Nancy Solomon: You know what is on this tape. This is Nancy Solomon talking with Ed Warner.

Ed Warner: Ed Warner, Sr.

NS: Ed Warner, Sr. Today is July 24th, 1997.

EW: All right.

NS: This is tape one, side one.

EW: Okay.

NS: So, you were telling me what you were doing at Mecox Bay about.

EW: We had ordered a bunch of oysters, seed oysters 25-millimeter. We put them overboard in Mecox Bay, Tuesday. We put them in two different spots. So, I had the maintenance man pump one pole down in one spot. Circle the boat around and around and around and around to spread them. That was down east off Hayground Creek. Then they had to go in to the southwest of – towards Mecox Inlet, where we do open it and put another pole down and around and around and around. We put them quite fixed so that we can check them in their poles, so they will see how fast they're growing and so forth.

NS: Now, how did you decide where to put them?

EW: I have caught oysters in Mecox Bay. These two particular areas, they seem to do – have done better in the past. They were grown better and so forth.

NS: Now, what had happened in the past in Mecox Bay? What was it like fifty years ago?

EW: Well, there were a lot of oysters and a lot of soft clams. It was open, of course, for shellfishing. We caught bushels and bushels. A lot of people bought the oysters. I think we got maybe 4, $5 a bushel. They took them. They took them elsewhere and planted them, the oyster people.

NS: Who were the oyster people, which company?

EW: Blue Point, I think, bought some of them. I don't know who the other outfit was. Some local fellow bought them here and then they sold them again. They would make a dollar or two a bushel, just looking at them. It's like [laughter] a middleman. The guy who does the actual work [laughter] doesn't really make a whole lot money. So, then we have…

NS: When did you start working in the bay?

EW: When did I start?

NS: Yes.

EW: I started probably when I was about twelve, thirteen years old. I would go in the summertime and go with my dad and three uncles. They would haul seine in Peconic Bay and catch weakfish and porgies and so forth. The fishnet, like we called the inshore end, I would pick the weakfish out of them. They let me have those. We shipped them in butter tubs years ago. A butter tub was three packs of four quarts. I would make money enough during the summer months to sit down in late August and make a little order out to see a real buck and get different stuff that I needed for school. Then when I got into school – because I graduated when I was seventeen years old in June of 1943. I was seventeen. I was eighteen in October that same year. Uncle Sam says, "I want you." The war was going on. Boom, I was in the Navy. I went in. We trained in Sampson, New York. I came home for – I think, it was ten days leave right across country. They lost all my medical history. I had to take a complete physical over there after being all through this. [laughter] There were a few people that I knew going to bootcamp with. I had to make new friends. Eighteen years old, what did I know? I didn't know nothing. All my friends went out. They shipped out. When I finally got on my ship, I had to catch up with my ship, the USS *Birmingham*. I was assigned to cruise the CL-62. I caught up with it in Espiritu Santo. That was one of the islands in the Pacific. Shortly after that, we went to the island of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

NS: That is where the Japanese were taken over.

EW: The first three islands that we had decided to bombard. After that, I went all the way through the war. It was hit three times. They took a –

Female Speaker: Kamikaze.

EW: – Kamikaze aboard and exploded in sickbay. The hospital on the ship exploded on both sides. We lost 231 men in that. So, I got back stateside a couple of times. I luckily endured it. I didn't get wounded [inaudible]. Then after the war was over, September, we took Admiral (Dale?) aboard, from the *Santa Fe*. We went to Australia. We decommissioned all the NCO corps. We spent six months there. We come back to the States, in San Diego. I was second class boatsman. They offered me first class boatsman. I had to stay on the ship to go from San Diego to Seattle, Washington with my sister in the Long Island. Then I come back home, and I've been a bayman ever since.

NS: What kind of shellfishing have you done?

EW: I've done all of it. Hard clams, I've caught as many as thirty-two bushels of hard clams. Bushels, not camps. Plus, some we'd throw overboard, and steamers, soft clams. My grandfather used to call the hard clam we call today, he used to call them round clams. The steamers, he called long clams. He'd say, "What are you going to do today? Are you going round clamming or long clamming?" I'm sure a lot of people have never heard that yet.

NS: I have heard necks. I have heard piss clams

EW: Piss clams. Yeah. Right. Any oysters and I…

NS: Scallops?

EW: Scallops, of course.

FS: Mussels.

EW: Eelpouts and mussels. I never got involved with mussels because I thought it wasn't my cup of tea. I put a fish trap, pound trap, eel fishing once a year, eel trap, and fyke fishing. I do fyke fishing in the wintertime. Years ago, when I was a young boy, my dad used to get smelt in this thing. They had smelt nets that they put onto the ice and cut holes in the ice. They run another hole and push a pole through it and pull through. Put the smelt nets under the ice, about yea big. You're talking about something delicious. You had a fresh smell. Fabulous. Now, you see them today. They're soft. They're like a dish rag. [laughter] Back in the day, it was nice and firm. Smelt is a good eating fish, but it's fresh. Then they caught what they called tommy cod, and they stripped the roe. They come out from the hatchery in Cold Spring Harbor. They strip the roe out and just throw them in the hatchery.

NS: Where did they go from the hatchery? Where would they plant them?

EW: I don't know what they do with them after that. Never got involved with that. But I'd set nets here in Shinnecock Bay and also in Tiana and up the East Quogue. When my uncle died, I bought his share out. There was the Warrner brothers and the son. That will be three of us. We would set as many as eighteen traps in the full year, which is a lot of them a year. Then my dad died, and my uncle died. [inaudible] by myself. I had as many as nine and myself. Then the son got big enough, and he wanted to get involved in it. So, he's involved. I tell him that if he's going to get involved with this, he got to treat it just like a job. When that alarm clock goes off, you get up. There's rain. There's snow. You've got to get up and go. If you don't get a whole loaf of bread, you get a couple of slices to keep the wolf away from the door. Sometimes that wolf will get right a hold of the door, not you. I have had scratches on the door, not you, wanting to come in. [laughter] But we first got married. We got married in 1957. I lived down with pop, with my wife and myself. The first child was born, Eddie, and built this house here in 1960. Dad gave us the land. This land, this house is built over my grandfather's farmland. He had ten acres right here. He had ten acres of land. The brother is right next. My uncle is right next to that. My daughter, who was just in here, she's three houses down. My son, as you look over, you'll see his house. He's out in the…

FS: You have to get up.

