

Rachel Dolhanczyk: We'll pretend like this isn't recording, though. [laughter] Hi. Today is September 16, 2013. My name is Rachel Dolhanczyk. I'm the museum curator at the Bayshore Center. I'm sitting in the home of Betty Higbee, who's been so kind to allow me to come sit with her for a little bit and bug her about Fortescue and pick her brain of some stories and other information. Her and her late husband wrote a great book called *Around Fortescue*, which, of course, I've looked at, and it has a lot of great information, so we'll just continue our chatting here. Well, Betty, can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Well, your full name and how you came to be here in Fortescue. Or were you born here?

Betty Higbee: I went to high school with my husband, and I was just from Cedarville.

RD: Ah, so you're local? [laughter]

BH: Yeah, I'm a local girl. We got married almost fifty-seven years ago. He passed away in – two years in December. But he was the longest-living person in Fortescue. He was here for seventy-six years.

RD: Wow. So, he was born and raised?

BH: Born and raised, right here on this spot.

RD: Wow. Where your home – well, right, because you indicate this.

BH: Yes.

RD: And his parents, they were from –?

BH: His parents was from here. They had the house before we got it, the small house. His grandparents was from here, so he was actually fourth generation in the small house.

RD: And there's a picture of that in the book that, yeah.

BH: Yes. And then when my in-laws moved down to a bigger house on Pennsylvania Avenue, we took over the small house, and our four kids was raised in the small house. But we got flooded out two times and lost everything we had two times in the small house, so we decided to build a bigger house.

RD: Which is where you live now?

BH: He told me I would never get my feet wet again. When Sandy hit, he was right. I did very well here.

RD: Was there water surrounding your home?

BH: Yeah. Yeah, I was surrounded with it, but nothing got in the house.

RD: Wow. Great. Your husband, he's Clarence Higbee.

BH: Clarence, right.

RD: But he had a nickname, I think, didn't he?

BH: Bunky.

RD: Bunky? Okay. That's what I read, yeah.

BH: Yeah, he was Bunky, which is a nautical nickname.

RD: I guess so, yeah.

BH: His grandfather loved him dearly. When he was born in the house his grandpop had, he would go sleep with his grandpop. His grandpop says, "When you're on a boat, and you sleep in the same bed, you're called my bunky."

RD: Oh, that's so sweet.

BH: "Because we're bunking together." So that's a nautical name. And then my husband held that name.

RD: Oh, isn't that something?

BH: He was always called Bunky. [laughter]

RD: That's so sweet. [laughter] Now, his parents' names were?

BH: His father was Clarence, also. He was born right here in this town.

RD: Right, you said, yeah. And his wife?

BH: Well, his mother was Mildred Higbee. She was born in this town, actually. His father was born in Cedarville, just like I was.

RD: Oh, just like you? Okay.

BH: Yes.

RD: But then you said, though, your husband's grandparents were here too.

BH: They were here, which was my –

RD: And who were they?

BH: – mother-in-law's parents.

RD: And what were their names?

BH: – Jesse and Anna Cossaboon. My mother-in-law's maiden name was Cossaboon.

RD: But they went back another generation, too?

BH: Yeah. Yes.

RD: So, do you know their names?

BH: No. [laughter]

RD: Oh, okay. [laughter] Do you know how that first generation got here to Fortescue or anything about them or –

BH: No. They were here for –

RD: – what brought them here?

BH: – quite a few years. Actually, it's been in the family for well over a hundred years.

RD: Really? Wow.

BH: Yes.

RD: So then your husband's grandparents then started the – or tell me about who –

BH: My husband's grandparents started it. They was always in the boating business. Jesse Cossaboon had a boat. And then, my father-in-law had a boat, which was called the *Bay Sweep*. And then we got the boat, which was called *Miss Fortescue*, so just went right on. The whole family's been in boating. They were either fishermen or clambers. We did a lot of clamming.

RD: With boating or with having the marina all these years – you said hundred-some years?

BH: Way back. But they didn't always have the marina. They just had docks here, and they had a store here. But we bought the marina from a fellow called (Cliff Finley?) and (Bertha Finley?). They had the marina part. But we was always in the docks and here, had the restaurant and sold a lot of marine equipment. And then we bought the business from the (Finleys?).

RD: I see. And who did you primarily cater to, or who were your customers?

BH: They're mainly from Camden and Vineland and around. A lot of them come from Camden and Woodbury and around that way and actually come down all the way down from Philadelphia, too.

RD: And it's pretty much – well, I can't say, but it's sort of always like that, I guess, like people from out of town –

BH: Yeah, out of town. Right.

RD: Can you tell me a little bit about that? I know I read about it in your book, but that goes way back.

BH: That goes way back. In the '70s, when there was a first real gas shortage, everybody decided to fish locally, so we'd put a hundred boats over a day. There was more than one marina down here. They was all putting a hundred boats over a day. And fishing was really good. Boating was really good. And you can almost not handle the people that came down here. And this house was built – never had a mortgage, nothing. This house was totally built from fishermen going fishing. So I always called this house – this is the house the weakfish built. You could afford to do anything you wanted in the '70s because fishing was so good. And actually, the fishing has slowed down, deteriorated. But the government has got their hands in it now. That's what's killing the fishing.

RD: And how is that?

BH: You're only allowed to catch one fish or two fish or a big size or –

RD: Restrictions?

BH: – they got to be so big. But when we're called the Weakfish Capital of the World, and that's what people want when they come here, and it costs them almost a hundred dollars a day, by the time they get to Philly, from their gas, their bait and the food they eat to get here, and they can only catch one, they're not coming down for one fish.

RD: In the '70s, how many fish could you catch? Was it unlimited?

BH: There was no limit. There was no limit. People was buying new boats, going out getting fish, selling the fish, paying for their boats, and just it was –

RD: How many fish, on average, could one get if they went out for –?

BH: Oh, they would probably get between fifteen and twenty apiece and then go to the market, sell them to the markets. The markets would sell them to the people. All the little fruit stands all the way from Philadelphia all the way down here, they were flourishing. The flower shops were flourishing. All the bait and tackle shops were. Now, the people at the little fruit stands say, where's all your people? We're not selling anything. Where's all your people? And it's just hurting. It's just hurting everybody. Everybody.

RD: Sure. And why are there all these limits on –?

BH: They want to bring back their – because it did slow up, they want to bring it back. But I don't think that's the way to do it. But they do. They think that's the way to do it. But they're killing the marinas right now. Really hurting. Really hurting the marinas.

RD: What about even – because you've been living here for –

BH: Fifty-six years.

RD: – fifty-six years?

BH: Yes.

RD: So what about further back? Like, say, even in the '50s, what was it like here –

BH: Well, I got married in '58.

RD: – like when you were a newlywed?

BH: So it was –

RD: Yeah, early '60s?

BH: – still good. It was good in the '50s and very good in the '50s and –

RD: It sounds like, up through the '70s, maybe '80s –

BH: '70s was actually –

RD: – or '70 is the end.

BH: – between the '70s and '80s was actually your better years. Well, in the '40s and '50s, it was all croakers. And then it became weakfish. And then now you can get drum fish. But there's a restriction on every single solitary fish. Every year, they change the restrictions. You almost have to have a handbook in your pocket when you go fishing, and so many – license for this and license for that. It's really hurting. It's really hurting.

RD: What about, because from what I've read or heard, with people coming here over the years, fishing has always been a big attraction, like even '20s or turn of the last century.

BH: That's all Fortescue can offer. That's all it can offer. There's no going to shore and having rides or this, and there's nothing to offer to people except fishing. Except fishing.

RD: So, you mentioned that people would come from Philadelphia or Camden area to go fishing.

BH: Yes.

RD: And then local people too, I guess, making a living.

BH: That's why they bought the little houses they used to call little fishing houses. That's why they bought them years ago.

RD: The out-of-town people would buy little cottages?

BH: Yeah. They were second homes to them. They loved them. Years ago, before the roads got real good, there was probably eight or nine restaurants on the waterfront. People would come down. And, of course, there wasn't good transportation. There wasn't good roads. They would come by horse and buggy or by car. But by the time they got here, we were called Little Cape May because we're centrally located between Cape May and Philadelphia. It took two hours on an excursion boat from Cape May to get here [and] two hours from Philadelphia to get here. So they all came here to eat, and then they all spent the night because it was too – they either went back on the boat, but to drive on those roads wasn't good, so they would spend the night and all the – that's why there were so many hotels, and that's why they flourished so well.

RD: How many hotels were there at, say, the height?

BH: Oh, I would say there was – every restaurant was a hotel also, so they would eat and then go spend the night in the hotels.

RD: And what type of boat would they take to get here?

BH: It was called an excursion boat.

RD: Excursion?

BH: A good forty- or fifty-foot boat, bring them down.

RD: Was it steam?

BH: Well, they would bring the girls from Philadelphia down here to work all the restaurants, and they would work all day, then catch the excursion boat and go back to Philly. And then fishing was good. Most of the time, years ago, when fishing got real good, they had floating homes called little houseboats or floating homes. Then they realized how good the bay was to make a living on, so they built the small homes. That's why they built the small homes is because they figured, well, we're just going to live here. There's two or three of the little floating homes still here. I have a friend who took one and made a nice home out of it. Nice home.

RD: Oh, that sounds nice. Yeah.

BH: Then roads got better, transportation got better, and then they could go to Atlantic City, or they could go to Cape May, so we lost out on that part.

RD: And when did that change [inaudible]?

BH: I would say in the '40s.

RD: '40s?

BH: '30s and '40s, yeah.

RD: Right. After the war, probably?

BH: Right. Yes.

RD: All the federal funding for highways and everything came in.

BH: So they could come eat, but –

RD: People started buying cars.

BH: – then they would take their car and go home.

RD: Right. And you really need people to stay.

BH: To stay, absolutely. To stay.

RD: I know, living in Cape May County, the people that come just for the day, the day-tripper, I would call them, but they're called shoobies.

BH: Shoobies.

RD: Do they call them shoobies here?

BH: Yeah. You know why? Because they took their lunch in shoeboxes.

RD: Because they were so cheap, they put their lunch in a shoebox.

BH: Right. Put a string around it.

RD: I understand what you're saying.

BH: We call them sundowners down here.



RD: Say again?

BH: They go home when –

RD: Oh, sundowners? [laughter]

BH: Sundowners. They come and go in a day. When the sun goes down, they go home.

RD: But it's the same thing, though, that they're not spending the money to –

BH: No.

RD: – get dinner, stay overnight and get breakfast in the morning, so it's the same.

BH: Yeah.

RD: Sundowners. I like that. [laughter]

BH: Sundowners. [laughter]

RD: So that's the problem now, is at sundown. Okay. So, after the war, roads get better, people –

BH: Got better. Transportation got better.

RD: Transportation.

BH: People went to the bigger shores, where there was no bugs. Of course, we're loaded with bugs. Loaded with bugs. This year is the first year in years that we haven't had no bugs.

RD: Oh, same in Dennisville too. This year is a good year.

