

Carrie Kline: Can you say...

Sarah Briscoe: [inaudible] because you were a little boy? That's what I'm talking about is my oldest son. Well, anyway, I think it was between [19]43 and [19]47.

CK: That what?

SB: When I started shucking oysters.

CK: Who are we speaking with?

SB: We are speaking...

CK: Introduce yourself.

SB: Oh, Sarah Briscoe.

CK: Can you say, "My name is"?

SB: My name is Sarah Briscoe.

CK: Your date of birth?

SB: Oh, my gracious. My date of birth is 8/8/29. What else?

CK: Now go on. He was...

SB: I started shucking oysters for Charles Edward Davis. I think it was round about [19]47. I'm not sure, but I believe it was. He was looking for some oyster shuckers, so he went around and solicited people to shuck some for him. I didn't know how to shuck, but my father was a waterman. We were around the water all the time. He used to bring oysters home and shuck them. That's when we learned how to get them open the way they would open them. A lot of them would put them in the oven and let them open up that way. But Charles Davis, Charlie Dave, we called him, he had an oyster packing house and he wanted some shuckers. So, we started down there shucking and we had to catch the truck. Elmer Smallwood was the truck driver. He lived down below me, down below Mount Zion Church Road.

Male Speaker: Beachville Road.

SB: Oh, Beachville Road. He'd come out in the morning and he would pick us up. We all had to meet up here on the corner. He would pick us up at 6:00 a.m. I had to walk from down where Mount Zion Church is up on the corner to meet him. I had to take the children to the babysitter first. Sometimes I had a babysitter to come in. We would walk up here and meet him and we all rode on the back of this truck as our brother was saying just a while ago. It was so cold on there until we wore gloves. I put my hand down here, like you said, and when I got to the oyster house, my hands would still be so cold I could hardly get them supple up enough to start

shucking. But he had a real large boiler in this oyster house where it heated the place some, but not really good. We had a box that we had to stand up on, a wooden box. But the whole place was cement. Then he had a long something like a canner, real long canner where he had us all lined up on this canner shucking the oysters. We had to wear stoles. Some people wore stoles. Some wore gloves. I had a lady in Scotland to make me gloves, make them out of canvas, you had a canvas heavy stuff like that. We had to put them on our hands to shuck or either wear stoles to stop from tearing up our fingers. He started us off with 70 cents a gallon. We were shucking three pots. We had standards, selects, and counts. The counts were so large until I used to carry about a 12-inch iron and I would take and break it. You had to break them off of them in order to get the oyster in there. But we got no extra money for that. He was getting paid for these selected oysters like the selects, standards, and counts. He was getting different prices for all of them but he paid us no extra. We were getting about 70 cents a gallon. I was shucking about 8, 10, 12 gallons like that a day. We worked from 6:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. We worked six days. We worked from Monday up until Saturday. Saturday evening, we worked half a day. We rode the truck and the truck went all the way down to the low end of Scotland, down near Point Lookout, because we had one guy down there. We had to pick him up. Then he went along the road and picked up all these men and women that were standing on the road and carried us all to the oyster house. So, we shucked. Sometimes the oysters were frozen. Sometimes we had to wait until they thawed before we could shuck them and they would tear up on us. But he was very particular. He had a large steam table, but they called it a skim table. He would pour all the oysters out and your bucket could be with water into it. But he never weighed them up at all with no water. There were the dry oysters that would make the gallon. Sometime I had a gallon, sometime we didn't have a gallon, we had to take that back and refill it over again. But he didn't give us no extra money at all. We worked there from 6:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. I shucked there for years. He really did have me one of his main shuckers because he told me, he said, "One thing about you, Sarah, you are faithful. You'll catch the truck in the morning, you'll go to work." He said, "I can depend on you." So, at that time I got pregnant and I had to go home and have my twins, praise God. By doing that, praise God, he said, "We are going to hold your box until you come." He told them not to let anyone have my box because he said I was a faithful shucker. We didn't tear the oysters up and just make a mess out of them like a lot of them did. A lot of them would just shuck them and they didn't know how. But thank God for Mr. Joseph Ford. He saw me striving one day and he said, "Sarah, I'm going to teach you how to shuck oysters because," he said, "you are trying," But said, "You are not really hitting the heart." I got up on my box and I got beside him and he said, "Just take your oyster knife and push it right into his mouth." Said, "When you get that oyster knife in that mouth, just twist your wrist like that." Said, "When you twisted your wrist, that cuts the heart of that oyster. When it cuts the heart of the oyster, then your oyster won't leak." You see when you cut that oyster, all the juice goes out of it and it turns right to skin. You see like that. Even when you cook it, it's just nothing in it because it's all dry. So, he showed me how to shuck. I thank God for him. I began to shuck and shuck better. I stayed there for quite a while. I don't know how many years I stayed there, but I stayed there for quite a while and shucked for Charlie Davis. He was a very good man. God knows he was one of the best men in St. Mary's County, him and his wife, that in my young age that I've ever known in my life. Because sometime down there, just like the gentleman was saying, you get in trouble and get in a fight. I was the type of person that didn't take nothing. I didn't take anything. When you rubbed me the wrong way, you're just going to be in trouble. I did get in trouble with an elderly lady down there and I almost knocked her

overboard. They came down and arrested me, praise God. But he said, "Sarah, I'm going your back." He said, "I know you wouldn't have done anything to her if she hadn't have rubbed you the wrong way." Because I wasn't a person that I'd get in trouble, but I just didn't take other people messing over me like that. Because I said, we here to do a job and if we're going to do a job, then we need to do the man's job and do it right and don't have other people coming in trying to mess it. But anyway, I protected my boss man. I put it that way. Because I was there to do a job right. He came and got me. I didn't go to jail but the judge really put the fine on me because he said it was terribly to fight an older person. But I said, "But she should have known to stay in her place also too and everything." So, anyway, he charged me \$50. My boss man came up and got me and brought me home. He paid my fine. He said, "You can work it out." I had to work it out. He said, "Then pay me a little at a time." This is what I did. But he kept me there on the job because I was a faithful worker. So, then he decided that if he could get some of the women to pick crabs, he would open up a crab house. So, he asked me and the different women that were there, would we pick some? I told him yes. I said, "I don't know how, but I'll try." Now, he had a man to come over here from Crisfield and his name was – I had his name on my tongue before I even started talking. It wasn't Sam but Davis. His name was Captain Davis. Dave. We called him Captain Dave. He'd come over here from Crisfield because he said they were shucking oysters and we were picking crabs over there. He told Mr. Davis, he said, "Now, it would be good if you opened up a crab house over here and it would give the women a job, work to do in the summertime after they finished shucking oysters." So, this is what he did. Charlie Davis opened up the same place because he had a two-part place. He was oyster shucking on this side, crab picking on this side. So, that's why the gentleman said that they could go over there and sing. Sometime they would crack claws over there too also. But anyway, he opened up this crab house and Captain Dave came from Crisfield and he had this real big boat. My God, he had a beautiful boat. He came and he brought crabs from Crisfield over here for us. It looked like they were twice as big as your hand. But Mr. Davis made himself a steam house. He had a long building out there. I believe it's still down there. But anyway, it was so long until Captain Dave made some shores, like little trenches, something like a tunnel that you would go through. But he made them like they put crabs in and he would bring the crabs out of his boat by the barrels. He would have all these crabs in this trough and push them in this big steam trough and steam them for us. He never culled them. He gave us the best and the beautifullest crabs you most ever seen in your life. He was a lovely man also. He opened it up and we went around a lot of us that were working there and got crab picking from him at Park Hall in Scotland and different places like that. So, I started picking crabs for him. When I started, his wife was the one that had went over in Crisfield, learned how those pickers were doing over there. She taught us. Bless her heart. I always wanted to have something right now in her memory because her name is Luella Davis and she's got Alzheimer's, praise God. But she's a beautiful lady, wonderful lady. She sat down and taught every one of us how to pick crab. She said, "Now, every piece of meat that you throw away is to your loss. But every piece that you save is for your good. So, make sure you cut the crab right. Get out all the meat and everything and watch out for the holes." She is still a beautiful lady, praise God. I want to go see her. God love her because I love her to my heart. When she taught us, we went down and we started picking for Charlie Davis. He started us off with 16 cents a pound. I was picking 25, 30, I went on up to 70 and 80 pounds a day picking. Then he wanted us to separate them. Captain Davis said he wanted the meat separated. So, how he wanted to separate it, he wanted the back after we cut the crabs around, cut the crabs all the fins off it, then we cut the back off it like this. Then that lump