EW: He's out in the middle where the farmland was. We're pretty much together. He's out right now mountain climbing.

NS: How many generations has your family been here?

EW: I'm the fifth generation. He is seventh on Long Island. Yes. They have a piece of

property down on the beach which dates back to the seventeen hundreds, in the Warner's name. We're just passing on to the two sons right now, right along Shinnecock Bay just outside the canal. Yeah, it's been a long, long time.

NS: Why do we not start with some of the different kinds of shellfish, and maybe with the clamming? Can you talk a little bit about the hard clamming and the long clamming?

EW: Well, hard clams, one of the biggest set of hard clams we have ever had here happened when I was away in the service in the early [19]40s, when they [inaudible] Tiana Bay. Now, we had a set in Moriches prior to that. That's when I thought [inaudible] Moriches Bay. That was when I was still in school.

NS: What about in Peconic Bay? What were some of the prime clam beds?

EW: Peconic Bay, it was mostly the creeks, like Red Creek Pond. Hubbard's Creek, I've done pretty well there. Reeves Bay was a very productive area. That's when we had the duck ponds, and the ducks would go in there. You scratched their long side. [laughter] Peconic River was very productive area. I mean, you have so many clams [inaudible].

NS: What would be like a good harvest for a day? How many bushels would you get?

EW: You take twelve, fifteen bushels right along every day, and up to twenty when it was peak, eighteen, twenty.

NS: Was this year-round that you would go clamming, or were there –

EW: Well, see…

NS: – particular times a year?

EW: -when I was a fisherman, we clammed in the summertime more so. Then the fall of the year, we put the fish traps in. The fish traps would come out around Thanksgiving and so forth. Take a little time to repair your nets and build some nets. Then after Christmas, we put the fykes in the water. Then in the spring of the year, which would be March, you'd get to [inaudible] your poles for the spring fishing. Then you fish until, well, we took about this year in June. Then you go clamming in the summer. Sometimes, if there's a lot of long clams or soft clams, you'd go with that. If there's a lot of scallops, you'd go scalloping. But some years, you have hardly any scallops at all. In other words, while you are here, you get tremendous.

NS: Had that been the case over the years until the last ten years? That there will be some years when you did not have many scallops?

EW: Yes. I've seen it before. Sometimes you'd go maybe a week or ten days. Then it would be all over. But now, I'm a trustee. You want me to get involved with this too?

NS: No. No, let us stick with the shell. Let us stick with the clamming.

EW: Well, where am I when we find clams? I mean, we put little baby clams though. We have rocks. We bought sea clams. We'll put them in the rocks in May and put the fine netting over, off bottom. You know what I'm talking about? Then actually put them overboard in November. We've done it with scallops too. But now, we buy the scallop from Steve Malinowski from Fishers Island We just sent, I think it was 150 big scallops over two weeks ago, that it was spawn out. Then we'll buy scallops off of him in November and put them back over all the town water.

NS: Now, what kinds of tools would you use when you go hard clamming?

EW: I'd like to rake out on the boat, mud rake, big rake. I've got some of the old fashioned – like banana rakes that's shaped like a banana. They call them Jersey rake. They were made in New Jersey. Now, they have the teeth the same all the way. The rake is like so.

NS: How big were they? How wide were the rakes teeth?

EW: I've got some of them. We can take a ride down when we get through here.

NS: Yes. That would be great.

EW: I could show you some of the stuff I've got in my…

FS: The teeth.

NS: That would be great.

EW: – barn.

FS: The teeth, thirty-six teeth.

EW: I've got some of them thirty-eight teeth.

S: Thirty-eight teeth.

EW: All different sizes. Then we have scratch rakes that we get overboard with the belt. Then we have tong. Also, today, they do what they call longlining that they blow the clams out. They put an anchor overboard. They start a longline. They start to have a bridle on their boat. They start the motor up, and they go like so. The motor goes like so. They make like a half a circle. Then they'll get overboard. They'll get back. They'll pick clams up with a peekaboo or a look box. You know that I'm talking about?

NS: Yes.

EW: Scoop nets and pick clams up that way.

NS: Does anybody do it that way anymore?

EW: We allow it here in Shinnecock, certain areas. It seems like the area that they do it, it lightens the sand up. They get rid of the predators because those predators stay just a little bit under –

NS: Like the starfish.

EW: – the sand. They seem to get rid of them more, and the clams reproduce more.

NS: How many baymen use that technique?

EW: I'd say, probably, now maybe six to seven, that's about it.

NS: What, about, say, twenty, thirty years ago, did more baymen use that then?

EW: No.

NS: It has only been a handful of…

EW: That's right.

NS: Who were some of the other baymen that used that technique?

EW: Well, my son, the youngest son, the one from the water district, and the other guy who just started to get into it lately, a fellow by the name of (Kenny Mates?).

NS: Yes, I know Ken.

EW: You know Kenny?

NS: Yes.

EW: Kenny Mates and (George Skellenger?). You know George?

NS: I know his name. What about when you were…

EW: Jay [inaudible].

NS: So, this is about what time period where all of you guys doing it?

EW: That they do this? They do this now.

NS: What about some of the baymen that are not around anymore that used this technique? What were some of their names?

EW: Some of their names?

NS: Yes.

EW: Bill (Kazawski?)[inaudible] or (BK?), they called him. He was a good clammer.

FS: Dan Warner.

EW: (Dan Warner?), (Dale Lane?), Squires, Dan Squires, Raymond Jackson. He went clamming. He was a blacksmith also.

NS: Did he make tools for the baymen?

EW: Yes, he did.