BH: We don't know what happened. You know what I call them? It's our police department. There's times I'll say, "Come on, bugs, get rid of some of these people." People don't stand on corners and spend the night on the beaches laying out there, do bad things because the bugs would chase them home, so that's our police department. [laughter]

RD: Right. Well, that's true. [laughter] You said how good the '70s were, but were there still hotels then, people staying?

BH: Yeah.

RD: When would you say is the heyday or the height of –

BH: The heyday, actually, was –

RD: – all these hotels?

BH: – yeah, was in the '40s.

RD: Oh, '40? Okay.

BH: Yeah.

RD: But seems like a lot of places, like –

BH: Yeah, '30s and '40s was really –

RD: Even like with the oystering business.

BH: Yeah. Well, see, you could go out and go oystering. You could go fishing. You can go clamming. You get all that stuff. You bring it into the hotels. They would buy it from you. You would have fresh seafood dinners. People loved it.

RD: Which, of course, attracted people from the cities.

BH: Right.

RD: So, the local people then were making a living off the bay, basically catering to –

BH: Yeah. Most of the people who had the hotels, like the Mayflower Inn – I forget her first name, but anyhow, she ran the restaurant, and her husband had the boat. He'd go out and get stuff for supper that night in the boat and bring it in, clean it, and that would be what they would sell. Today, you're not allowed to even sell stuff that comes out of the bay. It's got to be farm-raised, weakfish and stuff like that.

RD: Oh, really?

BH: Yes. I can serve a fresh – which I do – soft shell crab. But somebody can't go out, get weakfish, clean them, and me sell them in the restaurant. It's illegal, which is crazy.

RD: That is crazy.

BH: It's crazy.

RD: So they have to be farm-raised. What does that –?

BH: It's just a place that can raise –

RD: Where they actually –

BH: – yeah, fish and stripers and weakfish and stuff that. Then you buy it from them. Then, you fill out all kinds of paperwork. All kinds of paperwork.

RD: Then how is it – when you see the boats go out of Cape May and they bring scallops or whatever, but they're selling directly –

BH: Yeah. Well, see, they got a store there in Cape May. They got a shop there, so they sell it to the shop, and then it goes right into the store.

RD: I just wonder why it's different, like with the bay, you can't.

BH: Yeah. See, they work through their seafood store right there, like Cape May, The Lobster House. Well, they got the store right there, so they sell it to the store, and then the store just takes it right on into the restaurant. Yes. You have to have that middleman.

RD: Wow. Yeah, so that really would have changed things.

BH: Yes. It's all got to be cleaned, inspected, and whatever. They have all that sanitary stuff to clean all the fish and all before you're allowed to put it in a restaurant.

RD: And when did that change? Was it the '70s, '60s?

BH: I really don't know.

RD: No?

BH: I really don't know because I've never been into that part of the food, of selling fish or anything. Because I never had suppers. I just do lunches. I'm done between 3:00 and 4:00. It's all according to who keeps me there. I have breakfast and lunches is what my place is. It's a

luncheonette. I never went into the supper part, where this guy here, this Kenny Lore, I was telling you about, he's all supper.

RD: Just supper?

BH: He does it all. Yeah, he goes to Cape May and gets his fish for the restaurant.

RD: But he couldn't go out fishing?

BH: Yes.

RD: No? I see.

BH: No more. No more.

RD: How many people, during the height of things, say, in July, would be here or whatever the --? Do you have any sense of --?

BH: Well, that live here, you mean?

RD: Well, I guess either the --

BH: The town went from like four hundred people living here to about two thousand living here. And in the course of a day, for all the fishermen, there used to be twelve row boat marinas where you could rent a little rowboat to go. There's not a one now. Restrictions and insurance got so bad on little boats everybody had to shut them down.

RD: So, I could just, back then, come and just rent a boat for the day?

BH: You come over and, yeah, you'd pay forty-five dollars, got a rental boat, out you go, come in fishing, and that's it. But they got so expensive with insurance. Then you had to show people every day -- even if you're the same person and came every day to rent the same boat, we'd have to give you a story on how to run that boat every day. It got to be too much. I'd say there'd be between four and five thousand people down here. Every rental boat, everybody had -- probably a couple hundred of them was going out for the day. And all of the roads would be -- and yards would be full of cars. When we launched boats, there would be a line clear down around the bend waiting to go over.

RD: That's amazing.

BH: Yeah. It was amazing.

RD: And what about today?

BH: Today, if you get twenty, twenty-five, you call it a good day. You call it a good day.

RD: How many people live here year-round now?

BH: Year-round now, well, we probably got about four or five hundred. Yeah. We lost about ten houses off of the tax map after Sandy. Every other house is up for sale because of all the rules and regulations you have to do now to rebuild.

RD: Right. So, obviously, Sandy had a big impact. I imagine there were other storms, too.

BH: Oh, yeah. 1950, there was a bad flood.

RD: '50?

BH: That's when we lost the boardwalk. It was a nice boardwalk.

RD: Okay. I've seen pictures of that, yeah.

BH: That did a lot of damage. There was probably three or four foot of water, but we didn't have all that wind Sandy had and all the houses. A lot of them moved. A lot of them come from Gandy's Beach across the marsh here and what was here – over to Gandy's Beach, and so it did. There's been a lot of floods. You live on the water, you got to expect it every day. You never know, once you go to sleep, if you're going to wake up with your feet in the water.

RD: Right, right. [laughter] When people used to come down, before the sun-setters, when they would come down and stay, would they come for a week or a weekend or?

BH: They would rent the places for a week.

RD: So similar to what people do at the shore today, say Stone Harbor or something, they come for a week.

BH: Yeah. They'd come down for a week. But it seemed like, when Labor Day got here, it was almost like a great exodus. They would just close their cottage down, board it up, go home. You wouldn't see them anymore. But now they come back and forth clear until December to their places. Then they close them up because it gets too cold.

RD: Sure. Are there still a lot of second homeowners, or would the vast percentage be –?

BH: Yeah. Almost, I would say, half of them are second homeowners. And the other half are here for good now.

RD: Do people retire here?

BH: Yes. Yeah. They used to. They used to couldn't wait to retire here. But I don't know. Sandy has hurt – made everybody think twice. Think twice. Especially if they have to have any kind of mortgage. Their flood insurance is going to be so high that they can't afford to stay here. They can't afford two homes. And a lot of people are brokenhearted that has lost what they wanted to retire in. It's gone. It's gone.

RD: I imagine some people's cottages were probably in their families for a number of years, passed down?

BH: Yeah. I have a friend, and his – it was called the Boondocks. It was his grandparents' and his parents' and now his. He's my age. He lost it in the bay, and now he's living in Fairton in a trailer park. It's breaking his heart. Breaking his heart.

RD: How much water was outside of your house?

BH: Here? Well over three foot. Well over three foot. And I'm pretty high.

RD: Yeah, you are. Right.

BH: And I'm pretty high.

RD: How deep? What was the deepest or what part of –?

BH: It was probably three-foot all over. See, what happens with the tide –

RD: Well, that's true, right.

BH: – that kind of tide, it comes in and goes out. It comes in and goes out, where, if you're in a city, it's just there. It's just there. But you got your high tides and low tides, and what comes in will go out. But there was – I don't really know how much was on the beachfront. It was just so much wind that you really couldn't tell because there was waves on the roads. But it was a mess. It was a mess.

RD: And still recovering, too? No attention paid to here.

BH: There are some towns that'll be years getting their boats out of the marshes and rebuilding their houses. It'll never be the same anywhere. Never, ever be the same.

RD: What do you know about some of the other communities, like you mentioned Gandy's?

BH: Gandy's Beach and Money Island and Dividing Creek and Newport. There's five little towns in this just one township.

RD: Oh, that's Downe Township?

BH: It's Downe Township. Yeah, we got five towns in it. And Money Island was hurt bad on the left end. Right end wasn't so bad. Gandy's Beach looked terrible. Really looked terrible. And they have big homes there. Big homes there. There's probably two or three that'll never rebuild. But the rest of them have worked hard. The road disappeared two times during that. The road had been put back, but it was put back so quick, you just wonder how long it's going to last. The seawall was put up. The seawall's cracking already. You just don't know whether it'll last another flood or not. But those homes are big. They're big homes.

RD: Is that a similar history to Fortescue?

BH: Yes. Yeah.

RD: You had said people who came here, some had cottages that they had in their family, and they'd come down for a bit, and other people would stay in the hotels, and some people would just rent for a week, and then go home. So I guess there was a nice turnover business then.

BH: There was. There was a nice turnover because they could get breakfast, they could get lunch, they could get supper, and they would fish all day. And some of your – most of your places had a place right there, where the boardwalk was. They go right out of the restaurant and fish all day. Even at Charlesworth, up until she lost that in Sandy, you could go out on her deck. She had rods and reels, and you could fish all night and all day there. She never stopped you. She never stopped you.

RD: And what about local people? Obviously, during the season, they were taking advantage – not taking advantage but making a living off of people who were here, but what did they do for fun or – no time off in the summer and maybe –

BH: Well, most of the local people are here because they want to fish, so they all have boats here and a dock. They all had little docks. They had little boats. They're either the captains on the boats. But everybody is here because they like to fish. Very few of them don't like to fish. There's a few women. But most of the men brought them here, but they all have a fishing boat somewhere here.

RD: So even back in the '40s and '20s –

BH: That's why they came here.

RD: – if you were here, you were here to fish?

BH: Yes. Yeah.

RD: Isn't that something? [laughter]

BH: Yeah. You see, and what's good about a time like this, every day is different. You'll see a different group every day. You'll see three or four men who live here come in [and] have breakfast. They're going to go fishing. Tomorrow, you'll see another group. And then, next day, you'll see a different group, so they fish, and they either work on the boats or fish or lay on the beach or – but they're here mainly because of the fishing. Mainly because of the fishing. The houses have been inherited and left to them and whatever. All of the kids here, like my grandson, would get up in the morning; he didn't know whether he was going to go crabbing. He didn't know whether he was going to go fishing. “Maybe I'll mate on a boat today, or maybe I'll clean fish for someone today. Maybe I'll work in the tackle shop.” There was so much to do for kids, they didn't know what they wanted to do. But it made good kids out of them. Made good kids out of them. And this is the type of town that, when children are born, they love it. As long as they're in grammar school, this is their town. When they go to high school, there's so much to do. They get girlfriends. This town isn't good enough for them anymore. They don't want to be here.

RD: Where do kids go to high school from here

BH: Bridgeton High School and Cumberland Regional. So anyhow, this town isn't – “There's nothing to do here. I'm leaving.” And then, when they get older, they want to come back. They want to come back.

RD: I bet. Yeah.



BH: So there's a love and hate for Fortescue. When you're dating, they hate it. [laughter] They hate it. Yeah.

RD: Would kids today still do the same activities, say your grandkids, just go out and –?

BH: Yeah. Yeah, I have a grandson who has – well, he's a correction officer now, but he has a boat over there. He comes down. He'll go hunting. He'll go fishing. And after, he comes down here at night and jumps on a boat and goes up the creek and fishes two or three hours. He does it all. He does it all. And young guys do. They all come back, even if they get married. They'll say I'm going to Fortescue fishing. They all come back. Eventually come back. Their wives learn to like it too down here, but there's no malls or anything down here for them.