up right up in there, that was the back fin. We'd plucked that out, put that in a separate can. Then the rest of was called special. We would put that in the pan. So, when time come to weigh it up, we had to take this out. It didn't allow you to put your hands through it. You had to wipe your hands really good. But they wanted you to pick this meat in a can because they didn't allow us, and I didn't blame them, because some of them were terrible the way they handle the meat. He didn't want us to put our hands in the meat, which I thought it was really good. Because when you put it in the pan, they just squash it all up. I would tell them, I said, "Your meat should look pretty." Because I was the type of person when I worked, I'd give the boss man my best. I've done that ever since I've worked. I'm retarded now, praise God. But I give them my best. I said, "Now, if you all put this meat in the pan and chew it all up, then it's going to look like a bunch of mess and nobody's going to want to buy them. The boss man will get a bad name about it because of you all." I said, "But make it flaky and everything and drop it in your can. Don't try to press it down with your hand. Shake the can down like that and shake the meat down so you'll get a pound out of it like that." So, I went on and I picked. We picked a lot of crab meat because Ms. Davis Luella showed us how to pick. She's always told me, she said, "Sarah," said, "you do a good job." Because she said, "One thing, your meat is not messy." I don't like messy stuff. Lord, I know you aren't recording that, but anyway, it's all right. So, I'll stand up behind it. I said, "I don't like a lot of mess. If you are going to do something, do it right. If you're not going to do it right then don't do it at all." A lot of them came down on me at the crab house because of that, because I didn't hold up with them making a mess out of anything. We picked. By me helping them and showing them how to do after she had told me, because I took an interest in what she was doing for me and to me and I learned very well. So, he didn't give us anymore. But as we picked years to come, he ran up to 18 cents a pound. That was all we got. We had to separate the meat. We had to lump meat, like I said, in this can. We had the regular. First, it was regular and then special. Now, lump meat is a high price lump meat. The special is when you pick it all together, the lump and the regular go together. Now, the special is something that is almost as much as the lump meat. So, we picked that good. Later on, in later years, he gave us 18 cents a pound. What was so sweet about him, he allowed me to bring all of my children after they got old enough to work. He said, "Sarah," said, "if you don't have a babysitter, you can bring your children down here and teach them." Said, "We will teach them how to crack claw." He's one of them. Then I got an older son and I got a set of twins. So, all five of us were there working at the crab house there with Mr. Davis. He allowed me to do that because I taught them. I said, "Now, if you're going to pick crabs for Mr. Davis, you pick them good. Wash your hands and pick them good. Don't pick in a whole lot of holes and everything if you go outside, when you come back in." I had to teach them that at home. So, when they go on their jobs, praise God, wherever they go, they would know how to do things that's right. Because the important thing is on a job is doing what you're doing right. Doing it and putting your whole heart into it like that. So, that's the way I taught them to do that. So, he was working with the oyster catching with my daddy. That's where he got all this from because he was working with, we called him Pop Ball, praise God. This is who he was working with. But I told them to crack the claws. When I got up in the morning to go to the crab house, I got them ready, gave them their breakfast, and we all went down together. Praise God. I said, "Now, you got to work when you get here because the first money you make is mine and you got to work and make some for yourself." Praise God. [laughter] He's back there laughing. But anyway, getting off of that. Don't you all record that. [laughter]

CK: You got to tell me if you want me to turn this off because otherwise, we are recording.

SB: But some things you'll put in there and you won't. Everything you were supposed to put in there when you get ready to write. But anyway, [laughter] we'd done a good job for Mr. Davis, praise God. I love him and love his wife today. I always wanted to have a dinner or something in her memory because I told her daughter during the fall at the post office, I said, "I love your mother," because she taught me how to work. That was the first work that I had done out, praise God, since I had grown up, becoming a teenager. She taught me how to do that. So, we picked crabs for them and I tell you, it was a wonderful thing to do because I really did enjoy it. Now, I go around picking crabs for people. They don't understand how I can pick so fast. But you learn. As you go along, you learn to speed up because you're doing a piece work. If you don't be fast and don't make no money, you are not going to earn no money. So, I learned to be fast because right over here, praise God, that sent you over here, I done some for him last summer.

CK: Him?

SB: The him that sent him here. [laughter] He knew him.

Female Speaker: [laughter] Was the guy Davis?

SB: To him that sent him to me. He knows the him I'm talking about.

CK: Is that the Simmons?

SB: [laughter] I didn't want you to call his name. [laughter]

CK: Oh. [laughter]

SB: But anyway, it was good. He always said, he said, "Sarah," said, "I hope you'll be able to help me as the years progress." Because when I go, I go and give him my best in picking crab. I never went back shucking oysters anymore because shucking oysters the doctor told me I shuck from my chest and I was having chest pains like I was having a heart attack. I went to the doctor. Dr. Patrick was my doctor, praise God. He's gone now. Bless his heart. I loved him also. He said, "Sarah," said, "you have strained a muscle in your chest and it makes you feel like you are having a heart attack." But said, "The kind of work that you are doing –" Mr. Joe Ford told me that. He said, "Shuck oysters from your wrist." He said, "If you shuck from your wrist, you won't have the strain on your chest." So, I didn't learn how to do that. So, I had to quit shucking oysters because my chest used to hurt so bad. I stopped shucking oyster. But I kept on picking crabs until the crab – I didn't work under Mr. Dick Lore because they said he was a hard man. I know at that time, praise god, I wasn't saved. I knew I was a hard woman too, so I didn't need to be around him. I really didn't need to be around nobody that was mean and everything like that. Because I would go in there and give him my best and then if he didn't know how to treat me, then we wouldn't get along so good, like that. So, I never picked crabs under him, but as long as I picked crabs and shucked oysters, I gave them my best. Mr. Davis told them, he said, "Sarah is one of the best oysters shuckers that I have." I got around the men that was working to get fast. Because these guys, we all were on this line, like I said, on this counter.