NS: Where did he live?

EW: He lives on Canoe Place. He's pushing ninety years old. He's eighty-something, eighty-seven or eighty. He got emphysema very bad. He can't breathe. He made a whole scratch rake.

FS: I be all of them.

EW: All of Anderson, he was a blacksmith. He made the first scratch rake for my dad. We had a garden rake that he formed and made a basket, like the head of the scratch rake. That was the first real scratch rake that had been around. It was one that he made for my dad back in – oh, God. Pop was born in the 1890s, so that would be in the early 1900s.

NS: Wow. Did most of the baymen get their rakes and their tools from him?

EW: They did at the time because he was the only one. Like I said, the Jersey rakes and mud rake would come from New Jersey. He'd repair them. He'd make the teeth long, and so forth.

NS: Did he have a forge?

EW: Yes.

NS: Who made them after?

EW: Raymond Jackson.

NS: So, he was also a
blacksmith.

EW: He went down. He worked with him a little while. Then, pretty soon, Anderson married one of my relation, great aunt or something. He went in business. He had the patent. Anderson had the patent and all of it. Warner and Anderson, his name was Anderson, and he married a Warner. The Warner-Anderson Hall up there by the Methodist church, that was donated, that

land.

NS: That is their family.

EW: There are two roads up there. There's a Warner Road, and there's an Anderson Road. Over at the beach, there's Warner Island. That was sold to the town for $10 (by Clinton Warner?).

NS: Now, clams, were they pretty plentiful? I am thinking from World War II up until about ten years ago.

EW: Clams weren't very plentiful in Shinnecock Bay until the hurricane of [19]38. Shinnecock Bay was brackish water also because we had [inaudible]. When the hurricane came in 1938, September 20, 1938, the inlet broke through. Shortly after, we have a set of clams. They set mainly around over by the inlet in one of the remote holes over there.

NS: What about in the Peconic Estuary ? Have they always been like that?

EW: Like I was telling you, Red Creek, Red Cedar Pond, and then you have –

FS: Birch Creek.

EW: – Cold Spring. Then you have West Neck or Sebonac, they call it, and Scallop Pond. Then you go around Cow Neck Point. You have North Sea Harbor, Wooley Pond. Then you get around. Then you've got Noyac Creek and Mill Creek and Sagg Harbor Cove. But all this –

NS: Had been pretty consistent.

EW: All of these places down Sagg Harbor Cove would [inaudible] more salinity down there. I think…

NS: So, it has always been a lot better.

EW: They have been massive. There were clams – hard clams in Peconic when there were none here. Once in a while, occasional big one here.

NS: I am focusing on the Peconic Bay. That is why I keep steering it back.

EW: Well, that's why they were. I remember my grandfather. He talked about rolling out [inaudible] way over off Jamesport. They grow over there. There was a mudhole over there. They'd catch maybe two to three bushels. They'd be all big clams.

NS: Were they cherrystones or chowders?

EW: Chowders.

FS: Chowders.

NS: They were chowders.

EW: Huge.

NS: About how big?

EW: Like so. Big.

NS: A couple of inches.

EW: Yes. I guess so, like that. The clam inside, the older the clam gets, the bluer it gets inside. You knew that?

NS: Yes.

EW: Well, I didn't tell you. [laughter] You learn from that. [laughter] There were scallops in Peconic Bay, a lot earlier than they were in these bays here. Scallop is something that the salinity has got to be about right too.

NS: What were some of the techniques for scalloping? What tools did you use?

EW: What you'd use are scallop dredges.

FS: The sailboat.

EW: Well, they used the sloops [inaudible].

NS: What were the sailboats? I have seen pictures of it, but I…

EW: They were sloops. They would tow on one side. Because they wouldn't allow any power, they had to use the sail. The sloop would go along nice and slow. I don't have any dredging [inaudible]. But they get loaded. That would go into Greenport, mostly, because they had all this shucking houses in Greenport. They did have some up in Riverhead too, I believe.

NS: How big was this boat?

EW: They're very wide. Sloop was very wide. Not very long, but very wide.

NS: About how many feet, if you had to guess?

EW: They're, I'd say probably 36, 38 feet, more like a poking seed . They were built like so. But they'd come back and they'd carry the [inaudible] way back to the [inaudible]. So, in other words, if you put weight on, the floatility would still be there. They wouldn't go down.

NS: So, they were that wide, 36 feet wide?

EW: No.

FS: Long.

EW: Thirty-six feet long.

NS: Thirty-six feet long, and about how many feet wide?

EW: Probably 14 feet wide.

NS: Okay.

EW: Are you better?

NS: Yes, much better. [laughter] You heard him say that. It is on the tape recorder. You said 36 feet wide. I was like, wait a minute. [laughter]

EW: I did so?

NS: Yes.

FS: I thought he said 36 feet long.

NS: No. How many men would work on a sloop?

EW: Well, I think the limit was only ten bushels to a man and twenty bushels to a boat.

FS: How many men though, she said?

EW: Well, that would be two men, or maybe they'd have a third. But it was only allowed twenty bushel to a boat. I'm pretty sure of that. That's been the state law for years.

NS: Did anybody in your family have a sloop?

EW: No. We had a Cape Cod Cat boat buy they had [inaudible].

NS: What does that look like? I have not seen one.

EW: Well, a sloop is almost like this table here. In other words, flat like the table. They're low to the water. In other words, low to the water so that they wouldn't have to pull dredges way up high. They could haul them right over and jump around the deck and cull them out. But the Cat boat, that would be about yea high. They were also sailing boats too. The Cat boat had like a barn door rudder back there.

NS: How long were the sailboats used?

EW: Well, the sloop is what I'm talking about, about thirty…

NS: No. Until what time did they switch over to motorboats?

FS: It wasn't your time, Ed.

EW: It was in my time. Yes.

NS: You want to take…

EW: Because they wouldn't allow any power to scallops, you know?

NS: Yes, I know. Then at some point, they did. I am trying to figure out when that was.