RD: Oh, that's probably just fine. [laughter]

BH: And they hate the bugs and the this and the that.

RD: It smells. [laughter]

BH: And Fortescue is loved, hated, and loved again.

RD: Yeah. [inaudible].

BH: My husband never, ever lived anywhere else except this spot and never wanted to. Never wanted to leave it. Never wanted to leave it.

RD: Yeah. It's nice how sometimes things don't change, just?

BH: Yeah. Each one of my children, I've got four – one runs the ramp across the street. My younger son, [who] is fifty – he's my youngest. My older son – he's captain on the *Miss Fortescue*. I own that boat. He's my captain. My middle son, Clifford, runs a bait-and-tackle shop, and the place is across the street. That's his real neat home down there. See where the white truck is?

RD: Oh, yeah, down there.

BH: Yeah. That's his home.

RD: Oh, neat.

BH: They all live right around here. And my daughter and I run the restaurant. We have, and this is my fiftieth year.

RD: Wow. Congratulations.

BH: Fifty years. She's been with me every inch of the way.

RD: What other businesses are still in town or other families similar to yours?

BH: No, not really. We're the only one left. Used to be Al's Bait & Tackle. They closed up. You just wonder how long we're going to stay. You just wonder how long we're going to stay. We're here because that's all I know, and that's all they know. That's all they know. And, of course, the grandkids couldn't stay. There just wasn't enough for them. One's a teacher, one works at a bank, and one's a correction officer, but they all come back. They all come back and play here. [inaudible] for work here. There's not enough in Fortescue for them to do anymore.

RD: I guess there's no other restaurants, either.

BH: Charlesworth lost it, and they're not helping her. She's in desperate need. She lost her home. And they wouldn't help her because it was a second home here. She lost a restaurant, and they wouldn't help her because she was a business, and that upsets me terrible –

RD: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

BH: Because she was one of the highest-paying taxpayers there is. We're losing a ratable. And why? Because she's a business. Aren't they going to help her?

RD: Yeah, doesn't make sense.

BH: That don't make any sense.

RD: I don't know. Yeah.

BH: Don't make any sense. And so the other little places, any kind of business that was down here that was damaged is done. Done.

RD: So, prior to Sandy, there were still a few businesses left?

BH: No, just before Sandy, the one down the road down here, which was a real, real nice place called Al's Bait & Tackle, he just shut down, but like I say, at one time, there was – oh my

goodness gracious, there was probably twelve to fifteen boat rentals, and they all had either a little restaurant or a little bait and tackle shop with them. There was probably eight big restaurants. Oh, there was a lot. We're the only one left. Now, there's a few places that are renting rooms down here, which is necessary, but that's all that's left. That's all.

RD: Because otherwise, there's no place to stay if you don't have –

BH: No.

RD: – your own cottage.

BH: Right. There is a couple, right, and our pavilion has changed into a – I don't want to call it a trailer park. It's a recreational park where they can come down. What is it called? Sunset Mobile Park. But they're coming down, and they can hook up for the season. They can hook up for a night. They can hook up for a weekend or a week or whatever. It's brand new. It just opened about two months ago. But next year will be his grand opening. It is beautiful. It is beautiful.

RD: I'll have to tell my parents about that. They have an RV. [laughter]

BH: Well, we had a gang about three weeks ago. Actually, it was the day of [inaudible]. We had about a dozen in there.

RD: Oh, [inaudible]?

BH: It looked so pretty. You can go right up to the bulkhead, hook up, take your table out, and fish all night on the bulkhead.

RD: Just like they used to, yeah.

BH: Oh, it's wonderful. It's wonderful. And it's very, very pretty. It's going to be a great asset to us because, when they come down, they come have lunch, they come have breakfast.

RD: Right. Go out on a boat.

BH: They want to buy t-shirts. And they want to go fishing. So, it's a recreational trailer park, is what it is. It's going to be real, real nice. So next year [inaudible] open right away.

RD: Next year.

BH: I mean, he's open now, but it's the end of the season, so he's just touching base right now, and it's working out well. Working out well.

RD: What about people birding or kayaking?

BH: A lot of birders come down here, and a lot of kayakers down here and a lot of kayakers down here. In fact, my little granddaughter, that's where I had to go last week. She just took up kayaking. A lot of kayakers down here. A lot of birders come down here. A lot of people come look at the horseshoe crabs and the red knots or – the beaches are full of them.

RD: But they're not necessarily spending money to –

BH: They don't spend money. [laughter] Them people don't spend money.

RD: So birders and –

BH: No.

RD: – nature watchers don't spend money?

BH: They're in a class of their own. They're nice people, but they're just here looking at birds.

RD: Okay. Because it would seem like there'd be lots of opportunities for people to want to come here. But if they're not having lunch and dinner and staying overnight, then it's –

BH: Yeah. Yeah, no, they won't do that.

RD: – people can come and look all they want, but it doesn't make much of an impact on things.

BH: Yeah.

RD: Yeah. I know, in your book, there was a chapter on different people and characters, I call them. [laughter]

BH: [inaudible]

RD: But were there certain characters who you remember?

BH: Well, it's the people who live here that are the characters.

RD: [inaudible]

BH: Yeah. They come in every morning for a cup of coffee and come in the afternoon for a hot dog and come in later on and get a cheeseburger or flounder sandwich or whatever. But they're my characters, people I've known for years and years and years. But we'll have people come now, where they used to come from Cape May, older people, couples – hey would come – I would say to my daughter, “Well, it's time to see so-and-so from Cape May.” They don't make that long trip anymore because they can't afford the gas. Where they used to come maybe twice a month, three times a month, they said, “Well, this is our only trip. We're going to come down this time and go because we can't afford the trip to come back and forth.” We get a lot of bicycle riders, a lot of motorcycle riders, but the people used to – the older people used to make the day trips, come down. The gas has killed them. They can't make that trip anymore.

RD: How long does it take to get to Cape May from here?

BH: How long?

RD: Yeah.

BH: It's about sixty miles. It's about a forty-five-minute ride.

RD: Oh, right. You did say you're halfway.

BH: Yeah. And a lot of the older people find it difficult being here because now they have to go shopping in Bridgeton or Millville. And we're centrally located for either one. But to go get milk and get your groceries, it's a forty to forty-four-mile round trip. The older people say we can't live here. It's too far to go get our medicine and our groceries.

RD: Right, yeah, to get milk or something.

BH: So gas is killing us. So there are so many things against us.

RD: I guess that would have been the same with boats, too, obviously, gas.

BH: Yeah. Well, you take, if a man comes from Philadelphia – he used to come down and have breakfast, go get his bait, go on the boat, come in in the afternoon, and have lunch, pack another lunch, go back on the afternoon boat. It was his full, fun day of fishing. Now, they come down, they go get bait, they go on a boat. They either give up because, by the time they get down here, with the gas, the bait, the breakfast, and going on a boat, they've spent a hundred dollars, and they're only allowed to take one fish out. So now, well, see, a lot of them. They don't do all of

them steps. They'll come down. They'll go on the boat. Let the captain buy the bait, which he does. Then they go home. They don't go to the bait and tackle shop and get anything extra. They don't come in and get breakfast – they don't come in and pack a lunch to go on a boat. They have to give something up. So, they're giving up either having breakfast or packing the lunch. You can understand that. You can understand that.

RD: Yeah. No, you can't blame them for that.

BH: Because his wife's going to say, "Give me a hundred dollars. Let me go put some groceries in the refrigerator." You're not going to go down there, spend a hundred dollars, and catch one fish.

RD: Right. Yeah, it'd be different if you came back with a bunch of fish that you can eat.

BH: Right. If you come back with enough fish for their meals, they wouldn't think so much. But they're not coming back with enough fish for their meals because stripers got to be twenty-eight inches, which is big.

RD: Yeah, that is big.

BH: Flounders got to be thirteen or thirteen and a half. I forget what it is this year. And you're only allowed to catch one weakfish. Well, they've got the sizes so big, they're not there, and so they're going home with nothing.

RD: There are different seasons when you can catch certain fish?

BH: Yeah.

RD: So what's the –?

BH: You can catch flounder from May until this month. At the end of September, they're done. Now, they got to sit and wait for stripers to come in. And stripers don't come in until it gets real cold, so I close up at the end of October. And stripers might not even start biting until the middle of November and December. Well, I can't stay over there. It's too cold. I have no heat over there. So if they would just [let] flounder and weakfish go until the stripers get here, that would be fine. But no, end of September, you're done.

RD: And what about weakfish? What's that season?

BH: That's pretty much any time you can catch them. And then stripers are done at the end of December.

RD: Wow. That's not very long at all.

BH: No. No. It's just there's just too many rules and regulations.

RD: So before all these rules and regulations, you could just –

BH: Just go anytime.

RD: Anytime?

BH: Anytime.

RD: As much as you want and –

BH: Yeah.

RD: So did people initially – could they make a living year-round then?

BH: Before?

RD: Before?

BH: Oh, yeah.

RD: So, in January-February, there's still people coming down.

BH: They would be out doing something. Well, it would freeze up then, actually.

RD: Well, that's true. Right.

BH: Yeah. And it would be too cold for them to go. They would have to winterize their boats so they wouldn't freeze.

RD: Oh, right. That's true.

BH: And this and that. Right. So, January and February, it was – but they would start in March and April.

RD: And go through the end of the year or up until Christmas, maybe?

BH: Yeah. Catch fish and freeze it. Catch all them weakfish, put them in the freezer, and have them all winter long. But now, they don't catch enough to freeze.

RD: Yeah.

BH: And we used to have people standing on the corner selling fish to people who didn't catch any. It was wonderful.

RD: Oh, really? Wow, that would have been neat to see.

BH: Wonderful. I have a guy – a picture here [inaudible]. He had three other boats fishing for him – little boats – and they all came in before the big boats did. He would stand down here in a parking lot. He made a good living selling his weakfish, so much per pound, so that everybody went home with fish.

RD: Wow. And then you just get your fruit and vegetables from the stands.

BH: Yeah. Used to be fun. But it's no fun anymore. The fun's gone out of it.

RD: You were saying, now, that people, they get milk at the groceries, get prescriptions, how far they have to drive. So further back, back in the day, as we say, was there more –

BH: There was a lot of little stores here.

RD: – stores, shops –?

BH: Yeah. A lot of little places here.

RD: Where you wouldn't have to leave –

BH: More grocery stores. Right.