The guys were all down there. I would watch those men and see and I'd try to pick up one every time they'd pick up one. Every time they'd pick up one and stab it like that and twist the wrist and open it up, I'd try to do the same thing. So, I learned to be a good oyster shucker doing that. We shucked oysters. Lord knows some of them were 6 inches long. They were so big and so hard until I had to carry an iron down there and break the mouth open like that to get my knife into him. Sometimes you'd put that knife in it and just as soon as you put it, it would shut the mouth right on that oyster and they'd bite the knife right in half. The knife would snap. Well, that's going to cost you because you're going to have to go. Now, I'm going to have to get yourself a new oyster knife. He sold them so it was in his profit. He sold the oyster knife so we had to buy more like that. But I tried my best not to break mine, but that's why I carried the iron. Because when you had to press in it like that, that oyster being that long there, 6 inches long, God knows it would snap your knife right off. So, we shuck them whole and shuck them nice for him. He really did like that. I enjoyed doing it because like I say, I like doing things nice and making the boss man happy over what I do. I really did enjoy it. But his wife taught us how to pick crabs. Mr. Joe Ford, bless his heart, he taught me how to shuck oysters. That's what made me a good oyster shucker and a good crab picker because I was willing to learn. Whatever they taught me, I was willing to learn. That's what made me a good oyster. Then I ended up going somewhere else after that. I got to do it at the oyster house and crab house and all that, going somewhere else as a cook because my granddaughter wrote up a paper on me last year to meet with the congressmen. I brought it along and she wrote up this paper on me being a cook and making sweet potato pies and pineapple cake and all this stuff like that and everything. She wrote that up at Black History Month for last year because she's in college now. Her name is Danielle and she's in college now, praise God, in Bowie. But she wrote that paper up. I was famous for picking crab, shucking oysters, and being a cook, because I cooked at St. Mary's College up there. So, I was famous for those things. The lady that heard me there, she said she didn't know where I was. She wished she had heard of me years ago and she wanted to know where did I learn how to cook at. I told her, I said, "I didn't go no school for no cooking because at those times we didn't have no money to pay for no schooling, for cooking, all that." I said, "I learned it from my father and in the church because he was a chef cook. I learned it from him." She said, "Everything you do, you do it so nice." Said, "I'm going to have you to cook my husband's dinner for me and I'm going to take it home," she said, "because he enjoys your cooking." Like that. So, it's a good story to tell about yourself like that from other people. Her name was Louise Count. She lived in Pennsylvania Dutch, praise God. Sometime I had to pick crabs for her. Sometimes she said, "Sarah, you pick crabs and you don't pick them with no whole lot of bones into them and all that. You take your time in doing it." It is art. The way you got to cut them, cut that crab, then you got to pick that little bit of meat out there. Then you got to cut that little thin piece off there and gaping it in, pick that little out like that. Then you got to take your knife and reach around that back and take that lump out. They liked them because they came out whole like that. The people would come in and buy that lump because it was so whole and they could just make it for their salads and things of that sort. When they made these special dishes, they put these lump meats in there. We used to show one another, especially the new girls coming in, how to get your meat out nice. Some of the crabs we would have, they were full of butter. That's what he was talking about when he said some of the meat was yellow. They just wouldn't clean the crabs out. I said, "Now, if you don't clean this old yellow stuff out, then this is going through the crabs and the meat's going to look —" Well, I had a name for it at that day and time. But it wasn't going to look good like that. I said, "People are not going to want to

buy it if you don't clean." So, I would cut it open, pull it back off the crab, cut all the fins off it, and then take my knife and gap under there and clean all that old yellow fat that was in there. Because he sometimes looked like the crabs got mad when they put them in the pot and they would just spurge all the butter all over the place. That's the way they would look. You had to clean that out. So, I used to clean that out and everything and make the meat look nice and white. That's what made it sell because the people would come in there and look at this meat. Mr. Dave would have it into something like an ice pack and people would come and look at this meat. It looked pretty and they would buy. But we were the ones that were making him look good. But he didn't give us no extra money. I don't think we ever went up to 20 cents a pound. I don't think. Maybe they did, but not to my knowing. He paid 18 cents as far as I got and everything. So, it was good while it was going. But it was hard because we had to get up and go to the oyster house. It was so cold it didn't make no provision for us to have no heat in the back of this truck. That's the part that I never thought about at that time because I knew I had to work because I had some children and I had to work. It is not like it is today. Just so much comes to you like it is today. But I had to get out and go to work to take care of them and everything and see that they were taken care of. It was so cold out there. But I got up and went. When I got home in the evening, sometime I was so tired until I didn't get a chance after I walked the store because I had to walk from here. Up here where you see the store is up there where – what's the name of that store up there?

FS: It's an Italian place or something.

SB: Well, up there. I had to walk to the store to get food for them. I had to cook dinner for them, praise God, from the oyster house and go to the store, then get them something to eat, get them cleaned up and get them to bed and everything. Then get up in the morning at 4:00 a.m. to get them ready for the babysitter and then get to the oyster house at 6:30 a.m. It wasn't something that was easy. It was really hard, but we went out. It didn't stop when it rained, when it snowed, when the ice was on the ground, whenever. We still went out to the oyster house and shucked oysters, praise God. I thank God for surviving because we've been through a lot. I thank God for that. I really do. But through it all, God is still good. Through it all, he's still good and I survived through it. I learned how to work good. I learned how to do what I was doing good and it all came through. I put the Lord first because he had to be there through Luella Davis and Captain Dave from over in Crisfield because he was a wonderful man. He was determined to put a crab house here, a crab factory they called it. At that time, they called it Crab House. Because just like you said, they give you new names now, the crab factory and all like that. But Crab House is what they named it. He was determined to give us the best crab. They had male crabs that big.

CK: How big?

SB: All those crabs were 6 inches long before you put the fins off. This was with the fins and all on them. Then after you take the fins off them, at least they were 3.5 inches wide. God knows you could get the best meat out of them in the world. I'm telling you the truth. It was really good eatings and everything. He gave us the best, Captain Dave did. He was a wonderful man out of Crisfield. Charlie Dave was a good man and his wife was super. She certainly was. So, I thank God for those people, I really do, because they taught us a lot. They taught us

something here in St. Mary's County which we would never thought that would have been here. I know I never thought about being here like that because at that time, you had to go out and wash and scrub and do these kinds of things. But me learning how to work my hands and the man that I worked for last time, he asked me, he said, "Sarah, how you able to work your hands so heavy like that?" But I said, "I learned. Whatever I go into, I learned to get something out of it."

FS: Like typing.

SB: Should be. But anyway, he said, "You picked these crabs for me so good." That's what he said to me. I said, "But I come here to give you my best and I'm going to give you, my best. Anybody that's around me, I'm not going to let them give you no mess." I said, "You can depend on this because I'm not going to let them give – if they're making a mess of what they're doing in this crab, what we are doing for you, I'm going to challenge them. It's up to you to hold my back. But I'm going to challenge them," praise God. Because things being done should be done good. So, I learned to pick. Right now, at my age, I'm still picking a few crabs. I even picked some at home. Matter of fact, I had crab cakes and biscuit this morning. That's what I was eating. So, [laughter] two, nice, big crab cakes on a biscuit this morning, bless it Jesus. You're talking about something delicious. [laughter]

CK: How do you make them?

SB: Oh my God. You just take the crab meat and first of all, you make your batter. You get your crab meat and everything. You go through them, everything. I have to start it with this, wash your hands and clean them nails, praise God, and get everything in order. I have to start with that first. Then you get your bowl and amp your crab meat in it. Then you get yourself another bowl and make up your batter. You put your eggs, your mayonnaise, your bacon patters. They say put onions. I never did like onions. But a lady up here told me how she does her onion. She said, "I put them on the stove and some little margarine butter, sauté them, and let them get good and soft." Then I put them in this batter. Then you put your salt and pepper if you desire salt. Salt is optional. You can put some in there if you want to or you can use seafood seasoning. This is what I use, seafood seasoning because the seafood season call for seafood seasoning, which is already salted. Then it calls for salt. I don't use salt so I use seafood seasoning. You put your seafood seasoning in, your mayonnaise, you hook your eggs up first though. You got to get them eggs straight. You put them eggs in there and whip them up really good with your little whipper and get them eggs fluffy. You put your baking powder in, you put your mayonnaise, you put your seasoned salt, you put your Worcester sauce, you put your onions in there, and you put some certain amount of bread crumbs because I don't like no bread crab meat. I like my crab meat be crab meat. So, I put the less crumbs in there that I can. After, some people put it in the pan and they just take their pan and stir it. I said, no, you don't stir it, you fold it. You go up under it and turn it over and keep turning it over. [laughter]. Jesus, you don't make a mush and a mash, whatever you call it. You turn it over like this and keep turning it over and everything. After you get all this mixed up together, then here's your bowl here with your crab meat into it. Then you take your spatula, because the lady at the college always told me, "Sarah, you need a spatula." When you are cooking, you definitely need a spatula to clean out your pan or your bowl or whatever you got. You need to get every bit of it out because that