FS: When did the [inaudible]?

EW: No, it wasn't then.

NS: Were they still using sailboats before you went into the service?

EW: That was about almost on the tail end of it, I think.

NS: That is my guess.

EW: I'd say probably in the mid-[19]40s, I would think. Sloop, that's it. They didn't call them that. They called them sloops.

NS: Sloop. How many sloops did your father have or your grandfather have?

EW: They didn't have them. The sloops went out of the North Shore, New Suffolk. New Suffolk was a great – if you found somebody over there, they'd tell you more about the sloop than you've got with some old guy.

NS: Well, Doug told me a little bit about it.

EW: Well, they had the scallop shucked in New Suffolk, in Greenport.

NS: So, around here, if you went scalloping, what did you use?

EW: Years ago, I remember that you couldn't use any power. You have to use a long line. In other words, you go up and put your anchor out and go back. You throw your dredges, and you'd have to pull that boat ahead by hand.

NS: What kind of boat would you use?

EW: I'd use a rowboat, just a small rowboat. That was in the [19]40s too, then. Power wasn't permissible then.

NS: How many full-time baymen would go scalloping?

EW: Well, there were a lot of full-time baymen years ago, in the clams. Then when they went from clamming because there were a lot of scallops, they'd say, "Well, I will do a little change." You'd go from hard clamming to the soft clamming to –

NS: To scalloping.

EW: – to scalloping, where it's a little bit easier, but you never finish. You put them up on the bench. You've got to shuck them. When you get through, you've to take the shells to the dump. Then you've got to wash the shuck down. Then you've got to take them. You've got to go sell them. Then you take a turnaround. Tomorrow morning too, and you've got to…

NS: Do the same thing all over again.

EW: Over and over again. Years ago, we didn't have anybody to pack them up. We used to have to get them – we get two days. We take them over to [inaudible]. So, we'd have to go to…

NS: To Greenport.

EW: [inaudible]

NS: It was in [inaudible]. Wow.

EW: So, it was an almost never-ending job. But it was, like I say, a chain. Sometimes you didn't have any scallop. You'd have to tie yourself back to the bench and stayed right there until you almost fell down. You fall asleep and find those scallops and wake up. [laughter]

NS: Just from all the shucking and stuff.

EW: You get so tired.

FS: You get so tired standing the same place.

NS: Is that something that the family would also help with?

EW: Yes.

NS: Did you do that?

FS: I did occasionally but not right now. I'm not very fast. My daughter is.

EW: Her daughter is very good.

FS: She's, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom. [laughter]
EW: I've seen her, big scallop, shuck a gallon in an hour. It becomes nice scallop. Just beautiful.

NS: So, they used the longlining for the scalloping in this part of the bay, mostly?

EW: Not the scalloping . A longline is for the hard clams.

NS: For the hard clams. For the scalloping, you said that you would use…

EW: I'm talking about…

NS: You would pull with the boat.

EW: You would go way out, and put your line out, put the anchor out, and let your boat drop back with the wind, or whatever. Then you throw your dredges over. Then you go up, and you pull that.

NS: Did that have a particular name for the process of doing that?

EW: There was no name. It was just good…

FS: Hard work. [laughter]

EW: The harder you work, the more you caught. The faster you could pull those dredges, the more you catch.

NS: Now, for the soft clams, how did you get the soft clams?

EW: [inaudible], the motor and the rack. When we get down to show you the rake, I'll show you the soft clam racks we have.

NS: Did you ever dig them?

EW: The soft clam?

NS: Yes.

EW: Yes.

NS: What would you use to dig them?

EW: I used the outboard motor.

FS: Before the motor, Ed.

EW: If I were to eat it, I'd use a shovel. Put the shovel down, turn them over, then the neck would be out. You never dug any soft clam? Look at all the fun you've missed.

NS: Well, I've only seen it with the small hand rakes.

EW: Dung hook is what they call them, dung hooks.

NS: Dung hooks?

EW: That's what they called them, dung and hook. It has got about four – it's like a pitchfork, but it's bent.

NS: Right. I've done that. Because it's just, again, for dinner.

EW: They used those for [inaudible] in Maine too, the same thing.

NS: But the commercial baymen wouldn't use that for…

EW: No. Because it was always permissible to churn here, to blow that with a motor.

FS: But then she had to figure out when the motors came into being because, what did they do before the motors [inaudible]?

EW: I don't know. It was before my time. [laughter]

NS: Do you remember going with your father with [inaudible]?

EW: He had never done any soft clamming. If he got any, he'd just go and get a pail.

NS: Where would you find soft clams in Peconic Estuary?

EW: Where in Peconic?

NS: Yes.

EW: Hubbard Creek was a great area for soft clams. Are you familiar with Hubbard Creek?

NS: No, but I look at maps. [laughter]

EW: Well, there again, when it goes out, sometimes it goes dry. When you get dry, the fresh water runs out to the banks.

NS: So, when would you go? Would you go at high tide?

EW: You'd have to have so much water to churn, so your motor would work right properly.

You always have the motor on an angle, I guess, so, it will be blowing down. You have your motor pinched in like that. It blows down. It blows the trenches. It blows the clams. You blow a trench, and the clam goes…

NS: Leaders. Okay. Here we go. This is part two.

EW: In certain areas, you'd work at a high tide, and the tide is [inaudible]. In some areas, you'd have to wait. You get the tide right, then [inaudible]. It all depends which way the current is running. If the mud goes off, then you could see to pick them up, instead of just blowing strong. You take a pile of clams. You can throw your rake. Then you've got them.

NS: So, after you would blow them out, you would use a rake?

EW: A rake that didn't have teeth. It has like bent – I'll show you one of those when we get down too. They would have teeth like that. So, they wouldn't go into clam. Your rake would have teeth just like this. You go along like that. It wouldn't break the clam. They wouldn't dig in the bottom because they're on top. Then, of course, you've got a basket.

NS: Would you find them near the banks or in deeper water?