RD: I guess you could still go to Millville or Bridgeton for big –

BH: Right. Big grocery. You learn to live out of freezers when you live here. And you actually have better meals. You mix this with that. I guess it was last Thanksgiving, I heard four Black men across the creek over here laughing and having such a good time. I walk out on the deck



because I hear all these voices to see what's going on. I heard them stop. I said, "Look, I'm not out here to check on you people. You go ahead and fish." I knew what they were doing. They were catching stripers. I said, "I never turned anybody in in my life." I said, "This is what Fortescue is all about – fishing. You go ahead and do what you want to do. If you want to take a chance in taking them and not getting caught, you do it." I said, "I just want to know where the voices was coming from. I'll never call on you." And I never have. I thought to myself, here's these four men. Now, they've given a bait-and-tackle shop a nickel. I'm sure they've stopped and got a sandwich someplace and gave them a nickel. They've helped four or five little places on the way down here. Now, they were catching good, fresh seafood. They caught enough; they could have taken South Avenue and given everybody their meal. Everything they caught was probably illegal because stripers are real thick in here, real thick, but they're not the size in this creek. They're small, which is, to me, perfect eating. Those men really was doing what they should be doing. I come in the house, and I have the radio on. There's a man on there begging for Campbell's soup and cans of any kind of soup to take to the food bank to help feed people for Thanksgiving. And Campbell's soup, or any soup in a can, is probably the worst thing you can put in your body because of the salt. So here they are – here's four men over here catching perfect food. They would probably distribute them to the whole street, and the government says, "No, you can't eat that." Now, if these four Black men went to the food bank and stood in line, then people would say, "Look at them men. They're too lazy to work." So, the government has it all wrong. Them men had plenty of food to feed their family and the whole town, actually. But the government says, "Throw them back. Go to the food bank and eat salty soup in a can." Now, how wrong is that?

RD: No, I agree. Yeah.

BH: How wrong is that? But I hope they took them all home, tell you the truth. I just walked out to see where the voices was coming from. I told them, I said, "Look, I'm not checking on you. You go ahead and fish. You go ahead and keep all you want to keep. But you're on your own." [laughter]

RD: [laughter] Is there a big presence with law enforcement?

BH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They're here all day and all night, checking – and my ramp, when they come up, they're standing there checking everybody that comes up. It's a shame.

RD: Oh, that is.

BH: It's a shame. It's a shame.

RD: So you have a nice day out on the water, and there's the law waiting for you.

BH: Right. Yeah. They're here all day long. There's about four of them.

RD: Gosh. [laughter] Do they catch a lot of illegal –?

BH: Yeah, they do.

RD: And what happens?

BH: They fine them. Now, my boat – I'd say, if I took twenty people out and my boat comes into the dock, there'll be a guy standing at the dock. He'll say, everybody, sit down until I check you out.

RD: Wow.

BH: Or I have somebody on my boat or the *Bonanza* or any other fishing boat down here. I have a sting on a boat. We don't know that he's law enforcement, so he's sitting there. So, if my mate catches an illegal fish and then decides to cut it up and use it for bait, that man remembers that and remembers something everybody gets. So then, when the boat docks, he'll say, "Everybody, sit down. You get fined because you cut up a small flounder you wasn't supposed to do. I know in your cooler, you have an illegal weakfish." And he gives them all high tickets.

RD: Wow. Several hundred dollars?

BH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Now, my son is the captain. He's not responsible for – he's not a babysitter, so he don't get fined. But he tells the people, "I'm running this boat. And there will be law people here." And he says, "And I will follow the rules, so don't do anything illegal." And he tells them. But when you got twenty, thirty people, you can't keep an eye on them. But boy, my son hates them.

RD: Oh, I can imagine.

BH: Game wardens – he just hates them. Just hates them. And then people get mad, and they won't come back.

RD: Oh, yeah. Who wants to be –?

BH: They're not going to come back if they got a ticket.

RD: – harassed, and you want to have a nice time.

BH: Right.

RD: And then what happens to the fish? They got to discard them or?

BH: Yeah. He throws them overboard. You can't take them home after you're buying a ticket. You can't take them home.

RD: So they get a high ticket, and then you got to toss it?

BH: Yes. Then you still got to throw them over. Yeah.

RD: That's such a waste. [laughter]

BH: Everybody says – and I tell them – I said, “The industry of fishing isn't killing it because of lack of fish. It's the government that's killing. It's not fishing. It's the government that's killing us. It's really, really bad. Really bad.

RD: Is it the same with hunting, too? You mentioned earlier about guys hunting?

BH: Yeah. But I don't know too much about hunting. I really don't know too much about it. But there's game wardens for all of it. For all of it.

RD: Where do the game wardens come from? Are they from elsewhere? Did they grow up around here?

BH: I'm trying to think where their office is. I think their office is in Millville. Anybody who wants that kind of job is nuts because you're all hated. [laughter] But there're an awful lot of young men. They got more law than a state trooper.

RD: Really? Wow.

BH: Yeah, they got more authority than a state trooper has.

RD: I didn't know if your son went to high school with one of the guys or if they know them that way at all.

BH: Yeah. They know them. They all know him well. But boy, they're tough. That's their job. It's their job.

RD: Is that not just here but, I guess, anyplace where there's boats coming in –

BH: Yeah.

RD: – they're probably waiting?

BH: Yeah.

RD: Yeah. Who would want to go out and have such a nice day on the water and then come back and be harassed? [laughter] Hi.

BH: This is my younger son, Charlie. He runs the marina.

RD: Hi. I'm Rachel.

CH: Is she here?

BH: Yeah. She's in the other room watching TV. Yeah, he's been with us since he's been born. He does a good job over there. He keeps it neat and clean. It looks nice over there. I take her off the bus and then put her on in the morning.

RD: That's nice.

BH: He brings her down when he comes to work. Her mother's Japanese, and she is beautiful. Oh, she's beautiful.

RD: I bet.

BH: But she works all the way over near the Delaware Memorial Bridge, so she's – because she has a haul every day. But she got a good job, so she keeps it.

RD: Oh, that's good. Well, I was trying to think of any other –

BH: I don't know what else to tell you except –

RD: I don't know. We covered a lot of information.

BH: – the town is – I don't know. Everybody says they think the government's trying to destroy all these little towns and put it all back to nature. I don't really think it's that. But ninety percent of the people think that's what's happening.

RD: I guess I have heard some people say about letting things go back or, what do they call that –

BH: Yeah ...

RD: I don't know. Why would it –?

BH: Why would that?

RD: – matter? Why? Yeah, I don't know. Because, I guess, when you see how much money is put into shore towns, like Seaside Heights –

BH: Yeah. They're really [rebuilding] that. But they think these little ones down here, they're just trying to let the shorebirds and the horseshoe crabs take it over.

RD: But you don't think that?

BH: No. No. I don't think so.

RD: But a lot of people do?

BH: I don't know what can be done. But I just say, why don't every one of you fishermen just go out there, take all your boats, fill your party boats up, take all the little boats, and just go out there and catch fish. Let them put you all in jail. There's no room for you. [laughter] They'll let you go. But you got to – almost like the tea-burning thing; you've got to rebel. You have got to do something to save – I mean, we've got some beautiful – well, they were – we had a good two dozen little hunting cabins, beautiful hunting cabins and saved many of people's lives that broke down. They always kept them full of food, canned food, this and that.

RD: And unlocked, so you could –

BH: And unlocked – and wood there to keep you warm. It's worked. It saved many lives. Now, they want to do away with them. In fact, my son has one. There's probably only six left out there. If they burn down or they fall down, you cannot replace them.

RD: Right. I've heard that. Yeah.

BH: You can maintain them. But you cannot build a new one, or you can't – if it burns down, you have to leave it go. And that's wrong. That's a way of life. That's almost like a lifesaving station.

RD: Right. And those go back years.

BH: Oh, yeah. My husband and a couple of guys came Friday night. They were gone. They get in that little boat, and they were gone for the whole weekend and didn't wash pillowcases for twenty years, I heard. [laughter] But it saved many lives. It was a retreat for these guys. They loved it.

RD: So, your husband worked, say, during the week with your business?

BH: Yeah, because hunting was after the business closed.

RD: Oh, right. Yeah, winter. Sure.

BH: Yeah, the wintertime, so he would go, him and some of the other captains, they would get all their hunting clothes on with their dogs and little boats called a sneakbox. Out they would go and spend a whole weekend. Came back in with all these ducks and things that we would cook up. Wonderful. Wonderful life down here. They're destroying the way of life.

RD: Right. So here, you would, during the summer season into the fall [inaudible] work very hard and –

BH: Work every day in the heat, fight the bugs, and in the wintertime, which I like, I would rather go to Cape May, I would rather go to Atlantic – I would rather do all that in the winter, when there's no people there, anyway.

RD: Oh, sure. Yeah. No traffic and everything else.

BH: That's right. We didn't care that we were stuck here all summer.

RD: So then you would go out, have fun out in the marsh and –

BH: Yeah. Right. Muskratting. Muskratting every day.

RD: Not only have but then be able to provide for your family.

BH: Right.

RD: And then you wouldn't have to drive to Millville to get food because everything's here.

BH: You got it. You lived off the land. You ate fish. Now, see, I won't freeze anything. I'll eat summer food in the summertime and winter food in the wintertime. I don't freeze fish. I don't freeze any ducks. I don't do all that kind of stuff. I'll have soups and stews and deer meat. Deer meat's fine. You can make meatloaf, and you can cook deer meat. Once you eat deer meat and make stuff out of ground-up deer, you don't want beef anyway. That's a different story. But to freeze fish and do that kind of stuff, no. No. I'll eat fish all summer long. And in wintertime, I'll eat wintertime food.

RD: Still today?

BH: Yes.

RD: Still the same today? Yeah.

BH: Pardon me?

RD: It's still the same today?

BH: Yeah.

RD: Eating fish? Yeah.

BH: Yeah. I eat fish.

RD: And your sons, they –

BH: Yeah, they eat fish and crabs. They do all that. They just –

RD: – live off the –

BH: Oh, yeah. We deep fry everything. In fact, I've been eating soft shells all summer long. They just love all the summer food. And in wintertime, they go deer hunting. They go muskratting. I'll cook two or three muskrat dinners a season and invite half the town because half their wives won't cook it. [laughter] And I'd say, "Well, if the wives want to come, they can come. And they'll go in the dining room, they'll have ham or turkey or something.?" All the men sit out here and eat the muskrat, which is fun. We have a good time.

RD: Yeah. So much healthier for you than farm-raised turkey or something.

BH: Yeah. I don't mind cooking it. Right. But the towns are being destroyed by rules and regulations, not by flooding, not by any other means except the rules and regulations.

RD: Because you can always rebuild and –

BH: Sure.

RD: – like people used to, obviously, if there was a reason to rebuild, of course. Are there people that, say, come down from their places in the winter for hunting, or is there not really that type –? Or is it more local guys?

BH: Yeah. We've got a lot of people that – in fact, my marina over here, I have – and it'll be in the guide and reminder next week or week after that – where I'll have a special just on hunting boats and ducking boats. They can have a seasonal pass and stay until the end of hunting season. It's just seventy-five dollars. They get a sticker put on their trailer. They go anytime they want because I can't be here when they go. Those duckers go 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning [and] come in 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. They're very, very early people, so. And boy, sometimes I wake up, and there's a string of trailers there, where they've all used the ramp and gone. They still do a lot of it. They still do a lot of it. But the cabins is what's hurting them. They would like all to build a new cabin out there. I see nothing wrong with it. It ain't hurting a thing. But no, the government says no [inaudible].

RD: Because they're really living with the land. It's not like there's plumbing.

BH: That's it.

RD: It's just a structure.

