like our work.

RD: I'll have to ask people. Because we have tongs on display at the shipping sheds, I wondered if any of them belonged to you.

LP: No. None of these was – they was a pair of wood-head tongs, and unless they got wrecked some other way, you would be able to see where they had linseed oil and pine tar and stuff on them because they would be a deep brown.

M: They're probably still around.

LP: So, if you've got any say over there, look up in the top of Dan Henderson's garage, and you might find them. What they've done with the paper, I don't know.

RD: And where was Dan Henderson's garage?

LP: Right next to the house.

M: Near Lowell?

RD: No, in Bivalve.

M: Oh, Bivalve, OK.

LP: Down to Bivalve. Do you know where the old Post Office was in Bivalve? Well, that was Dan Henderson's wife.

RD: Right.

LP: The house set here and the garage over here. That's where that man came out and put them tongs up. Now, I've tried to do something for them people several times. I went over there one time – actually, they was bits is what they were. They had some pieces of wood that came out of something that were wood, and they couldn't figure out what they was for. They were just bits – that's all they was – to tie boats up with.

RD: You said the teeth bar was [inaudible].

LP: Yeah, actually, what they did was they extended down to the bottom, and they had partners around the frame and stuck up through the deck, and they was confused because it didn't have any bolt through it to put the line around. Not all bits had bolts through them. They were just posts that stuck up. But anyhow, that's what they were.

M: Maybe we want them.

RD: Yeah. Do you know what year you donated them?

LP: I didn't donate them. I identified them.

RD: Oh, the tongs.

LP: The tongs.

RD: Like, late '80s? Early '90s, maybe? 1990s?

LP: Probably around '90s. See, I retired fifteen years ago, so that would be '99.

RD: 1990s? Okay.

M: Do you want to come back?

RD: Yeah.

LP: When I worked in the rubber factory, that was my tonging boat. I worked second shift, so I would come home, go to bed and get up at five o'clock, walked to [inaudible], and I'd catch three or four bushels of oysters, come home and sell them, and take them in and sell them at the rubber factory. I was making more money doing that than what I was doing.

RD: Where was the rubber factory?

LP: West Company in Millville.

M: They made rubber?

LP: This was some of the pictures that they took of me when they was making up that other thing.

RD: The Library of Congress?

LP: Yeah, they wanted to see how tongs was and this, that, and the other. This was the *Henry Clay* after they had repowered her and sawed the pilothouse off of her. Uncle [inaudible] and Grandpop – they're brothers. That's Aaron and [inaudible]. This is the Louise tied up to Nantuxent Creek, and that's the *Esther*, where we used to work out of. This is the last boat that I fixed up, where she was burnt out, and I [inaudible]

M: Was that the party boat?

LP: Yeah, well, I put oysters, and she ran oysters.

M: Yeah. Would this be Money Island, then, more or less?

LP: That's Money Island, yes. Laid her up there in Nantuxent Creek. Money Island. That's what your buy boats used to look like. You've probably seen them before. That boat is actually sitting on a bottom there because they would go up there in Nantuxent Creek and pull up there, and all the bushelers would go up there and unload alongside of it. That's what my folks done most of the time, was bushel.

M: Now, you said that's a buy boat

LP: That's a buy boat.

M: Was that different than a Maurice River boat, say?

RD: When they would buy the boat – buy the oysters from the –?

M: Oh, buy. I thought you meant Bivalve.

RD: B-U-Y. Yeah, like buy.

LP: Yeah, the buy boat would be on there a lot of times. Actually, McLean was the one on Joe's buy boat.

RD: Who operated the buy boats?

LP: Well, I think Joe rented a boat from Delaware to come over there. I can't remember whether her name was the *Nordic* or what it was, but she was a huge boat, and you could only get her in and out of Nantuxent Creek on high water, especially if she was loaded. That's what they did, what we did.

RD: Because then the buy boat would take the oysters back to the houses.

LP: They would plant them. Not the houses. It was planting season up the Bay.

M: Go up to the seed beds [inaudible]?

LP: Yeah, they have ruined the oyster industry, as far as I'm concerned. They did just exactly what I said they would do. I used to go over to the oyster cleaner and packer association. When they would hold meetings and try to get the laws changed, and this, that, and the other, I told them – I said, "You keep on doing that, and after a while, there won't be nothing left but oyster houses. There won't be no little men in it no more." "Oh no, that can't happen," the state man said. "That can't happen. Absolutely can't happen" – this, that, and the other. Well, how many little guys is down there? When they limited the license and this, that, and the other. Then Bobby and Wheaton's man there – Luther Jeffries and Bob Morgan – stood up there in the meeting, and they was going to ask for this, that, and the other. They said, "No, no, no, that's not the way you do it. What you do is you ask for a little bit this year." He says, "In a couple years, ask for a little bit more." And then the next year, a little bit more, and then after a while, you've got it all." That's what happened, too. Absolutely, that's what happened.