EW: Sometimes it was near the bank of the brackish water, the freshwater running out. They seem to like freshwater flavor, for some reason. They always like the head of the creeks and brackish water, like [inaudible] Pond. We've got a very small inlet. The water stays brackish in it most of the time. You get a set of soft clams every year.

NS: Now, with soft clams, was there a minimum size that you had to reach before you could harvest it?

EW: It used to be 2 inches. Now we dropped it back to an inch and a half because a lot of them, I've seen, get just an inch and a half each, and every one of them dies. Every one of them.

NS: When did that start to happen?

EW: It happened in (Core Canal?) first, I think, it was about – it had the whole length of the coast, [inaudible]. I'd say probably twenty-five, maybe thirty years ago.

NS: This also happened in Peconic's?

EW: Not so much.

NS: Not so much.

EW: In (Core Canal?) I've seen rows of them. I couldn't believe it. Then I heard, after, that happened in Maine because of some kind of disease or something.

NS: But it did not happen in the Peconic area.

EW: Not to my recollection. I don't remember it. But it can happen along the way though, because…

FS: They're tied.

EW: Let me find…

NS: Would the steamers get to be bigger sizes in the Peconics?

EW: In Hubbard Creek, sometimes it's huge.

NS: Yes, like a couple of inches.

EW: I, once, one morning, went up there. I made one cut. I run them over, bring all of them back, and [inaudible]. I picked up twenty bushels. They were all fryers like that. It looked like somebody took bags of corn, and dumped it when the [inaudible].

NS: When the mud turning after…

EW: [inaudible]. I've never seen a sight like it in my life. It's actually good. They do because they jumped on [inaudible]. I said, no I'll go back and then get a half a sandwich [inaudible]. I'm walking up, and I'm looking. [inaudible] When you blow them out, they look yellow like in banana [inaudible]. That's a rim. The rim on them, they have to fall off. In about 2 feet of water, it looks yellow. It looks like corn. Yes, pretty sight.

NS: Would you also sell the soft clams to…

EW: This went to Fulton Fish Market.

NS: How would it get there?

EW: A truck stops here, (Chet Shaefer?)

NS: What would he do?

EW: They pick them up. They charge so much freight. Years ago, (Reach?) Brothers used to take them. (Squeezy?) used to take them.

FS: They used to take them by railway.

EW: Years ago, pop used to – I remember him taking them up the railroad station. He'd take them up. I remember him saying that he got – what he got paid back, postage stamp. Didn't get no money for his fish, postage stamps in an envelope. Imagine. Things were pretty tough, weren't they?

NS: Yes.

EW: I never remember being hungry though. We always had something. My mother was a great cook. She'd make stews and stuff like that. I didn't deserve any of it. [laughter] Where did you grow up?

NS: I grew up in Westchester County. [laughter]

EW: Oh, you're a foreigner.

NS: Well, I lived in Mamaroneck, where they had a lot of lobster when I was growing up. I used to watch lobster. I remember I used to love being around the water.

EW: Nothing like it.

NS: I can never live any place that did not have an ocean coast of some kind.

EW: What else can I tell you?

NS: Well, I want to get back to some of the different – the oystering that you were talking about. Did you do much oystering in the Peconics. It sounds to me like it is more done by the companies.

EW: The only place I caught any oysters [inaudible] was in Mecox.

NS: Where in Mecox would you…

EW: There are several different areas in [inaudible] Creek, off on another highway, Rose Hill Road. That's the west of that. Then Mohawk Avenue and then they call on the west side. That's where some of the season's wall oysters I was telling you about.

FS: [inaudible]

EW: No. All along West Shore too. Mostly found on the sticky bottom, I would think. Sometimes [inaudible] more perfect oyster, single, they'd be – the shell would be straight. Sometimes on the bottom, they'd be a little bit crooked, like rabbit ears. They go in [inaudible]. Sometimes you see two or three sticking up. They call them rabbit ear oyster. You know a rabbit ear?

NS: Yes. I've seen pictures of them. I've never actually seen them.

EW: You look at these, they're called rabbit ears, stick up like that.

NS: Were they close to the banks? Were they deepwater?

EW: Well, the oysters lived in pretty deep water, probably 6, 7 feet of water.

NS: What kind of tools and boats would you use?

EW: We used the tongs and rakes because they didn't allow any power in there either. Only when we had transplant – when we had some transplants, they'd let us use the dredges, so we could move them. We had caught a lot of them and looked into different areas, like seasonal areas like we have. We put some in Scallop Pond. We put some in Cold Spring. One year we put them in Cold Spring, and everyone died. Why? I don't know.

NS: Do you know when that was?

EW: I beg your pardon?

NS: When was that?

EW: Oh, God.

NS: Rough guess.

EW: Ten, twelve, or fourteen years ago. But the ones that survived the best was Scallop Pond. There, again, you've got some places that run off and have some brackish water to it.

NS: Where is Scallop Pond?

EW: Scallop Pond is a lead that runs off of Sebonac and Bull Head Bay. There's a lead that runs off in the sea. [inaudible] and then they called Port of Missing Men. That's on Scallop Pond. The water is very deep in there. It's 18, 20 feet of water in it. They used to use that during the rum running days, they told me.

NS: [laughter] Did you see any evidence?

EW: Port of Missing Men, I think, they look like the same thing.

FS: Missing Men do. [laughter]

EW: [inaudible]

NS: How many baymen were really involved with shellfishing?

EW: Well, there was a lot after the war. Like I said, when we had the big sets of this, I'd say between Moriches and then Shinnecock Bay, probably 200 baymen.

NS: What about in Peconic Bay, like around Mecox and New York?

EW: There would be four, five in each creek. If somebody hit a good spot, they'd go and help him out. Move over, I'll help you. [laughter]

NS: Were these newcomers, a lot of them, or were they people in the family?

EW: No. Well, we had nothing. There was no industry out here. So, what are you going to do? There was no house that's being built. So, you had turn to the bay. Some of the [inaudible], they didn't have paperwork. Or they'd pick up a rake, and they'd go clamming. If they couldn't sell a wall, they have clam chowder or clam slunk or something.