BH: That's it. Just a little –

RD: On pilings, I guess and –

BH: – yeah, just a little one-room, two-room shack. It's got about six bunks in it lined up, but – got a little cabin there, a little heater in there, and a little stove. Those guys will cook up all that stuff, clean their fish and eat it. They love it. They just love that way of life. Not me. I don't want to do it. But boy, my grandson, he just can't wait. He takes that little duck boat. Like I say, he don't know what he wants to do. You want a cold soda of some sort?



RD: Oh, no. I'm fine.

BH: You sure?

RD: Yeah. I'm fine.

BH: OK. Or a cup of hot tea or anything?

RD: Oh, no. I'm good.

BH: It's just a shame that the way of life is disappearing, never to come back again.

RD: Right. Yeah. Once it's gone.

BH: Never to come back again. This is one reason I wanted to do this because my husband was – he had had a stroke for fifteen years. And him living here – he lived here. He was the oldest guy to live in the town. I mean, there was older people here. But he was born and raised here for seventy-five years. People would come into town who would say how it was named, the town was named. Speakeasies flourished down here. There was so much going on. But people are making up their own stories about how things got started. We had rum runners down here that used to run rum – in fact, one of my girlfriends found a bottle of rum full of barnacles. I would like to have found that myself. But anyhow, I told him, I said, “You know what? You’ve been here seventy-five years. You know all the ins and outs of this town” – because he collected pictures galore, and he collected postcards. I said, “Let’s put something together with the truth in it before something happens to you.” I think I had the book out one year before he passed away. But he taught me a lot. That was very, very hard to do. It took me three years to do that and a lot of sitting up, drinking coffee, when he would be sound asleep. I’d get up at 1:00 in the morning and write into that book, write until 3:00. And then I’d go over to the store.

RD: Go to work? [laughter]

BH: Yeah. But I remember all those buildings. There’s not too many buildings I don’t remember.

RD: Yeah, it’s great. A lot of these photos you have, the [inaudible] –

BH: I have them all.

RD: Oh, they’re all yours?

BH: I have them all.

RD: Oh, wow.

BH: I'd like to do another book. I don't know why, but I would like to do another book, but I would like to do it by postcard. Cape May did a Cape May book. And they did a postcard book. It was called *Revisiting Cape May by Postcard*. Well, I would like to do *Revisiting Fortescue by Postcard* because I have about six hundred. This book here, this book here, this lady here, now this is where Fortescue is. This little dot, that'd be where Fortescue is. And all these little white dots here, that's how many books she's published in these towns. Every book looks alike. You've probably seen them.

RD: Yeah, I've seen them. Yeah.

BH: They're all 128 pages. You can only have fifty words under every picture.

RD: Oh, is that what it is?

BH: She requires two hundred images, which is pictures. I left a lot of information on the table. I left a lot of good pictures I would love to have had in here. But they had to be original, and they couldn't be copies. I don't care how good your copier machine was. I tried to sneak one in, and she sent it back to me.

I think this is adorable. I think that's adorable, them women there. They were all waitresses down here. That's how they dressed then. But you can only – like I say, fifty words. You have to have nine chapters. I left a lot of good pictures that she wouldn't put in there. When you're done, you have to have no more than ten thousand words in the whole book. You got to have nine chapters. You got to have two hundred images, no more, no less. The only part I didn't like about her book is open space like this, where I could have put a whole lot more about things. But that's how she – she was a professional, and I went about what she said. She always said that, if you write more than fifty words, it gets boring. She was the professional. I wasn't. This building's still in Fortescue, except this is missing here.

RD: The awning?

BH: But the building is still here. You send her five pictures that you want on the front cover and tell her – well, and I could tell her what one I wanted on there, but she still picks hers. She said, "If it's a good one, I'll let you do it. But if it ain't, I'll pick the picture." She's very, very hard to work with. In fact, she turned me down. It broke my heart. I just called her, wrote to

her, told her I'd like to do a book. Then I had to give her a summary on what the book was going to be about, send a handful of pictures, and do this and do that. She writes back and tells me she thinks it's going to be a good story and this and – then she calls me back later. I am so excited. I was telling my friends I was going to do this book. Then she calls me back later and tells me – she says, “When we had our meeting, we decided that we shouldn't do the book.” I said –

RD: Oh, no.

BH: – “What?” I said, “What do you mean? Why?” I said, “When you told me it was going to be” – she said, “Well, we went through the Census Bureau, and you only have so many people and this and that, and it doesn't warrant us doing a book.” I said, “Now, wait a minute. There's five towns in Downe Township.” She says, “Honey, we know how many towns and how many people live in all those towns.” She said, “We did our homework.” And I said, “But those people don't mean anything to Fortescue. It's Philadelphia and Camden and Vineland.: And I said, it's all those people that come to Fortescue. I said, “We swell up from four hundred people to five thousand people in the summer. They're the people who have the summer homes here. They're the people that want the book. And they're the this. It ain't the little towns in our township.” She said, “Well, we're going to have another meeting, but don't get your hopes up.” Well, I sat down and cried for hours and hours. Finally, I called another guy who wrote a Bridgeton one. And I said, “Bill,” and I told him. He said, “You just tell her you want to write that book. She gave me the same runaround too, but you got to stay with her and fight with her.” He said, “If you want, I'll call her.” I said, “If you would.” Well, he didn't – he said, “If she calls you back and tells you that they don't want to do the book, you write them a letter and tell them what this book means to you.” Anyhow, she called me back about three or four weeks later. Then she says, “I got your letter. I want to say one thing to you. Are you prepared to pay five thousand dollars for the first set of books?” I said, “Yes.” “Are you prepared to do this?” I said, “Yes.” Thought to myself, “You dumbass, you're not prepared. You don't have that kind of money.” [laughter] But I was going, “Yes, yes, yes, yes.” And she said, “We're going to take you on.” What a relief. Then I thought, “Now, what do I do? What do I sell? What do I do?” I went out in the garage and told my husband because he went out every day in his wheelchair. It was a little Rascal. I said, “Bunky, she's going to do the book, but this is the stipulations.” Bunky said, “If you have to take a loan, you're going to do it.” My neighbor says, “No, you won't. You need five thousand? I'll give it to you because I know that book's going to sell.” Well, when she got the book all done, when I sent her the whole book and the book was done, she called me. She says, “Your book is ready.” When she called me, she says, “Are you going to have all this information in?” Because she gives you a schematic. You have to have a big picture here, a little picture here, a chapter here. Then the proofreader calls, and she says, “You missed a letter in something. This address I can't find,” which I had to tell her where the address was and this and that. She said, “Well, I'm going to call you on a Tuesday, and I will talk to you

probably three hours, so be prepared.” So, when they got the book done, the lady calls me. Then she says, “This book has to be – all your information has to be in by March the 1<sup>st</sup> [when] we start publication. If it’s not in by March the 1<sup>st</sup>, you get fined a thousand dollars every single, solitary day because you’re going to have to sign the contract.” I got my girlfriend here – because I don’t have a computer. This was all done by hand. Anyhow, she helped me with it. We got it all in on time. The lady calls me. Says, “We got your book done.” She says, “I’m going to tell you right now, that book is sweet.”

RD: Oh, nice.

BH: She said that it is nice. So, here they come. I had two or three book signings. And every time, people were there for hours. It was wonderful.

RD: Oh, that’s great.

BH: It was really, really nice.

RD: And your husband was still alive at this point?

BH: Yeah, he was. Yeah, he was. He was very happy with it.

RD: Yeah, so he saw that?

BH: He was very happy with it.

RD: Did you have to scan all the photos, or did you give them to somebody to scan?

BH: I gave them all to her, and she sent them back. She said, “I’ve never lost anybody’s pictures.”

RD: Oh, that’s great, yeah, because that takes so much.

BH: She says, “I’ve never” – yeah. I said, “Some of these pictures are precious to me.” She says, “Honey, I’ve never lost a picture.” Anyhow, I wanted to – one I really wanted in there, and I snuck it in the pile. She sent it right back – “This has been scanned.” And my son has a great scanner. He does it for a lot of people. I thought, “He’s got a good scanner. This will scan nice.” But no, she didn’t want it. Anyhow, I’d like to do another one. I’m a postcard collector. I got about seven hundred, except I might have two of one, one of one, maybe eight of another one, because every time I see one if it’s not real high, I’ll buy it because it’s a good – if somebody else has three of something, and I don’t have that, and they want one of mine, then we

can trade-off. So I buy them for trade-off. So this winter, I have to sit down at my dining room table and just place them, see if I got two hundred different ones, so. I would love to do another one.

RD: And you'd go through the same company to do the postcard?

BH: Yeah, I'd go with her again because I know what I'm in for. I know what I'm in for. And I do like her. She's very tough. She's very tough. I can't use no Is. I can't say "I" and "me" – no first-person anything. There was a lot there that I would like to have done and couldn't do, but her books sell. They're in Borders.

RD: Oh, yeah. You see them.

BH: They're all over. My little granddaughter, her and her sister – her sister is a senior in high school this year – they'll go to Borders and those places because they love books. They love to read.

RD: Oh, that's nice.

BH: And they'll say that's my grandmom.

RD: Look. [laughter]

BH: That's my grandmom. [laughter] But it's been fun. It's been fun.

RD: Oh, that's great.

BH: And this guy here, who built half of the – (Pugh?) – that built half of the houses in Fortescue, I went to school with his daughter.

RD: And what's his name?

BH: His last name was (Pugh?). I can't think of his first name. But anyhow, his daughter – in fact, we have a class reunion, fifty-five years out of high school, next week. She'll be there. That was his daughter. He had her late in life.

RD: And that's the second man on the left on the cover of the book?

BH: Yeah. .

RD: Were most of the houses built during a certain time period then, or, I guess, were they all different –?

BH: Well, when they were living in the houseboats, and they all decided to stay in Fortescue – they were living in a houseboat – they would pull their houseboats up along the shore and live in them until their house got done. So this guy built half a dozen of the houses. He was a builder, so he built half a dozen of the houses down here.

RD: I guess, after the 1950 storm, where things had to be rebuilt –

BH: Well, these were built in 1925. Most of his building was all done in the '20s. It's all done in the 20s.

RD: Right. Wasn't there a fire, too, I read?

BH: Yeah. We had a bad fire down here. It took half of the town down. I think we lost about forty-five buildings. Yeah, wind was about seventy mile an hour. I was living out here at the time.

RD: And what year was that again?

BH: Pardon me?

RD: What year was that?

BH: I don't know what year that was.

RD: I think you say in the book somewhere.

BH: Yeah. I forget what date that was. But my husband was fire chief then. And it looked like somebody dropped a bomb.

RD: I bet. That's 1950.

BH: Yeah. There was a barge out on the water. This guy here drowned out there. He was duck hunting. Every Thanksgiving, after Thanksgiving dinner, he went out to the cabin and stayed the weekend. Well, he went right after Thanksgiving, and he fell off – we don't know whether – because he was in his eighties, we don't know whether he fell off of his boat because he was – he had groceries in the boat, putting them in the cabin. Some was on the dock. Some was still in the boat. And he was gone, so he could have had a heart attack. He could have slipped.