little bit that you are leaving there will cut off from what you are fixing. You just need it all in there. She told me to do that. So, I always use a big spatula and get it all out the bowl. All this here, a batter that I've made up. Then I put it over with my crab meat. Then I take this crab meat and go up under it with this spatula and bring the bottom up to the top. I keep bringing the bottom up to the top. I keep bringing the bottom until I get it all mashed up all there together. Then when I get ready to make these crab cakes, I don't squeeze it, squash it, because it looks mushy. Crab meat is supposed to be flaky and you're supposed to see the flakes in it when you cook it and everything. So, as I go, I just take a small bit in my hand and just hurl it around like that and then pat it out like that and drip it. Jesus, [laughter] God, put it around and then lay it on whatever. I had some nice, clean cardboard that I got out of some can. I just covered it over. This time I just laid it on these little cardboard like this here, after I'd covered it over with some foil and everything. Then put it in one of my freezer bags and put it in the freezer. So, when I get ready to get one, I just got under that and plucked that right up. [laughter] God have mercy, Jesus. I just plucked that right up and put it in the pan and cooked it. The crab meat is not mushy, it's not all like it's been squished to death like that. So, when it cooked, you can see the little pieces of crab meat in it like that. That's the way I cooked mine. But you don't get that around these restaurants like that because people make it the way they want. But I'm just saying how I fix mine like that. So, I had two this morning and they were very good. [laughter] But we learnt to do that. I have had no problem in what I learned to do because I put my whole heart in it. Like I say, Ms. Davis right today, I told her daughter, I said, if I could take her in my home or if I could go down there and stay with her, I'll do whatever that you all would ask me to do. Because she was the cause of me, in the name of the Lord, to be where I am today to get help for my family and help for my children and everything and learn how to do something. She taught us to do it well. I grasped all of that. Everything she told us to do it and do it good. Said, "Every piece of meat that you throw away and don't put in this pan, that's going to cut your pound." So, when she told me that, you know I was going to do all that I could keep all the meat that I could because that was what we were getting paid for by the pound. So, I did that and I really did enjoy doing what I did. We started at an early age. I was very young when I learned to do that. I grasped it all and I did well. God has really blessed me with my family, praise God, and blessed me to raise my children and all. They're all here now to help to tell the story, praise God, of how they came up. We didn't have a lot of people in the morning get up and turn on the water and jump in this shower and do that. We had to go and get our water. We had to heat it all, get the baths and everything when I came home from work from the oyster house and get them bathed up for school and get them bathed up to get to bed and all like that. We didn't have what the children got now. The children got all this here now, but we didn't have that. I had to walk to the store. I had no car. I had to walk from Mount Zion Church Road, you know where that is, all the way up here to Machetes, up here where this bare garden is. That's where they had store at the end. I had to walk up there at night after I fed them. I had to walk and get food for them and come back and have food for them in the morning. When the babysitter came, she would have food there to feed them in the morning if I needed to go to store. Then I had to come back home, get myself ready. Sometime just sit down and say I'm going to get up and I'm going to get myself ready for the next day. I fall asleep and when I wake up, the clock is alarming for me to get up at 4:00 a.m. Now, I'm going to get up and get bathed up and get myself together and everything. Heat water, make a fire because sometimes the fire would go out and everything to get down to Charlie Davis on time. That's what he told him. He said, "Sarah is a faithful worker." Said, "Although she had children —" he knew I had little children because he said, "If

you don't have a babysitter, when the time come, bring them down here." That's what he told me. He enjoyed what I'd done so wonderfully and helped me that much. He said, "Bring them down here." That's exactly what I did because my oldest son, he was old enough to crack a few claws at that time. My other one that was staying here, I had to take him to the babysitter. But that oldest one, I took him with me and he learned how to crack claws. Then after that, then I showed them how to pick crabs. I said, "Now, you all got to do more than one thing. You just can't come in here and learn how to crack these claws. You got to learn how to pick these crabs." Every one of them can pick crabs just as well as me and can make crab cakes and cook out a site. Every one of them is good cooks, good crab pickers, and good oyster shuckers if they want to do that. I learnt them what I was taught. I passed it right on to them. They knew how to do that. They can pick crabs just like nothing to it, every one of them. He's left-handed and the other one is regular handed. But all of them knew how to do something with the hands. To sum it all up, they knew how to survive. I sum it all up, they knew how to survive. If they can't get a government job, you can't get a base job or whatever they get, they knew how to survive. That's right. I thank God for that. I didn't have anything that I didn't pass on to my children and everything. Because I said it's time that the parents should teach the children how to do things. My father taught them how to oyster because I didn't have no girls. He taught them how to oyster them. He carried them all with him and he gave them money. That helped, just like he said, helped to buy the school clothes and helped them to buy food for themselves and just helped us, praise God around. I thank God for that. Absolutely. So, I don't think there's anything else left. I don't believe so. [laughter] I really don't. But anyway, it was good. It was a rough time, but still it was a good time because we all were together. It's not like it wasn't these days and time parents go off and leave their children. I made sure that as I worked, my children were secure and had someone to look after them. Then I made sure when I got off that truck in the evening, because we got home sometime it was dark and we got home late in the evening and I had to go pick them up. Sometime the babysitter, like I said, was at the house. But I made sure that they were in good hands, praise God, and had plenty of food down there. But we didn't make no money. We absolutely didn't make no money because Charlie didn't pay no money. I always said, I said, "Well, you are making plenty of money, but we are not making any, but we going to survive," and we did and everything. I thank God for that. I thank God for him because he didn't have to hire me. He didn't have to give me no work. But by him giving me work, his wife taking interest in us, that made us learn. Matter of fact, it made me learn. I don't know about the rest of them, but it definitely made me learn, that's right, and I survived with my children. Absolutely. So, I thank God for that. I really do. I'm telling you. I thank him for that. So, I learned how to shuck oysters and pick crabs and the gentleman told me over there, "Sarah, you're such a good crab picker." But I won't get bigheaded or nothing like that to make him think that I can pick. I said, no, no. The lady that I brought with me is faster than me. He said, "Sarah," said, "I don't believe there's no one at picking crabs that's faster than you." I said, "Oh, yes, there's some that's faster than me." I don't build myself up high over anyone like that. I let him know. I said, "The lady that I brought over here to help me, she's just as fast as I am." He doesn't want to believe, but I told him to believe it and everything. [laughter] I told him to believe it because she is good. But I gave it my best. I learned well, absolutely. But I love Luella Davis. I told her daughter, "I love your mom." Absolutely, I love her. It was anywhere in the world that I could put on just something for her in her honor, it would do me so much good before she go to this world. That's the truth because she helped us so much. I love her today, absolutely, for that.

CK: Who were some of the oldest folks working in the crab house with you?

SB: There was one lady named Mary Dorsey, one lady named Gladys Ball. She lives right over there.

CK: Hold on just a minute. Can he turn the TV down a little bit?

FS: Yes. Let me get to him. I can get over there.

SB: Oh, bless your heart.

FS: I'll get it. I got it. Just sometime my hip gets stiff.

SB: I know what you mean. Gladys Ball.

CK: What is that now?