NS: How many did nothing but fish and work on the bay? I am not talking about people that needed something…

EW: There were a lot. There were a lot. There weren't many people really. They were very few. Some of those same people, in the wintertime, like if the bay froze up and you got a lot of snow, they took [inaudible]. They went to the highway department. They got a job shoveling the snow, and so forth. I've seen it. I worked, myself, sometimes. If you've got to do things, you've got to do things. You've got to eat. It seems like, to survive, we've got to eat. [laughter]

FS: He likes to eat. I guess you know that.

EW: We all do.

NS: Now, when were the first signs that you knew that the bay was really changing? When did it start to seem, in hindsight, that things were going to start to change in the bay?

EW: Well, back in the [19]60s, I caught lots and lots of eels. The water turned into greenish color. My cousin, Ed, was fishing up in the Peconic Bay. At the same time, the water – every night, he'd catch loads of eels. I would say, ever since then, the eel population has been going downhill. Now, it's gotten to a point they're almost extinct. They really are. It's a shame.

NS: Do you recall any things that were happening at that time that may have been factors?

EW: Just the coloration of water, I don't know what caused it. I don't remember how severe the weather was or how hot it was or whatever. Not like right now, it would be – you take particular notice. Conscious of the brown tide, for example, of the rainfall, all this, the hot weather. Animal waste. Now everybody's brothers got a dog or three or four cats. Where they're going to go? They've got to go walk them. But when they walk them, and they do their duty, where do they go when they get rained on? Years ago, when they built the highway, they built it the cheapest way they could.

NS: That oil and tar.

EW: They fixed the roads towards the bays and ponds, and so forth. Now, it's cost us millions of dollars to try and correct it.

NS: Were there other things that were happening on the water that you started to notice?

EW: Well, at [inaudible] Bay, there used to be very good clam. Now, the bottom has changed to…

NS: Where is [inaudible] Bay?

EW: [inaudible]

NS: So, we are not talking about the Peconic.

EW: No.

NS: I am thinking about the Peconic. If you can think about the Peconic.

EW: They had very good clamming up there. Now, the bottom has changed to almost like a coral. It's gotten hard, like the coral you get down South. It's a formation of worm, [inaudible]. Whether that had something to do with the clams, or it killed the claims. It smothered them. There's some reason. Maybe the worms killed the clams. I don't know. Maybe the worms made the coral.

NS: Did you start seeing more pleasure boats on the water, in the [19]60s and [19]70s?

EW: Now, there's more boat of all kinds. You've got the damn jet skis. Oh, my God.

FS: In the [19]50s, at least there weren't too many pleasure boats around.

NS: When did you start to notice them, especially in the Peconic area?

FS: See, we lived more on the Shinnecock side. He knows more about Shinnecock than he knows Peconic. But then of course, they go through the canal…

NS: Well, even like crab by Mecox or North Sea.

EW: When you're talking Peconic now, there were more boats. There was more fishing, as far as – now the weakfishes used to go right through. There'd be more weakfish. There would be more boats coming out of New Suffolk, and the fish in Peconic. They went here. But now, there's so many people who just go out in the afternoon, on the weekend. They have boats because more money around that. Everybody needs [inaudible] in the boat.

NS: So, when did you start to notice that there were a lot more boats out on the water? If you had to pick a year, when did that really first begin?

FS: In the [19]60s.

EW: I'd say late [19]60s to [19]70s. Yes, I'd say in the [19]70s more.

FS: That's when we had the kids down the shore, the little kids down the shore, you'd see the

boats going by, pleasure boats going by. They'd go through the canal, and into Peconic too, a lot of them.

EW: Big time was the fourth of July weekend. You'd see boats steady streaming. Now, you've got the smaller boat. People can't afford the bigger boat. So, they will have a smaller boat go fast.

NS: Do you think that has affected the fishing and the shellfishing?

EW: I think so. I think it hurts it. There's more oil and stuff in the waterway. It's got to hurt. I would think so.

NS: What about the creeks? Have there been more boats in the creeks?

EW: Well, there's more of an anchor up at least, a lot more, excuse me, moorings and stuff there. But the boat activity, most of them in the creek, they get out. They go outside in Peconic Bay. [inaudible] When they go outside, [inaudible]. You've got, like I say, Red Creek Pond is loaded with boats. They've got to wait in line to try to get in the moor again. Cold Spring now is becoming better because the channel had been dredged. There's no place up here. So, they go somewhere down there. You talk about Bull Head or Sebonac. There's a boatyard in there. There's the town dock there. There are moorings. The channel is good. It's very close to the fishing grounds. North Sea, there are two boatyards there. You've got more boats.

NS: What about bulkheading? Has there been more bulkheading? When do people start to bulkhead?

EW: When we have severe erosion. The storms get worse. The worse the storms are, the higher the tides come. That's the inlet. You've got the inlet. You get bigger tides. You get the erosion. People have got to protect their property. So, they've got bulkhead. You've got that CTA, copper, crude, and all. They're all poison.

NS: When did you first start to notice bulkheading, especially around the Peconic shorelines?

EW: Well, I don't think Peconic. Peconic Bay itself has got very good bulkhead. Some of the creeks like Red Creek Pond, just a couple of places, bulkheading there is mostly going to Peconic Bay.

NS: So, that has been more on the Shinnecock and…

EW: Here. I know that because it's to the back of the inlet. Cold Spring has very few bulkhead. You've got all grass. You got the meadow [inaudible]. Down Heavy Creek, we don't allow any bulkheads in the zone there. A colleague suggested that years ago, as long as two or three places, otherwise, it's all [inaudible] there. You've got the reservation on one side. No bulkhead there at all. Of course, you baitfish, and everything goes up in there [inaudible]. They spawn in there. They've got to have a habitat. They've got to have some place. Absolutely.

NS: Were there ever any turf wars among the clammers and the oysterers and the scallopers over whose area – what area was yours? Was there any sense of proprietary?