Anything could have happened to him, but he was never seen again. Nobody could even find his body.

RD: Really? Wow.

BH: Yes.

RD: That was Ellis Walker.

BH: Mr. Walker.

RD: Mr. Walker. This picture's 1935. Wow. Let's see. Oh, is this the fire with – you were saying about the barge?

BH: Yeah.

RD: '63.

BH: That is the barge there.

RD: And so what happened with the barge?

BH: Well, he wanted to burn it because it was no good to him.

RD: Oh, I see.

BH: So he poured a little gasoline on it and [inaudible] just let it burn slow, and it would just – and it caught on. The wind got real strong, and it started really, really blowing embers around, and it caught all the houses on fire.

RD: Wow. And then, 2007, another fire you have here – December 2007. The winds were at gale force. Oh, I see, but due to modern fire equipment and firemen's extensive training, only two cottages were lost.

BH: Oh, yeah, that was the one down in –

RD: Was that this picture?

BH: Yeah. That was on that end of the beach. We had another bad one. But we only lost two homes then and stopped it on both sides, where this one here, where there was about, oh, God, at

least forty-five building – not all houses but buildings and houses went down. Here's some of the floods.

RD: Oh, I see. 1980.

BH: That's Gandy's Beach, so see, that's not all new. That ain't all old stuff. That's – we've had all that before.

RD: Oh, sure. 1980. A lot of pictures – 1980 and then 1950. Lots of pictures. 1950 flood. Wow. That's great. Well, good. Well, thank you for all your time.

BH: Oh, you're welcome.

RD: We'll probably wrap things up because it's almost your bedtime, and I should get going, I guess.

BH: Well, we'll survive down here. It'll never be the same, but you can't make a living anymore with the government's hands tying your hands behind you. You can survive, but that's it. You can pay your utilities and barely pay your taxes, because taxes are so high down here now because all the ratables are gone, so now you got to pick up –

RD: Pick up, yeah.

BH: – everybody's got to pick it up and pay their – pay [inaudible] the ratables are gone. We're getting no help whatsoever. Whatsoever. The government says – I'm ready for rebellion.

RD: Yeah. Sound like –

BH: Yeah. Get all your boats and get all your [inaudible] behind your truck and go to Washington.

RD: So it's mainly federal? Well, state too – all levels of government, I guess – or not so much local?

BH: No, it's just Fish and Game. I don't understand, DEP [Department of Environmental Protection] –

RD: Federal? Yeah.



BH: Yeah. All federal stuff. All federal stuff, and yeah. This creek is a state-owned marina. That's not private. That's all state-owned.

RD: Oh, really? Wow.

BH: And you have to send them so much money at the end of the season. But how can you make the money if they tell you you can't keep the fish? That's all state-owned.

RD: Wow. So, I guess local officials must feel like they're banging their head against the wall, too, half the time.

BH: Yeah, they are. Yeah, they are.

RD: They probably try to do things to help bring revenue or help their community.

BH: Every little thing you do, they got their hands in down here. Every little thing.

RD: That's incredible, considering all that goes and so forth. It seems like you wouldn't even have the time to –

BH: Yeah. This family now, my family, is fifth-generation boat captains and boat owners and something to do with boating. But my grandchildren can't stay here. There won't be another generation. I could give them the business, but then what am I giving them? What am I giving them? Because I think my children – and my older son is fifty-four, and I don't think he could live here the rest of his life and make a living. And yet, it was a great living for me. But my kids just – and I think, when I turn it over to them, which is going to be right soon, I don't know what they'll do. They can sell it, tear it apart, and do what they want. I don't really care because they just – they got nice homes. They all have beautiful, nice homes. But when a boat should be gone seven days a week, and then my boat used to go seven days a week in the morning, and then Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, an afternoon trip from 1:00 to 8:00 – it's all empty down here. There's not enough traffic in that parking lot to keep the grass dead. When you start seeing grass all green in the parking lot – there's not enough cars in that parking lot to keep the grass down. No afternoon boating at all.

RD: None? Wow.

BH: None at all.

RD: Seven days a week in the morning or not at all?

BH: They'd go seven days a week in the morning. But now, there is so few people coming that we don't go Monday mornings and we don't go Tuesday mornings. We go Wednesday morning with a nice group because they all get together and decide – most of them are retired who come down, anyway – if they all come together, they know there's enough to go because if you don't get eight to ten people, you can't go because you can't pay your mate, your fuel bill, and your captain. And then Friday is a good day. Saturday and Sunday's usually a good day. But if it's not – if the *Bonanza* only has three, we only have four or five, and another boat down there called *Salt Talk* has four or five, then we all put them on the *Bonanza*. The next time there's not enough for all of them to go, they'll put them on my boat. They'll gang them up. So now, we're help – it's my turn to get the gang today. It's their turn to get the gang the next day.

RD: Oh, that's nice. Yeah.

BH: But if you can get twelve to fifteen, you're lucky. But we used to – our boat holds forty. We used to take forty and have to give forty away to somebody else. But now, you're lucky if you get a handful of people.

RD: And how many boats were there in the '70s, say?

BH: Well, we had – every dock, there had to be –

RD: Maybe you already said that.

BH: – there had to be maybe twenty, twenty –I call them – head boats, which people just come down and go on. Now, we got four and can't fill four.

RD: And you own two?

BH: *Miss Fortescue*. I just own the one.

RD: Oh, one? Okay. So, down to four boats.

BH: But now we don't have enough to fill four boats.

RD: And that's why you trade off with the other boats?

BH: Right. Yeah. Rather than send the people home, you put them all on one boat. Because of the cost of gas and the cost of the mate and the cost of the captain, you're making more money leaving the boat sitting in the dock. And that's crazy.

RD: Yeah. That is. So, you maybe only go out a couple days a week, then?

BH: Yeah. We probably go – out of seven days, we probably go four. We're lucky if we can get seven, but we can't. We got on our missfortescue.com that we close Monday and Tuesday, so if we have an office group that wants to charter the boat and take a gang out, then we tell them either go in the afternoon after 1:00 or go Monday or Tuesday because that boat's open, and which is – but they're not doing that. It used to be the office – the boss would pay, would have a day [and], take the whole office out fishing. And now the office don't want to go.

RD: I don't hear that anymore.

BH: They don't want to go. And I would make subs, forty, fifty subs a day for that boat, but don't do that anymore.

RD: So, unless you have a charter, you're really not filling the boat?

BH: No.

RD: No, (inaudible) get ten people, that's good.

BH: Right. Yeah. It's tough. It's really tough. It's a good, clean day for people, good clean day out in the bay, fresh air, having fun catching fish. But when you know there's going to be a game warden on the dock when you come in.

RD: Oh, yeah. Well, even with sailing on the *Meerwald*, there's some – because the *Meerwald* goes all around the state between April and October. There are some ports, she does a lot better being able to fill the boat and so forth. And then there's other times where maybe the weather's not quite so nice, but it's not bad that the captain would say you can't go. It's just not pleasant.

BH: It's not fun. It's not pleasant. No. You don't want a bunch of sick people.

RD: Or who wants to go sailing when it's a little drizzly or whatever, so there's good days and bad days. The same with schools, too. It seems like there used to be a lot more classes that would go out on their field trip. But with cutbacks in field trips and then – you were talking about the government – the Coast Guard, as you know, changed the weight limit. So, where the *Meerwald* could, at one time, accommodate – I think it was, say, two classes of kids. Well, now, because of the weight changes, even though they're all little fourth graders –

BH: Yeah. [inaudible] fourth graders. [laughter]

RD: Well, [inaudible] some big ones. I think the total headcount is forty-one. Don't quote me on that. But if you have bigger classes and you need chaperones, you can't accommodate two classes anymore.

BH: No.

RD: So then, of course, it gets harder then for the school to be able to pay because now they can't take two classes, now they can only take one, and on and on it goes. But it's some of the same issues then with regulations and –

BH: So unfair.

RD: – because I would think –

BH: Well, I guess everybody – you need rules. You need rules and regulations. But you need a little bit of normality to it. It just don't make sense, some of these things they do. It don't make sense. Don't make a bit of sense. Like in a restaurant, they want a sink to wash dishes, they want a sink to rinse them, and they want a sink to – got to have three sinks in your kitchen. Now, I'm grandfathered in with three sinks in my kitchen.

RD: You have to have five sinks [inaudible].

BH: Now, if you build, you need five or six. Now, you need one for lettuce.

RD: Because you need to wash your hands.

BH: You need one just for the cook just to wash her hands under. Nobody else is allowed to do that. I jumped down the throat the other day – well, when I opened, the Board of Health – I said, “Now, look, I wash dishes all day long in this place. My hands are in red, hot, soapy, bleachy water. Now, you tell me that's not as good as when I stick my hand under the hot water.” She says, well, you're out of the norm. She said, “That's because most cooks don't wash dishes.” I said, “Well, I wash dishes all day long.” [laughter] Another thing is she told me, “Throw away your tea towels.” I said, “What do you mean, throw away my tea towels? I just bought a whole stack of them.” “Well, now the government wants you to air-dry your dishes.” I said, “How many dishes do you think I have? Where am I going to put them at to air dry them?” We're not air-conditioned, either. I said, “On a hot day, with all that humidity, how do I dry them?” She said, “Yeah, you're allowed to use a hair dryer.” Now, you tell me that hair and crap flying out of that hair –

RD: Moving around [inaudible].

BH: I said, “Well, I’m going to tell you right now, I’m going to use this tea towel right in front of you. I’ll go to court on that. Let’s see what that judge says when it comes to drying dishes. You want my hair dryer on, or do you want a tea towel?” But they told her now it’s going to be – everything has to be air dried, no tea towels. Well, how dumb is that?

RD: Well, at work, at the Bayshore Center, we have a little café. I know there’s five sinks, the three with the dishwashing and for your hands and then one for food prep. I don’t know. But then, because we don’t have a mechanical dishwasher, the dishes get washed, but they have to be air dried. So, they have all these drying racks stacked all over the place. And the dishes get – I mean, I’m surprised they don’t all come crashing down on you because they just get stacked. And I don’t know. To me, you wash a dish, dry it, put it away is cleaner than –

BH: Leaving it out in the air –

RD: – leaving it out. Yeah.

BH: – let all them flies and crap get on them.

RD: And people are in and out.

BH: Have you ever seen a glass that’s air-dried? I mean, it’s spotty, terrible. So that’s just something that – this year. I think, within a year two, that air drying’s going to be totally gone, so here’s all them dish racks. Stupid.

RD: Well, didn’t the Union Hall have the same problem, where they couldn’t be doing their dinners because of –? Because Dave Patterson volunteers.

BH: Yeah. David lives down here.

RD: And he lives here. He volunteers down at Bivalve. And I know he was working to redo their kitchen.

BH: Now, I came here because my water’s inspected in the store every other month, and my well here for my house takes care of my store. I had the water run under the road when I built that place. I can cook cakes and stuff in here and sell them. But you’re not allowed to, in your house anymore, make a cake and take it to a cake sale. Dumb.

RD: Isn’t it? Yeah.

BH: Dumb.