SB: Gladys Ball. She lived right over there, right over across from here. One lady named Mary Dorsey. She was a really older lady because we were the younger ones to her. Then we had some that were out Atta Briscoe. She was one of the younger pickers that was with us. She's older now. We had Mary Goff. Let me see the other lady that I'm trying to think of. Jalene Sewell, she worked with us. Let me see. It's a lot more but the names are just not coming to me. But it's a lot more that worked with us. Matter of fact, Mr. Davis had a house full. Let me see. He had about six tables going down this way. Then he had about four over on the other side because he couldn't put the tables where he had this long train of crabs because he brought the crabs in a tunnel. It was just like you going through a tunnel, this real long trough. I always called it a trough. He would take a shovel and open up that little screen door and just shovel them right out and put them on the table. I know he had, just like the gentleman said, he had over a hundred and some pickers down there. He had one man that was a skimmer that weighed up the meat as we get 5 pounds. This is what hurt me so bad. Now, this is the problem that I did have down there. But like I said, when you hear me say, "Thank God for Mr. Davis," I do because the skimmer that he had down there to weigh our meat, he said, "If you got over 5 pounds, I'm going to take it." I said to him, I said, "Mr. Campbell," I said, "Why would you?" I was the one that had over 5 pounds, almost 6 pounds. He took my meat. I said, "But Mr. Campbell, why did you?" Then he got smart with me. But see, like I said, I didn't cook up no trouble, but trouble looked like sometime would come my way. So, I had to go in the skimming room on him. I went in the skimming room on him. Mr. Davis came out that evening and he fired me. Yes, he fired me. But he said, "Sarah, I'm going to send you home." But said, "I'm going to bring you back." "Because," he said, "I know Mansel didn't treat you right. He didn't serve you right." So, I went home that evening. I stayed home about a week and then he called me and he took me back. But he took my meat and I asked myself, "What are you going to do with it?" If you take it from me, what are you going to do with it? You got to either sell it or put it with someone else, so you may as well let me have it like that. He got smart and I just couldn't stand it. So, him and I had a war. I won't put that other F word on there. Him and I just went to war, because I wasn't going to take that. When he called for the boss man, the boss man came in

and he said, "Sarah, I have to fire you." So, he fired me but he brought me back. He had to do that to please him, to make himself feel big. But he knew I was a good worker and he knew that I didn't do that intentionally because sometimes the meat is heavy. See, sometime you can pick this meat and by being males, a male has got heavy meat if it's fat. But a male has got poor meat. Meat is so frail if the male is poor. Now, those females, God knows the meat is just stuffed into them. It's so gooey. It's just gooey type of meat. That's why a lot of people won't buy female because the female meat is gummy like. It's just thick and everything. That male is so flaky, you can just pull it out. So, these crabs were so fat and the meat was heavy. When I bounced the can down, he didn't allow to put our hands through it, which I was glad he didn't, for a lot of other benefit. He would tell us to shake it down like that. So, we would shake this can down. Sometime you shake it down, you just have sometime a pound. Maybe you have one third or one fourth or something like that. So, when it all added up with the rest of the 5 pounds, sometimes you hadn't able to have a pound or made almost a pound like that. So, the gentleman he took mine from me and I didn't think he served me good on that. I didn't think he was really good to do that. But like I said, the boss man sent me home and I went on home with just good grace. But he sent for me to come back and I thank God for that because I'd done all that I could do good for him. He let him know that too. He said, "Sarah is a good worker, a good picker, good oyster shucker." Said that, "She takes care of her work. She does it from her heart." So, we learnt and learnt really good about that. But crab meat is so different. That's why they charge so much money for these males because the male meat is so flaky and so good. The female, you can take that meat and if you don't, like I was saying, handle it carefully, it'll be gummed up and chewed up just like somebody chewed it up and put it in the pan like that. But the female meat, you can take it and it's so flaky everything. That's why I handled that female meat with so much care. Because if you stir it up too much, you're just going to have a bowl of whatever. [laughter] She frowned her face up. I'm serious. You just going to have a bowl of glue or something like that. You got to handle it careful. But that male meat is some good meat to handle. Absolutely. Sometimes if you get a poor one – and this is what the gentleman got to talk about last summer with me – if you get a poor one, a female, and I just cut it around and cut the top and shake it. When I shake it, the meat just falls right out it just like that. Because the way you cut it, you cut it so it loosens up all the meat that's in there. When you cut that top off that crab and I just take it and shake it. I said, "Look, I done shook the meat right out. I didn't even have pick that out. I just shook it." Because that male meat is some good meat, absolutely. People will buy that. That's why males are so expensive. They are really expensive down. But you can buy females for some time less a whole lot. Cheap, I put it that way. I won't say what they charge for them, but they're cheap because a female crab is just gooey. That's the way I put it. It's just thick but that male crab is a wonderful crab to deal with. When you deal with those males, my God, you can pick 35, 40 as of now. I can pick 50, 60 pounds right now and everything. They get good money. That pays good money for picking crab now. Absolutely. That's what we can do. But they're nice to handle. Just like my son as he was saying about putting your hands up. But it's the way that you hold them. You see a lot of people take them and hold them so tight until they squeeze them. When they squeeze that crab like that, that bone in that crab, because the crabs is going to be bone all the way hard, they call it. You can squeeze until that will stick in your hand. But you see, I learned to hold mine light. After I cut it, I learned to hold it light in my hand just lightly and then just pluck that meat out like it. Then when I cut that little top off there and everything, that other meat that's up under there, I just got under there like that and pluck it out like that. When you pluck it out like that, you eliminate the

holes in it, you eliminate all that juice and stuff that's in there. Because when you hold it tight, that squeezes the juice and all that stuff just goes right in your pan. I don't like no wet meat. [laughter] God, I guess I got this back. I said, now, I don't like no wet meat because it's so poor that you got to see juice running out. I said, I don't like that. Well, I just will sum it all up and tell you like it is. It just doesn't look clean to me like that. I don't like no wet meat and everything. But wet meat is good for a picker because the wetter that meat is, the heavier it weighs. When that meat is dry, then you can get a lightweight. But when that meat is wet, then you're going to get a good weight and then you're going to be able to make some money. But I still don't like it being wet. But if they give me poor crabs, I don't have no other choice but to pick wet meat. I tell them that. I say all the time, I said, "You should give us some fat crabs," so you can get some good meat because that juice and stuff going in the leg, I don't like that. But I said I got to do what you say do. This is what I aim to do, is please the boss. I try to do that not only there, but on all jobs and everything. Please the boss man, make him feel happy, and everything. So, if they give me poor crabs, then I'm going to pick them because they're your meat and I'm working for you. I'm doing what you tell me to do. But a male crab is the best in the world that you want. If you want to get them a good eating, you get yourself a bushel of male crabs. I tell you, got something good to eat. Sometimes people put seasoning. Most time they're seasoning them up. But I don't like them seasoned because of salt and stuff like that. But a seasoned bushel of male crabs is the best that you can eat. Absolutely. Because we have dealt with them all, the soft ones, the hard ones, the paper shells. Sometimes we had to work in all of them. Sometimes there was soft crabs you had to take and place them into places like that. Sometime you had to take the paper shells and change it because some of the crabs were paper shells and you can't sell the paper shells with the soft ones because they all got different prices on them and everything like that. So, I've dealt with all the seafood other than fish and stuff like that. But I would have done that if I could have gone into a fish house, I would have done that too, because I like working with my hands like that. I really did enjoy it very much.

CK: What do you mean about the soft crabs and the paper shells?

SB: Well, see the one that's unshedded and you let them stay there in that water and don't bring them in, the shell on them will get hard. They're getting ready to turn now to a hard crab. That's what they're getting ready to do. They're getting ready now to turn to a hard crab. So, you have to be careful. You have to get it in as soon as possible, so it won't turn to a paper. My father used to call them paper shells. I don't know what they call them now, but he used to call them paperback like a cardboard. When you cook them, sometime you have to pull that top off them and fry them. That's what you call a paper shell. But if you get them in out that water right after they've been shedded, they won't stay any long to turn to that. So, that's why you have to get them right in because that's why these people have these floats out there. Praise God. I'm going to something I shouldn't bother on that one. But they had these floats out there where they shed crabs in. When they shed them in the crab like that, they had to take that little crab that and dip them out.

MS: In salt and pepper.

CK: How did you work with them?