EW: No. You see, as long as your residence is out in the town, you can go in any of the Southampton waters. Of course, in Peconic, but that's state Now that the state has lost that case in the residence law. I suppose you read about that. They don't have any residence law anymore. So, anybody now could get a big set…

NS: That is right. Yes, the law expired that…

EW: We get a big set of scallops in Peconic Bay.

NS: Forget it.

EW: They'll be able to come from Connecticut or wherever.

NS: No. I did read about that.

EW: They will help.

NS: I thought they had fix that already. I forget.

EW: I thought [inaudible]. They shouldn't have done without it.

NS: What about unwritten agreements among people? Did you ever work – like when you were mentioning Hubbard Creek was a really good area, would other people try and come in if you were working there?

EW: Well, I worked up there with a couple of other guys. You generally respected the other guys.

NS: That is what I was trying to get at.

EW: If he was working down in that area, well, you'd let him go there. He will leave you alone here. But if you get an influx of people, hurray for me, the heck with you. They don't care. Dog eat dog. It's no good. That's why some of the people are off. It's not a very good way to be.

NS: When did that first start?

EW: Well, you start getting more some of the West Enders, some of the people that they must have done it up there because there's a lot more baymen. Evidently, they – I've seen them, and you've seen them on the ice, the pictures in the paper, *Newsday*. It was right close together. You could almost step from one boat to the other. But we don't have it like that here.

NS: Everyone works their own.

EW: You've got to have a little elbow room.

NS: So, what would be the closest you would get to another baymen?

EW: Sometimes you bump boats, but you can't help that.

NS: But in terms of clamming or something like that?

EW: I'd like to get away. I'd like to go by myself.

FS: Yeah. But as soon as he gets there, everybody else shows up.

EW: Get room. Have a little room.

NS: So, if you were in one area, how far away would the next person be?

EW: They'd be pretty close. You can be talking. You're mud raking. But if you've got your steamers, you couldn't get on top of each other because you have cloudy – you'd blow smoke in each other's faces. Nobody would do it. Pretty soon, you have a lost day. When you have a lost day, pretty soon you would [inaudible]. [laughter]

NS: So, if you were doing this off clams with the motors and stuff, how far apart would you be?

EW: Well, he could be on that part of the shore. Maybe I'd be up on the other two…

NS: So, they would be a couple of hundred yards away.

EW: Oh, yes.

NS: I was just trying to get some idea.

EW: Have you chatted with the other guy.

FS: Yes.

EW: Well, we've done that with a bunch of guys in Tiana Bay. They got too close to each other. They were throwing chowder clams at each other. [inaudible] [laughter]

NS: How often did this happen?

EW: Well, I know it happened one time. [laughter] He got hit with a big chowder clam like that. You sure would not even move. [laughter]

NS: Were there maybe other ways of letting somebody know, hey, stay over there?

EW: Yes. That would be one way.

NS: What is another way?

EW: Sometimes you get [inaudible]. They get too close. You've got to spot a clam.

FS: You get up and leave and then go to someplace else.

EW: If you had a good spot to find, you didn't want to move. You pull your boat up and hit them. Run right into them. I kept riding back up until the day I couldn't move. I can't clam. I can't move. I've got to move. You've got to move. Come on, haven't got any clams. [laughter]

NS: Does that happen very often?

EW: No, not too much.

NS: Like, once a year or every couple of months?

EW: Not very often. [inaudible] ends up pretty good. They didn't bother you much.

FS: The clam diggers are so sparse, so few of them.

EW: There's very, very few, so you don't have much problem.

NS: Musseling, where would you go musseling in the Peconics?

EW: Very few mussels in Peconic. Most of the mussels is towards the bridge.

NS: In the inlet.

EW: By the inlet in the [inaudible] bridge. They like a lot of tide and a lot of current.

NS: I know it is very popular up on the west end of the island. There's more mussel. What about conch? Would you go…

EW: I've come around but not very much. Peconic Bay is a good place for conch. They get a lot of them.

NS: On this side too, or is it more on the north side?

EW: Well, this side too, also, and up around Reeves Bay and [inaudible], between Red Creek and Simpson's Point, up in that area.

NS: What would be considered as good catch during better years, for clamming? How many bushels of clams would you get it then?

EW: Six, seven bushels of clam, you're doing pretty good.

NS: What about for scallops?

EW: Scallops, you're only allowed ten bushels.
s
NS: When was that instituted? I know it goes back to the [19]40s.

EW: As long as I can remember, it's been a ten-bushel limit, twenty bushels per boat. That's why I…

NS: The two men.

EW: That's the sloop, yes.

NS: What about for soft clams?

EW: There's no limit.

NS: Well, what is considered a good day's work in soft clams?

EW: Well, it depends on the price, see what price you get. If you're getting – I've caught lots and lots of soft clams at $5 a bushel. But now, today, they're getting $50. So, sometimes my son, on a good day, he'll get seven to eight bushels of soft clams, which is a good take. If you get $50 a bushel, that's a good day, isn't it?

NS: I think so.

EW: I think so.
I would not say no to that. [laughter] Would you sell them to restaurants around here?

EW: Sometimes, he does sell them, yes.

NS: What about you?

EW: I did years ago.

NS: Who would you sell them to?

EW: I sold to her sister-in-law. She worked for the Fish Net Restaurant. Did you come by? I know you didn't. It's right on Main Street, Fish Net Restaurant. I sold to…

FS: Judge's?

EW: Judge's.

NS: What about Canoe Place? Did they buy shellfish?

EW: No.

FS: By the time – after the war, Canoe Place went down. It didn't stay…

NS: What about (Vaso's?)? Did they buy?

EW: About what?

NS: Vaso's?

FS: Casa Vaso.

EW: Yes. They bought clams, but they bought it from the guys from West. They know better and the other seafood and stuff up there. He would supply. This is the way you would do things. I mean, if somebody was up there, you just leave him alone. They wouldn't come and [inaudible].