RD: Because who ever got sick from a church bake sale? [laughter]

BH: Not anybody I know of.

RD: I think more people get sick eating at restaurants than –

BH: I think so. I think so.

RD: – people's houses. [laughter]

BH: Where all the rules and regulations are.

RD: And they're not working.

BH: Right. Right. No, it's a little crazy. Then I got marked off – I have a milk machine. You pull a handle, and you get good, ice-cold milk. I didn't know the hose had to be cut at a forty-five-degree angle. I just took a pair of scissors and cut it when they hook it up, and I'm getting milk out of it. She says, "Well, it can't be cut across like that. It's got to be a forty-five-degree angle." I said, "What?" [laughter] I don't know. It just blows your mind.

RD: Do they come [at] the beginning of every season?

BH: They come at the beginning [of] every season, check things out, and they never go back without some kind of a little thing. I think they have to find something.

RD: Probably, have to find something. [laughter]

BH: But I sigh a sigh of relief when they leave. But same with rubber gloves – I hate them. Well, now, see, I had to go to school for a week a few years ago. They made you go, which was no big deal. I was closed, so I went. She says, "I hate rubber gloves, so don't wear them." She says, "People get a hole in them, and they still go ahead and wear them half the day, and they get food up and in there." Well, you're supposed to pull them off after every sandwich and this and that. What a mess that is. What a mess that is. I don't use them at all. I have the box sitting there. But I'd rather put my hands in red, hot, soapy bleach water because I like bleach water anyway. I know one of the inspectors, and he lived in Dividing Creek. When they put him on [as] the Board of Health inspector, he had no doubt – when he lived with his mother, and he ain't no better living with his wife – the most filthiest, crummiest house in the whole township. He became a board of health inspector. When his sister got married, she was real friendly with my

daughter. His mother calls my daughter, who was in the wedding, and a couple other girls, and said, “Would you help me come get the house ready for Diane’s wedding shower?” Cynthia said, “Mom, this ought to be good.” Well, her and the three other girls went. They could not clean one room enough to have company there. There was clothes behind every chair and every couch to the ceiling – dirty, clean, new, old.

RD: Mixed? Yeah.

BH: In the cupboard where the dishes was, there was dirty sinks and dirty clothes stacked into the cupboards. And she said, “We all had to go to the bathroom, went to the bathroom, and decided we didn’t have to go when we got in there.” [laughter]

RD: Yeah. Well, I can imagine. [laughter]

BH: She said they didn’t know what to do. They didn’t know where to start, where to begin, or where to put stuff. So, they went down the street and got boxes and totes and stuff, whatever, and just loaded the totes up with it – just put everything in there and locked them up, took them into another room, and stored them. And the mother says, “That’s probably where I’ll keep them forever.”

RD: Yeah, probably, once it’s away.

BH: Yeah. [laughter]

RD: It’s funny. Just a quick story about when you’re talking about gloves in the kitchen because I’ve worked in museums or archives probably for fifteen years now and [in] college and so forth. And the original thought was – you’ve probably seen on TV – I put white cotton gloves on when you touch old papers or handle things. Well, now the thought is you don’t wear gloves because you lose your tactile feeling and you don’t handle things – like if you try to turn a piece of paper and you have gloves on, it’s pretty clumsy. So, now, the rule is clean, dry hands are better than gloves.

BH: Than those gloves. How [inaudible].

RD: And then they were finding too that – and I’ve heard people from Winterthur and big museums say this – that, at one point, they were making gloves that had these grippers on them, like plastic, so if you were carrying a vase or something, you wear gloves with grippers, so you wouldn’t slip. Well, the plastic they were using was leaving pockmarks on this fine china. [laughter]

BH: Oh, my goodness.

RD: Because it was coming off and sticking to it, so now it's just –

BH: Oh, my goodness. Just have good, clean hands.

RD: Just have good, clean – and wash your hands and dry them. The only time they say you should wear gloves, if you don't know how to handle something right, is silver, if things are made out of metal.

BH: Oh, okay, because it won't tarnish. Yeah.

RD: Metals because of the oils or photographs, of course, you shouldn't – because especially [inaudible] processed with silver, but if you were to touch it underneath the paper side or hold it, then you wouldn't need gloves. But if you're – so it's just funny how – [laughter]

BH: [laughter] None of those rules last forever.

RD: No, I would think, in a restaurant, just clean hands are better than –

BH: The only thing I tell the girls that work for me – and, of course, my daughter was born into the business. She's one year younger than my son; she's fifty-three. I tell her [inaudible] – in fact, I have it all in the bathroom in there – please, please wash your hands. But I tell everybody. I tell the Board of Health – I said, “Look, my life has been with my family forever. My kids have always worked for me. I fed them three meals their entire life. Now, I have all my grandchildren that come in and eat. My grandchildren worked for me until they got their better jobs. Now, I've got great-grandchildren coming there, saying, ‘Mom-mom, I want a pretzel, Mom-mom I need chocolate milk, Mom-mom, can I have an egg?’” I said, “They mean more to me than life [itself], and I don't want to make them sick. Now, if I can feed my grandchildren, great-grandchildren, my husband, and my kids, and they're all healthy as horses, every one of them.” I said, “If I can feed them seven days a week, then I think that stranger that walks in the door is going to be okay.”

RD: Good point. Yeah.

BH: Going to be okay. And no. I don't want to hurt any – accidents happen. Accidents happen. But I don't want it to happen, and we work hard not to have that happen. I don't think I've ever had – I've had two people drop dead in there. [laughter] One guy stood up and said, “I don't feel good,” and then he was gone. Another guy – he didn't actually die. One guy said, “I don't feel good,” [inaudible] against the wall, then he looked at me and laughed, and he rattled



something. I said, “Dear God, he’s having a stroke” because he never spoke again, never found another word. I said, “He’s having a stroke.” So, I have seen some things in there in all those years, but I never killed anybody from food or made anybody sick.

RD: No.

BH: But when she comes in, she said, “You got some of the best” – what do you call it – “freezing and refrigeration anyplace I’ve been in.” And I said, “Well, you know what? That’s all you should check. If the freezer’s supposed to be freezing, everything should be froze, the refrigerator should be cold, and the water should be extremely hot. That’s the only thing that matters to me in this place.” They don’t even check the hot water. That makes me mad. She didn’t even check the hot water. Didn’t even see if it was hot enough. But now they want you to have a light in that freezer. They want you to have a light in that refrigerator. But they don’t check the thermometers and stuff. I said, “The things I think you should check you’re just walking away from.”

RD: [laughter] And the things they do check, you’re like –?

BH: Yeah, like the angle of the hose.

RD: Oh, gosh. [laughter]

BH: I know they hate my sugar bowls. I can understand that. But I hate them little packages. I don’t think they’re sweet. I don’t think there’s a full teaspoon full. When that wind blows and them fans are on, I’ll tell you what – Sweet ’N Low and all that stuff we have in a container, and that paper’s everywhere all the time. My regular sugar, white sugar, is in an antique sugar bowl. I got seven of them on the counters over there. And I can understand their – she says, “Oh, you still have your illegal sugar bowls.” I said, “Yeah, I’ll get rid of them next year.” But if you – and I can see why – because when they raise the lid on them, they stick their spoon in there, and they get in their iced tea, then they stir their iced tea, then they take a sip, they’re, “Oh, it’s not sweet enough,” back in the sugar they go. [laughter] Double-dipping. Double-dipping. I looked at my daughter and said, “Cindy, look, I can understand why they don’t like them sugar bowls.”

RD: Yeah, I can see that. Yeah. But all the packets and all the gloves –

BH: Oh, they’re a pain in the neck.

RD: – they’re such a waste of –

BH: It’s such a waste. Such a waste. [laughter] Yeah.

RD: Well, thank you for all your time and stories.

BH: Yeah, our little fishing villages, I'll tell you right now, they're hurting. They are hurting. They're hurting bad. They're hurting bad. But I always say – we're not broke. We're badly bent, but we're not broke yet. We're not broke.

RD: That's what I hope, in this exhibit, to not just talk about the past but talk about today, too, because what makes history interesting to people is when it's relevant to their own life.

BH: Right.

RD: And an exhibit's supposed to help get people thinking, so if they can start a conversation with somebody or – some of the things you told me with these rules and regulations and how much – yeah, I think, if we can –

BH: Just [inaudible].

RD: – mention that in the exhibit, and people who wouldn't know say, "Oh, you know, [inaudible]."

BH: The little towns are made – they couldn't wait for Friday night. They're coming down here. They're going to go fishing on a weekend. They're going to have someplace to have breakfast. They're going to this, they're going to that. There's no fun in a small town anymore. The fun's gone out of them. People's fun time is gone. It's gone. All these captains couldn't wait to get a big boat and want to be a captain. They said there's no fun in it anymore because you're nothing but a policeman on a boat, making sure people aren't doing things illegal. And the fun's gone out of these little towns. Now, the new group – the rules and regulations have been in force long enough now that the older fishermen have either died off or quit fishing, saying I can't handle this, I can't handle going out and getting one weakfish and turning right around and coming in because I have my limit. The younger group of guys growing up that decided they want to go fishing – don't bother them as much because they weren't used to the good times. So, the new generation, they just think it's a way of life.

RD: Because they don't know.

BH: They don't know.

RD: So that's why having a revolution would be tough, because they don't –

BH: Yeah. Well, what are we rebelling for? [laughter]

RD: Yeah, they don't know what they're –

BH: Right. Yeah. But I honestly think, years ago, when my husband and all of them fished, went out, and we'd get tubs of fish, I got all movie film – I got all kinds of movie film on this.

RD: Oh, yeah?

BH: Yeah. Little eight-millimeter camera. He would come in at night, and I'd be asleep, and him and his friends down here – he would get me out of bed. “Come on, get the camera rolling. We got a lot of fish to take pictures of.” I think they overdone it. I think they overdone it. And they hurt things. I think there should be rules, but my thing is with the weakfish. Come down and take home the first five weakfish you catch. A good fisherman, if it's that long, he's going to throw them back, anyway.

RD: Right. Too small.

BH: A good sportsman will. They're going to come down and try for five. They might not catch them. But they will come down and try for five. But they're not going to come all the way down for one. So, if the government would say, “Come down and keep the first five weakfish you catch,” they would be down here in droves.

RD: That would seem like a nice balance to not overfish but still –

BH: That's it. There still are rules and regulations, but it's not stupid, a stupid thing – one fish. Five fish is fine. Fish will feed a big family. A good sportsman will throw a fish away that they know it's too little. They throw it back.

RD: Now, were guys like your husband or other guys – were they ever concerned about overfishing or taking too much?

BH: No, they never thought about it.

RD: Because it just kept going?

BH: Yeah. Never thought about.

RD: There was never a season where they'd say, oh, there's less fish this year.

BH: A lot of these people, you'll see a lot of boats for sale, a lot of these people, on the weekend or during the – say, they got a week's vacation during the summer. He got a week's vacation; his wife's got a week's vacation. They would take that vacation together, go fishing every day, get pounds and pounds and pounds of fish, go to the food market, and sell them. They had enough to buy a new boat and pay for the new boat. That's what they used the money for. Now, they got a new boat and had a good time, so I would say a lot of this they asked for. But if the government would – if I just said, "Come down, you're allowed to catch five weakfish. First five you catch, you can keep," they might not do that. But it at least gives them incentive. They need incentive to get here. And so I don't know. I don't know. I think it's a little overkill, the rules.