SB: Well, we didn't work with them, but I just was helping, the person that would get them together. I wasn't working with them at all as a job. I was just there helping to place them in these little containers for the sale. You see people coming in to buy a dozen here and a dozen there and a dozen there. They just sell them like that. But I never worked with them money-wise like that. But we used to do that even at home when my father used to bring them home because he was a watermelon and he oystered, crabbed, and fished. This is what we lived off. We lived off seafood. So, we've been in seafood all my life, I have, and everything. Now, I'm tired of seafood now. I've been around it so much. But we lived off of seafood, fish, crabs. Excuse me.

CK: Excuse me. Did your mother then also pick?

SB: Praise God, my mama died when I was 2. I wasn't raised by mom. My father raised me. That's what the children tell me, "Mama, you are tough. You are hard." Because their daddy, Pop Ball, my father raised me. By him raising me, he taught me all that he knew. He was a chef cook. He taught me to cook. He taught me to clean. He taught me how to keep myself clean. The main thing he said, "Sarah, when you go around these places, go presentable." That's what he used to tell me. He was a strict church man right from day one. Ever since I knew him, he was a church-going man. I'm his second generation. We are the second. He had the generation before us. So, we are his second generation. He said, "Whatever you do, do it good." He was a strict man. We picked crabs, we shucked oyster, we cut tobacco, we shucked corn. We planted tobacco. We picked tomatoes. We done all these things. But we had to do that to survive. We had to do that. I never knew my mother at all, at all. She didn't raise me.

CK: But you say he worked as a chef?

SB: He worked as a chef. Cooked down here to Scotland to a place called – I can't think of the name of the place down there now. But it's right down there. The old house I believe is still there. He worked as a chef. I don't know where he learned how to cook at, but he taught me how to cook. The first thing that he taught me how to do when he taught me how to make light bread, "Sarah, wash your hands." Now, he worked outdoors, outside, and in the house. He showed us how to clean. I don't like to talk about everything because it's sad. He showed us how to clean the house, washed up the dishes. We didn't leave them laying around at night so bugs and things could run all over them. He taught us how to cook. He said, "Now, I'm going to teach you how to make bread in the big white pan like that." He told me in the beginning, "Wash your hands. Get your pan, wash that." We had to tug water. He said, "Now, get your flour in this sifter." He told me what to put in the baking powders, then salt. He said, "Now sift it. To make it light, take your spoon and scoop it back into your sifter. Sift it again like that." He said that would make your bread light. Then after that he told me how much lard to put in it. At that time, we raised hogs and we put lard in there. He said, "Now, you work this up really good, work it up really good. When it gets fine," he said, "now I'm going to come in and I'm going to show you how much milk to put in there." Then he would take that milk, measure that milk out, and showed me how much milk to put into it. After I got it all round, he said, "Now take your bread and just go around the pan like this here so you won't leave no dough stuck to the pan." So, after I got all that together, now he told me, he said, "Now you knead it." He didn't use the word knead because back in them old days they didn't know what that word knead was. He said,

"Now, you work it all together. Work it all together. Just work it up together. When you get all of this worked up together, pat it out. Now, I'm going to show you how to make your biscuits." He told me, "Pinch off a little piece like this, round it up, and pat it down and put it over there in your pan." I made biscuits for dinner and everything like that. Put them in the oven. We had a wood stove. So, he said, "Now you got to keep check on it so they won't burn. But you got to keep that wood in there so that oven can stay hot." So, when they got brown, top and bottom, I took them out. He taught me how to make apple butter. I don't like the apple butter that they got. I was so little I had to stand up in a chair. He went down in the woods and got his stuff an oak paddle, God, about that long.

CK: How long?

SB: I know it was 12 inches. It was longer than 12. It was about twice 12, 24 inches long. He shaved it off really good. He took it out to the pump and he got himself a scrub brush, old cloth we never used and washed it. Put all these apples in this great, big pot. He said, "Now, I'm going outside and do some work." But said, "I want you to keep these apples stirred." I had to step up in this chair and get over that pot, stirred them apples like that stir. I don't like apple butter today because I could have fell in the pot. The pot was just that big, one of them big, old black pots that they used to have back there years ago. He had it sitting on the stove. I had to stir them apples like that in that pot. I stirred them. When the apples begin to cook and the apple butter begin – because apple butter pops. When you put it on the stove and those apples get bubbling up from the bottom, then they're going to pop up. If you don't get back, that stuff will pop up in your face and everything like that. So, he taught me how to make apple butter. Then he told me, "Now, you take these jars, scour them, put them in this pot of hot water. After this water was boiling, you drop them jars down in there. Take this long handle spoon and take them out and turn them that way and turn them down on this cloth on the table." Then he said, "Now, after you do that, put yourself a pan on the stove with some water and just put a little bit in the bottom of the pan and little in the bottom of the jars, empty the water and fill them up. Make sure you get this cap on tight." Because at that time they had these old tin-looking tops with the rubbers into them. You had to put the rubber on the jar. He said, "Now when you get that on there, you screw that tight," and said, "I'm coming in after a while. I'm going to re-screw them; I'm going to tighten them up for you." But said, "You take your cup and just fill this jar until you get it up to that mouth to the brim. Then you take your dish cloth." Because at that time we didn't have no dishcloth. We just had a piece of cloth. "Wipe all the way around the mouth of that jar and wipe that jar off and then take it and set it out here." Said, "When I come in, I'm going to tighten them up." That's what he did. If the head swelled up, he said, it's done worked. But if the head puckle – he said, "Listen out for that pickle." It would say puckle, puckle, puckle. You could hear these jars ceiling like that. Absolutely. They would seal and that was the apple butter. I'd done the cooking. That's a lot of the cooking because he showed me. I was very interested in taking what he told me because I wanted to learn. See, I wanted to learn all that I could learn when I was young. I know if I could learn it when I was young, when I got old enough to have children – I didn't have no children then. I was only with my father and everything – I could teach them. So, I taught them all how to make bread. I taught them how to can. I taught them how to make pickles, all this stuff here. I learned it and made jelly. I raised four sons and never bought a jar of jelly. Never bought. I made all the reserves, made all the raspberry jelly, strawberry jelly, all the grape jelly. We went out and together wild chairs. I

made all that. Saved all of my little mayonnaise jars and poured them in that. Then the older ladies were telling us in later years how we could take wax and put over them like that just to help the seal them so that mother, they called it mother, wouldn't get on top of them. But I used all the tops. I take those tops and take that inside out them, scour them good and put a little piece of wax paper over them first and then screwed this top on there. Never lost a jar. I raised my children on jelly reserves and my father taught me how to do all this stuff. He taught me about the chitterlings and all that. He taught me how to do every bit of that. Doing all the hog work. I can riddle a chitterling faster than you can look at me. They say, "How do you do it?" But I learned when somebody taught me. I just take the chitterling and cut the mouth of it where they started at and just riddled it and riddled it. When I knew anything, I had a very long thing of chitterling. I just went all down the line with my dull knife and just pulled all that fat off it and all that stuff. Then I took that water. We didn't have no running water. But we took this bucket of water, put the mouth of that chitterling down in there and just done it like that, up and down like that and brought it all, everything that's in it. When you do that, then you take them and put it on this knife and turn it inside out. When you turn it inside out, you'll find it. If anything in them, they just as pretty and clean as they could be. That's the way we did. I was taught that. I wasn't born that way. I've taken in everything that I was taught and I learned how to do that. But I don't want to do it now. But I learned how to do it. [laughter]

CK: Did he talk about the old people in his family, parents, grandparents?

SB: Yes. He talked about his father came over here on, I call it a scow. But he didn't say a scow. He came over here on something like a ferry boat. That's why I was asking this young lady about Westmoreland, Virginia, because that's where my family's from, Westmoreland, Virginia. My grandfather was a slave. So, he came over here. When he came over here, he got married over here and that's when he started his family. But he was a runaway slave. They would tell me it's all Balls. I met a lady the other day at the church and she's said she's a – and I said, "You mean to tell me you –" I said, "Who was a Ball, your father or your mother?" She said, "My father." Said, "We are from Westmoreland, Virginia." That's where my family is, Westmoreland, Virginia, down there. I'd love to go down there and meet some of them. I really would. Because there was a man who came up here who would sell candy, white fellow. He said to me, he said, "Sarah," said, "I have met some people in Westmoreland, Virginia." Said, "They are just like you." Said, "They'll sit down, they'll talk, they'll offer you something if you're in the house." If there's something like a juice or water or whatever they had. Said they're just as kind as they can be. I said, "I'd love to meet them."