NS: You were telling me that you had somebody who would come to your house to buy oysters. Did you ever have anybody who wanted to buy clams or shellfish?

EW: Yes.

NS: Is that pretty common among a lot of baymen? People would stop by and buy.

EW: We sell a lot of them. Get scallop. I put the scallops down there You'd be surprised [inaudible].

NS: Had that always been the case?

FS: No.

NS: When did you start doing that?

EW: At one point, we had the scallop very abundant. Scallop price went down. So, we put the sign out. You couldn't believe the customers that we had.

FS: Because they were fresh. They could see them come right out of the shell.

EW: Coming right up and watch you open the scallop.

FS: Watch you while you open the scallop.

NS: Do you remember when that was, or roughly what time period?

EW: What year?

NS: Yes.

FS: Two years ago.

EW: Four years ago.

FS: Between two and four.

NS: Did you do that in the [19]70s or [19]60s, anything like that?

EW: I see you sell some, but you wouldn't sell very many. Because there's more poor people, and they knew the heads of fresh seafood. They [inaudible]. People would even want you to fillet fish. I wouldn't bother really. Heading down the fish market.

NS: What were some of the biggest problems for you when you came back from the service, up until about ten years ago? What were some of the biggest problems for you as a bayman?

EW: I don't know. I didn't seem to have any problems. There weren't too many people. There were quite a few – there was always a lot of yield. There's plenty of flounders. Always done good. I always said that's why the pope said, "Go to Saturday night church," so I can work Sundays. [laughter] [inaudible] They told me to relax in my youth. But I've always prayed together as a family and brought the family up. There's lot of Sunday morning that I didn't make church. You've got to make a living. You've got three little rascals running around. You got to get out and hustle. But I tried to. We both tried.].

NS: Did you keep a written record of your harvest, your catches? Could I take a look at those?

EW: Yes.

NS: What were some of the things that you decided to change in the course of your work, in terms of where you would go and what kinds of tools you would use?

EW: I made some of the fishnets. I had traps instead of having – we used to fish 50,000 liters, which is 300 feet. Now, I've got 758 feet. I think that some of the bigger fish off the shore.

NS: What about shellfishing? Were there things that you did differently?

EW: Well, I hate some of the newer rakes we've had. The ones, like I'm talking, instead of the Jersey and these other rakes, it's getting smaller. Nothing gets out at the end. If you didn't know your business with the other rakes, they would walk right out at the end. If you didn't turn the rake, a lot of people would lose their catch. You pull it and pull it and pull it. These rakes today, you don't lose. It's entirely about the rake.

NS: Who made them? Was it a factory, or with somebody around here?

EW: The ones now?

NS: Yes.

FS: Newark.

EW: For a clam company, one month at [inaudible]. Are you familiar with Norfolk?

NS: Yes.

EW: You know where that is [inaudible].

NS: I know exactly where that is.

EW: He was right there trying to protect [inaudible] with this thing.

FS: We were married then.

NS: This is Edward Warner. Tape two, side one.

EW: Probably in the [19]60s.

NS: Had you heard about him? How did you find out about him?

EW: Well, I'd heard about it. One of the fellows had a rake. They let me try one, one day. That was on Peconic Bay clamming. I'd like to buy that rake. But that was [inaudible 01:03:50] better ones. Once I tried it, it was pretty good. But I wanted something a little different. I got something a little different versus I got what I wanted. But this rakes the floor, I will use the big one. So, I got in between too. I got what I wanted.

NS: Do you remember who that baymen was that you purchased?

EW: Berglin.

NS: What is his first name?

EW: Harry Berglin. He was up in Peconic Bay, Aquebogue. "Let's try this rake," I tried it. "How is it?" It's all right. It's pretty good. I didn't tell him that. [laughter] [inaudible] Right?

NS: Right. What were some of the other things you changed?

EW: I don't know. Sometimes we use on the bottom of scallop, dredges on the bottom, we'll use a lead line and then let it roll. Now, you finally shortened the line up. Good to see that your line up wouldn't have to You use the lead line. You shorten them up. You kind of nudge some scallops out. The scallops [inaudible] get you.

NS: So, what speed would you go out in earlier days, and how much did you slow down?

EW: You've just got to slow down. If you're not catching, something is wrong.

NS: So, how slow would you go?

EW: Well, sometimes you just barely moving because that's scallop. It depends if there's a lot of grass, still gives the scallop a chance. These scallops go to the top of these dredges. Because a dredge is only about that high.

NS: So, we are talking like one mile an hour, or just –

EW: Oh, I don't know.

NS: – kind of like drifting?

EW: You do it all by feel. It's all by feel with the motor.

NS: Would you be drifting very slowly? Is that…

EW: You go slow. You pull the dredge up one time if there's something wrong. You just make adjustments. You know very well you don't say to the other guys that there's something wrong. So, you make adjustments for that. Let's say when we're claiming. You watch the pole with the government. You get the pole, you break down like that. It won't pull as hard. You get it just directly, so you get to see it right. If you catch a clam, then the rake can be pulled a bit hard. Some people showing up with [inaudible] teeth with big rake down the bottom, and you can't. It's all in the feel. It's something you can't explain them over there.

NS: How long did it take you to learn this technique?

EW: I don't know. I don't know. Maybe I just had the knack. But I was always pretty good at clamming. My father was good. He never looked like he was doing anything. He was [inaudible], like my son is. [inaudible]. Other people will grant that he sometimes he catches many [inaudible]. There's something in the knack. It's got to be. You know what they always say about me? "Your son is a good – I used to take him with me a lot. So, you know something? He's a very good student. He learned real world. He watched me.

FS: His grandfather.

EW: He watched his grandfather. A lot of holes where they dug up the. He was with me a lot. He watched the way I worked. He's top man today. He is. I'm not bragging, but he is. That's what I tell the people when I see him. He's a very good student, just like you in college. He was a good student. Some people don't give a hoot about it. So, some people don't really – today's overwhelmed by that dragger that's behind. But you get out of it what you put into it. Pretty much so.

[end of transcript]