M: Do we have enough? Do we need more?

RD: Well, we've taken a lot of your time.

M: I don't mean today, but I mean another –

LP: Well, I got to say, come anytime you want.

RD: Thank you. We appreciate your time and your stories.

LP: I'm – what do you call it? – a good gabber, I guess.

RD: Perfect.

LP: Blow smoke or something.

RD: No, no. We believe everything you say.

LP: Anyway, there is a lot of things that went on this side of the river and the other side of the river combined. Actually, we both lived the same way. I mean, there was men all up and down the river that lived on the scows and cabins on the bank. Old Jerry Cole used to have a cabin on the bank down there at Dennis Creek, and he just stayed there all the time. It wasn't nothing but a shack, and if he wanted a bag of coal, he'd hire somebody going up to get him a bag of coal, and he would pay them for the bag of coal or if he wanted some flour or something. They just stayed there. They stunk a little. [laughter] I can remember all that.

RD: I had a grandfather named Frank Sparks who was a shad fisherman most of his life. He also did other things. But I think that was back in the caviar capital of the world, days up there around Penns Grove. That's how he made a living.

LP: Well, our first money down here was actually herring. You would get your Nova Scotia herring, your pickling herring, your little round herring. That would be cold weather, they would be coming down, and then they would be – they would start getting mixed with perch, and then we'd have perch and herring. Then your moon herring would come down, and your stripers and your shad would usually start getting around middle of March. Middle of April, your weakfish would start coming in, your big yellowtails.

M: Well, he would be a shad fisherman part of the year, and then, when he wasn't doing that, he worked at – well, for a while, he worked at the powder works in Carneys Point when they were making munitions for the war.

LP: Yeah. I can tell you something about that, too, when you come back to visit. Mom's people were on the ferry one day, the Pennsville ferry. Boy, they was putting everybody on the side of the ferries, and here come this old truck, great big old truck coming in there, tractor trailer. Guy jumps out, throws up the hood, and started yanking wires. What in the heck ails him? I'm

sitting right here, and he's right there. I'm just a kid during World War II. Well, got docked on the Jersey side and wouldn't let nobody off. Got a tow truck and towed that truck off. When it went off – "danger, munitions, high explosive." [inaudible]

M: Didn't want any sparks.

LP: Well, Dupont. You can't imagine unless you seen it, the trains, the production from General Motors, and in places – automobile things going down – my aunt used to live down in Laurel, down there, and there was three sets of tracks right alongside her house as close as from here to that shop out there. Train after train, and they'd have three locis. They'd have one pulling, they'd have one in the middle, and then they'd have one pushing. When they got outside the city, the back trains would let go and come back. All they was for was to get them going. They was loaded with tanks, jeeps, guns, and everything you could think of, all Army brown, coming down. It wasn't just one train. It was this train going on this track, another train going on that track; it was just continuous night and day. You would wonder how they could manufacture that much.

M: The Delaware Valley pretty much won that war. We outproduced the whole rest of the world at that time. We just keep cranking it out.

LP: I seen that.

RD: Well, before we go, if I could get your address? I don't think I have that there. Let's see. I've got all my notes. Oh, here we go. So your address?

LP: 28 MacDonald Lane.

RD: MacDonald?

LP: M-A-C-D-O-N-A-L-D. This is a real MacDonald's farm.

RD: Yeah, it's beautiful.

RD: And that's on –?

M: Old Macdonald.

LP: Yeah. This is Macdonald Lane. 28 Macdonald Lane, Heislerville 08324.

RD: Your phone number?

LP: 8-5-6-7-8-5-0-9-2-9.

M: That's right.

LP: If you don't call your number or something –

RD: So true.

M: That's true.

RD: I saw your Peterson – I saw the P-E-T-E-R-S-O-N, Louis. Okay?

LP: Yeah.

RD: Just to make sure I get the right spelling.

M: Your brother pastors a church right now, right in Port Norris?

LP: Yeah, he's retired, but the problem with the Methodist Church is they don't have any elders. They're filling the pulpits with lay speakers and deacons.

M: Oh, really?

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Molly Graham 1/21/202

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