CK: Can you tell the story about him being a slave?

SB: Well, no, because my grandfather didn't talk that much about him being a slave. But he said he got with the rest and just ran away. He didn't never take time and tell us what happened to him and why. You didn't know why he run away. But he didn't tell us whether he was beaten or abused or something like that. But he said he was a runaway slave. That's what he said. He came over here on this boat with no housing, nowhere to live or nothing. He just came over here on this – I always called it a scow, but they said it was a ferryboat or something like that where you called and things on something. It was back in them days and time. He came over here. So, he came over here to St. Mary's County. He lodged right here in St. Inigoes because he lived



right up on that hill right on Beachville Road. That's where he lived at, him and his wife and all. That's where he raised his children at, down there. Because my father lived right down below him in a field with my mother and us. But he was a slave and he didn't tell us what happened to him or anything that they'd done to him or nothing of that kind. But he just said he came over here as a slave and that's all we know. That's all. My father didn't never tell us anything about that. But he came over here that way and he learned how to oyster, my grandfather did, and taught his sons and all. Every one of his brothers were oystermen. All of my father's children and all of his brother's children are watermen, every one of them.

MS: What was your grandfather's name?

SB: My grandfather's name is James Bowl. I don't know what his middle name was. But his name was James Ball from Westmoreland County, Virginia.

CK: B-O-W-L?

SB: B-A-L-L. B-A-L-L.

CK: Ball.

SB: Ball.

CK: So, he was the one who came over?

SB: Yes, the grandfather was the one that came over from Westmoreland, Virginia. Absolutely. He came over here and all these other children would come on the scene after he got here and married and all and got here. But he came over from Westmoreland, Virginia. They tell me it's a mess of them down there. That's what they tell me. I don't know. I'd love to go down sometime to meet some of them, I really would and all. But he did. He loved gardening and he loved raising hogs and things and picking fruits like cherries. He had a cherry tree, peach orchard and all that kind of stuff down there where he lived down on that hill down there. He loved doing all that kind of work. That's the kind of work that he was doing. Because when I knew him, he was an old man because we are the second wife's children. When I knew him, he was an old man, my grandfather. But my father raised us all without my mother. He had six and he raised us all without my mother. So, I just thank God to be here to tell the story, whatever. But like I told my son this morning when he called me, I said, "It's sad to me to think about the way we came up." It's sad. It hurts because sometimes we had good days, and sometimes we had bad days and God, we had to tote so much water. We had to cut so much wood. We had all this stuff to do and everything. We had to tote water for everything. Then he would make us walk to church. We walked all the way over to Beachville down there, up here to this church up here on Mount Zion Church Road where I live at right now. Then we lived in an old hall that was there. He bought an old hall. I could just lay right in the house in there and tell you what car is outdoors or what car is outside or what it was doing, whether raining or snowing. This is the truth. You could look right out the woodwork [laughter] and tell you just what he was doing. I could lay right in the bed at night and lift the cardboard up like that and say, "There's a car in the yard," and everything. [laughter] This is serious. He stuck with us through it all. He stuck with us and

raised us because he said, "I promised your mother on her dying bed." She died in childbirth 17th of March. I can't think of the year. But my brother's got a birthday coming up the 17th of March. He said, "I promised Lela." That was my mother's name.

CK: Lela?

SB: Lela. I guess I got the name home. I pronounce it the way they give it to me.

CK: Lela.

SB: Lela, that's right. He said, "I promised Lela on her dying bed that I wouldn't separate you children. I would keep you and raise you." This is exactly what he did. He raised us and it wasn't easy. Yes sir, it wasn't easy at all. It was hard.

CK: What were their names? Your parents' names?

SB: My father's name was Frank. Frank Ball. My mother's name was Lela Cecelia Lee. She was a Lee. Their family, some of them are down there at Virginia too. But anyway, her name was Lela Cecelia Lee and James Frank Ball was my father's name.

CK: Were her people around here at all?

SB: Oh, yes. She got a niece that's lived down there. She's in her nineties. I talk to her all the time. Go get her and talks to her all the time. She knows a lot too. My god. She lives down in Ridge and everything. She's very nice to talk with also and everything. But her and her cousins and her mother and my mother were sisters. My father, he raised us all. When her mother died, all of them were grown. But my mother died in childbirth. She sure did.

CK: At home?

SB: At home. Right at home. Because Dr. Bean was her doctor. He said that if they had have called him. But she was being worked on by the midwife. I pray that God forgive him for that, but he went out this world disliking the midwife. Because he said if the midwife had allowed him to call Dr. Bean, maybe you all may heard of him, called Dr. Bean, said he believed his wife would have been living. But they said they could handle it. She hemorrhaged and they couldn't stop it. She died just like that. So, he doesn't like midwives because he said the midwife goes too far. There's a lot of times the doctor needs to be called in and they think they can handle it, but there's a lot of times they can't. So, they didn't call the doctor and she died. But they tell me I was 2 years old. That's what they said. So, I don't know.

CK: Can you remember her or anything about that time?

SB: I don't remember anything about her. But I have a brother that can read her just like a book. Because he's my oldest brother, he remembers her. But I do have her picture at home and everything but I don't remember her at all, what she looked like or nothing. But I do remember the vision that God gave me of her. You cut this off because I know you don't need this on there.

CK: Do you want me to turn this off? I am happy to record.

SB: God gave me a vision of my mom because I wanted to see her so bad. I was in the house one day in the dining room there by myself. All the children were outside and I was messing in the coffee pot because my father had always told us to stay together. I guess by me being the youngest in bed with it also, I was pouring the coffee out the pot into the cup back in the pot in the cup. After a while, I fell off the table. When I fell off this table, I looked up and when I looked up, there was a lady standing over in that corner and she had a heavy round face. She had long arms. She had on a white dress and she had a rose flower right in her hair. So, when my father came home, I told him. I said, "Pop Ball," I said, "I had –" I didn't call it a vision because I didn't know nothing about a vision. But I said, "I saw a woman today." He said to me, he said, "What did she look like?" I said, "She was standing in the corner, long arms. She was bright skinned." My mother was real light skinned. "Bright skinned with a round face and had a white dress on and a flower in her hair." He said, "That's exactly what your mother was buried in." Said, "That's your mom. That was your mom." That's what he told me. You can imagine how I felt. But I always longed to see her. God allowed me to see her in a vision. I didn't know nothing about visions in those days and time. But after I grew older, then I knew God gives us visions like that. So, he told me, he said, "That was your mother." Because he said she was buried in a white dress with a white rose flower in her hair. Said she had very long arms just like that. Tall, with very long arms. He said that was her. So, that's all I know. When I received the picture, someone gave me a picture of her and I had it all made off enlarged and gave all the family one. That's her. The picture is her that I saw. The vision that I saw is her. She's got a round face, one of them real scuba hats on. She was standing up there. Real long arms and real tall. That was her. Absolutely. I saw her.

CK: Any stories from her family from Virginia who were on this side?