RD: Do you think they would ever lift – the government would lift the rules?

BH: It's very, very hard to lift. I'll tell you, they put a moratorium on stripers. They got to be twenty-eight inches. That's a big striper. There is so many stripers in this creek that when I go out and sit under my gazebo, they're jumping. I mean jumping. You can go out there and catch fifteen or twenty with no problem. Every one of them is perfect, perfect pan fish stripers, make a good meal. You never catch a twenty-eight-pounder here in the creek. But they did that so that they could replenish. But now there's so many, they're eating everything that they can find that's smaller than them. They're eating baby crabs. They're eating baby fish. They're eating baby this, baby that. They're gorging. There'll be so many now, before long – they're so plentiful right now – they're going to get a sickness. They will have something happen. There'll be too many of them. And once they put a moratorium on them, it's hard for them to take that off. In fact, I've never seen one taken off on anything they've ever –

RD: Wow. Really? Even when the population comes back, or there's enough.

BH: And right now, the population is back thicker than it should be, so that's what's happening. They're eating all the little baitfish. And they're going to wind up – there'll be a blight. There'll be a sickness because there's too many of them. Then that will be bad. Right now, they should open up, open it up, and let you catch all you want to catch of them and enjoy them. But I don't know if it'll ever happen [in] my time. I used to love to go fishing. I had my own boat. [inaudible] was done, I was gone. Me and another girl went all the time by ourselves. In fact, my husband had bought me a nice twenty-foot Manatee for my anniversary present. And I'd go all the time. Enjoyed it. But I sold the boat. I said, "I can't handle these rules and regulations." Can't handle it. And it makes me sick when I hear – I see them people, they're catching them fish, and the government says, "Throw them all back and go to the food bank and get food. We're filling the food bank." Begging people to give you money to fill that food bank with food that's not fit to put in your body. I would love to get on television and tell them exactly how I looked at that situation, how bad that looked – four Black men. Like I say, first thing I would

say if I saw them in a line: “They’re too lazy to work. They’re getting free food.” That’s what the government wants. He wants a number on you. Wants a number on you. I just hope they got away with taking a whole lot home and giving them away. [laughter]

RD: I hope so. Yeah, hopefully. [laughter]

BH: I’ve gotten a few out of the creek. My brother-in-law – he’s a deer hunter, God love him. He lives in [inaudible]. And sometimes I’ll call – well, he won’t now because my husband’s gone. Actually, my brother-in-law’s one of my best buddies. He would call me [and say], “All right, I got deer meat. And I want a striper for supper. I’m coming down Sunday.” I said, “All right.” Well, now, here comes my brother-in-law Joe with deer meat. And Bunky, my husband would say, “All right, let’s go.” And he’d go out on the deck. Next thing you know, Bunky had two or three stripers. Illegal, but then Joey says, “I just don’t know how you do that.” And I said, “Well, I don’t know how you shoot them deer, either.” So we’d bring there in here or out – well, we had a fish cleaner out there on the deck at the time. We’d clean them stripers, and he’d take them home. And we’d have deer meat. And to me, that was fun. That was fun. That was fun. [laughter]

RD: Yeah, definitely. [laughter] All-righty. Well, I should probably head on out. Thanks for all your time and stories and –

BH: Oh, that’s OK. I hope it enlightened you on something.

RD: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Definitely.

BH: Yeah. But you’ve got captains on these boats, like that first boat there, the *Bonanza*, he’s a fourth-generation captain too.

RD: Same, yeah.

BH: And Joe Maffei on the *Duchess*, he’s fourth captain generation. But their kids want nothing – it’s going to end. It’s going to end.

RD: I guess, well, it makes sense so many generations in because, nowadays, you couldn’t afford to start up a business, I would think, right?

BH: No.

RD: Like if someone came in from the outside and said, oh, I want to have a business here in Fortescue. I don’t know how they can –

BH: But why?

RD: – do it or how they would –

BH: No. You can't pay the mortgage. You can't. Now, see, me, I own everything. That's one thing. I got high taxes. My taxes are real high. But I don't have a mortgage, never did have –

RD: No? I see. Right. And if you did –

BH: – because the weakfish were here when I did all this building. In fact, my older son Jimmy and the one that was just here – I bought two farms, one seventeen acres and one thirteen acres. I bought both of them a farm same year I built my house.

RD: Wow. And that was in the '70s?

BH: I sold each one of them their farm for one dollar.

RD: Oh, that's great.

BH: And they still have and keep them wonderful. But see, you could do things then.

RD: Yeah, when you can help your children like that, that's a nice gift.

BH: Yeah. But today, if you got a mortgage, you can – people cannot come down and buy. Say that I was selling my place. They cannot pay a thousand dollars a month rent or a thousand dollars a month mortgage and pay your utilities and pay your help. There's not enough to do it. Most of these people who have these things now have had them, and they're paid for. But you cannot buy a business today for the way the government has destroyed the business and pay mortgage or pay rent. There's nothing leftover to do it.

RD: Right. But if you don't have a mortgage or have to pay rent, then you can get by.

BH: Right.

RD: Even when things aren't so good.

BH: Yes. Now, at my age, I have to think about – which is going to be right soon – putting this business in somebody else's hands. It's got to be divided up among my four kids. That's probably going to be the hardest thing I've done in my life. I don't even know how to get

started. Of course, a lawyer will take care of that, but – because if anything happens right now, they couldn't afford the inheritance tax. They couldn't afford it.

RD: And how old are you, may I ask?

BH: Seventy-four.

RD: Seventy-four?

BH: [laughter] Seventy-four. So it's you're getting – now I'm getting touchy with this age, little health – I've never been sick. I've never missed a day in fifty years, never been late. I've taken a few hours, and I've gone to the doctor or gone here and gone there. My husband was in – he had his stroke, and he was in a wheelchair for fifteen years, and I still took care of him. Still took care of him.

RD: That's a long time.

BH: I'd come over and get him after we slowed up. [He] had a Rascal, he rode over there, in. And he'd have breakfast and have lunch, talked to all the people, because everybody'd come to him for information. He was a tough guy, but he was a good guy, a good man. And they all knew it. And he actually made this town what it is today, the Higbee family has. I'd get him back, and just before I closed up, I said, "All right, I'm going to take you home and put you in your chair." I take him and take him in the living room, put him in his chair, then go back over and close up and bring supper home to him. Never, ever, ever. I told him, I said, now, look, if you get sick enough, you have to go in the hospital, make sure it's wintertime. [laughter] All the kids had to have babies in the winter. Nobody could get married in the summer. It all worked out fine. Never had a problem. I don't get sick. I said, "I'm the one that's going to be walking across the floor and drop dead of a heart attack" –

RD: Ah, that's okay.

BH: – which would be fine.

RD: [laughter] That's probably the best way to go.

BH: But I haven't had a cold in ten years. I just don't. I just don't get –

RD: It's all that bleach – your hands. [laughter]

BH: I guess. I guess, disinfectant or whatever. But Fortescue's a good place to live. Never smoked, never drank. My husband never smoked a cigarette, never even touched alcohol. None of my kids smoke. They've just been good, hard-living, hardworking children.

RD: Yeah, it makes all the difference.

BH: I kept thinking, boy, these kids are going to have something when I die. But what are they going to have? They're just [inaudible] and sell their share. I don't care. That's up to them, do what they want. And I just – they all have nice, nice homes. My daughter even has a lovely home. But they're all good kids. Not a one of them's ever smoked a cigarette. But I can't say they don't drink, because they do do that, have their parties, and they're drinking. But it's just that I give them – I'm just going to give them heartaches and headaches. But like I say, my grandchildren, they're just going on to college and just going to go somewhere else because there won't be enough to leave them.

RD: Right. Yeah. That's so sad. Yeah, after four generations, yeah.

BH: Yeah.

RD: And to go that long, that'd be a hundred years or more.

BH: Yeah.

RD: Yeah. And that's through Depression, the wartime and –

BH: That's it. That's through all that. That's through all of that. Right.

RD: It's just incredible that now, all of a sudden, you just, for reasons you mentioned –

BH: Yeah. And taxes, like I say, they're going to go sky high – they're high now – to make up for all the – I mean, what is [Chris] Christie thinking or what is anybody – and I like Christie. I'd vote for him for President any day, but – and it's not really him that made those rules, I don't think. But what was he thinking when he said, no businesses, that we can't help any business? They should be the first ones they would help, the very first.

RD: Oh, sure. Yeah.

BH: The lady who owns the Charlesworth has a house across the street. Her house was totally ruined. They can't help her with that because it's her second home. And they can't help them with the business because it's a business.



RD: But yet she probably – but she'd stay in that house to run the business, I would –

BH: She stayed in that house to run the business because her other house is way over in Vineland. And so that's where she's at, crying every day because she'll never – she's eighty, eighty-one years old, so she said she'll never be able to get – they'll never give a mortgage. She'll never be able to pay it back. But she'll never be able to live in that place again. And I said to her, "Well, put it on the market." She says, "I'll burn it down first."

RD: Interesting.

BH: She doesn't want nobody to have it. It was a gorgeous place. Was you ever in it?

RD: Yeah. A few years back, my husband and I had lunch there. We had a great time. I always remember – I had salad, and it was cucumber dressing or something.

BH: Oh, she makes all her own dressing.

RD: Made her own dressing? Yeah.

BH: Yeah. My daughter worked for her. Well, my daughter said this year – her and Denise Pepper worked together there because my daughter would work for me all day and then go down there at 4:00 o'clock and work until 11:00, 12:00. They lost twenty-thousand dollars. That's what they made each year, just there, at that place. They lost between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars in extra money because the place wasn't open.

RD: Isn't that something?

BH: That's a lot to lose.

RD: That is. And probably the state, whoever's probably thinking, "Oh, it's just this little restaurant." But then, of course, if you have twenty-thousand less, then you're not spending that money or putting it back into the economy, and around and around and around it goes. Yeah, I guess we were just out driving around. And we're like, "Oh, let's go to Fortescue." And, of course, we look at the map, Dennisville to Fortescue as the crow flies isn't really that far.

BH: I like Dennisville. Yeah.

RD: Yeah. We like it there. Glad all the traffic is gone, though. [laughter]

BH: Yeah. You do. Yeah.

RD: 47 gets a little hairy, but it's only a couple months.

BH: Yeah. When the shoobies go home or the sundowners.

RD: The sundowners. But yeah, it's not so – the rest of the time, it's nice.

BH: Yeah. We're always ready for them to go home down here, too. Everybody down here has got a golf cart, so at night, when – it's cool tonight. I haven't even seen one. But the weekends, there's about fifty of us down here have them, so we all line up down on the beachfront and watch the sun go down and ride around.

RD: That makes sense. Sure.

BH: That's our little haven.

RD: Oh, neat. All-righty.

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

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