SB: Well, only that she had a large family. Her family did, her sister. The family died at an early age and all like that. It's just that my grandfather on her side, he just had a lot of children. He had a lot of sons and a lot of daughters and all, because that was my mother and this lady's mother. Then he had a lot of sons. My God, the Lee family is such a large family. My Lord. This one that I'm telling you about, she can tell you every name of them. Every name. Because she knows them all. She's telling me about some that I've never heard of before. Absolutely. Some of my uncles, some of my cousins that I've never seen in my life. She can tell me about them all. She has told me about them all. I didn't know them because by mama dying at a young age and my father staying on his side. He didn't fall to the Lee side on my mother's side. He just stayed with the Balls. So, by him staying with the Balls, we didn't learn too much about my mother's family until I got with my first cousin down here and she was telling me about them. It was so many of them. But my grandfather, so they say his name was Daniel Lee. They said he was part Indian because he looked like an Indian, looked just like an Indian for the world, high cheekbones, long skinny feet and everything like that, long legs. I call him a stalk, God, because he was just that tall and everything. Absolutely. But I'm serious that's the way he was. [laughter] But anyway, he had a lot of brothers and he had right many children also. But it's a large family. Absolutely. So, she told me so much that I really didn't want to hear anymore. No, I didn't want to hear anymore. Because I told her to think about this, it's sad. It just makes

me heavy. Gives me a spirit of heaviness to think about all these family and I not knowing any of them, not knowing hardly any of them at all. It just makes it terrible, sad. But she really does know because you know she would know. If she didn't know, she's hitting there very close and everything. So, she knew them all. Yes, indeed. They lived in Old Shannon down on the water down there by Clayton Marina down in that area. Maybe you all have heard of that down there. She carried us down the other day and showed us the old home place of Grandpop Daniel and the family that lived down there. It's right down here on this water down here near Charlie Davis, where his old places is. But you turn off. It's called Clayton Marina. It used to be called Clayton Marina. But it's a lunch room down there now. She said that's right where the house used to be, right down there. She's got a very good remembrance of things. She remembers quite well.

CK: Speaking of the water, you said the old people oystered. Were there any older shucking houses that you heard about?

SB: No. Never heard of any other shucking houses at all, crab houses, or nothing. So, I don't think they really had any. They just must have shucked the oysters down on the water or in the boat. Because my father used to bring them home in a basket. He would get himself an old chair that he had outside because old people always kept old chairs outside and everything where they'd sit. Some of them were cloth chair, ragged, and rain washed and everything. He always had this old chair that he would sit near the barn and he would bring this bushel of oysters home and get himself a board and put it right across that basket. He'd leave enough opening for him to put his hands down there and put the oyster up on the board and shuck the oyster. Then he would rinse it in a pail of water and drop it down in a jar or in another pail like that. But that was the strangest thing to see him do. I enjoyed to see him do it because he always rinsed it. Before he put it in the bowl, he always rinsed that oyster first. So, that rinsed off all the shells because sometimes you could get a shell in your throat. That rinsed off all the shells that was on that oyster when he opened it up. Then he dropped it in the other container over there. He used to do that. He used to sit outside because I used to watch him doing that. Because I was around him all the time and that's why the children say sometimes that I was hard. But I taken in his life because I didn't have a mother. He was hard on me because he'd direct me and fuss with me and everything like that. But I still stuck with him because I wanted to learn. By wanting to learn, I learned. I saw him shuck oysters. I used to wonder how he could take that oyster knife and just push it right in that mouth. Then he would pull up on it. But that really wasn't the way to do it because just like Mr. Ford said, it's the twist of the wrist that cuts the heart out. Sometimes he would leave part of it in there and sometimes he wouldn't because he did what he knew. But when Mr. Ford showed me how to do it, he said it's just a twist of the wrist. So, you push that blade in there and then you twist your wrist like that. When you twist your wrist, you cut that heart and that releases the oyster. All you got to do is pull that top shell up and there's the oyster right there in the shell. Then you take your knife and go right up under there and cut that heart from that shell and drop it in your bucket like that. It was just easy as could be, but not the way he did it because they did it the way they knew. That's the way I learned shucking oysters the way he knew. But when I got to the factory, I learned it was a different way to do that. Absolutely. So, it was really neat. But he used to do that. He used to bring oysters home, then he'd bring fish home. I always had to clean the fish. Always had to clean the fish. He showed me how to clean the fish, cut the head off the fish and cut this part on a fish that's got these gills

around the ears. They say it's just like a person with a strong arm. Underneath a person's arm, is strong. This is how come sometimes fish is so bitter because they don't cut this part off. There's a fin that comes between the fish's mouth and his throat. It's a fin under there. When you cook that fish with that on there, that sometimes makes the fish strong. But they say you're supposed to cut all that off. When I clean the fish, I cut all that off. I got down that. I can't feel them, but I got down that side on both sides and pulled out all that fish bone in there and just leaves it right open in there like that. Then I'll take it and wash it good and everything and then put in the pan. But he'd done what he knew how to do and he cleaned all kinds of fish. He even showed us how to clean a carp. Now, he would bring fish home. God, they were that long.

CK: How long?

SB: I would say about 24 inches long. They were 12 inches twice to me. He showed me how to step on the tail of this fish and pick a hole and scale it. I was right there with him helping him to do it. He said, "Now, Sarah, you can do this." Said, "Let me show you." He said, "Take this hole and just gut down this. The scale will come off." Sometimes that is as big as a 50 cents piece, sometimes big as a quarter. Then he would take the butcher knife and cut it and I'd be ready to help him pull the guts out of it and everything. Cut the tail off, cut the head off and everything and scale it with this hole. That's the truth. Lord have mercy. It's just something to think about from what you go through in life. But it was all for our good because it was food for us. I was helping him to get the food together and everything. He'd take it and wash it really good, get all that blood out and everything and then lay it off in his pan. He'd take it and make himself some seasoning up in some flour. Put himself some salt and some pepper and whatever kind of seasoning them old people back had there. Then he said, "Now, after it dries off some, then put it in this flour and just turn it over." Because back then now, later on we learned how to put it in a bag. You get a bag and put some flour into it and everything to see and just shake it up like that. Well, that eliminates all the mess that gets on your hands and everything. Now, he showed us how to do that. Said, "Just check it and cover it over with this flour and then shake it off like that. Drop it right in your pan."

CK: So, when he was shucking those oysters, that was just for you all to eat?

SB: Yes, for us to eat it. It wasn't for him to sell or nothing like that because he didn't sell no oyster thing. He sold like the young man was talking about this while ago to the buyers that were out there in the water. But when he brought oysters home, it was for us to eat. He brought them home for us to eat. Crabs, same way. We didn't know how to pick them like Ms. Davis showed us. We would take them and break them in half like that and dig in the meat like that. But when we learned from Ms. Davis and Captain Dave – not Davis. We called him Captain Dave. He just showed us how to cut the round and we plucked the meat up like that. We didn't have to dig down in there and dig up the holes and all like that. We just picked it up like that. I thought it was beautiful. I really did. I thought it was really nice. Yes, indeed. Because we learned well. Matter of fact, I did. I can say it for myself. I learned well how to do things. I don't want to do it now because a lot of people want to say something about your cooking. I tell them, I don't even want to cook. I don't even want hear Tella cooking. Because sometime I don't even want cook for myself. I'm telling you the truth. Thursday, I went to some McDonald to eat. I didn't want to cook. But learning how to cook and learning how to fix things was my bag

when I was growing up. Because it started from a little girl and it was my bag. Ms. Count, bless her heart, she told me, she said, "Sarah, I love the way you do things." Said, "Because you put yourself into it and I can depend on you and you do it right." She was just wishing that she had heard of me over above all those other people that she had hired. But I said, "But Ms. Count, you couldn't have hired me until I put my application in." But I said, "I just trusted the Lord and took my chance that I would get hired here at St. Mary's College." I did. I got hired there. Absolutely. I had no problem. Then after that, Sarah Mason took it over and we went to work up here to the dormitory. I had never had so many students to come to my house and sit down. When I lost my husband, they came and they just sat right down in a – it wasn't a fireplace, but just sat right around in a circle and just comforted me. Because when they their head people would get so hard on them, I told them, I said, "You got to remember these students are leaving home. They're in a strange place. They don't know nothing in your place. All they know is what they learned at home." I would take them right under my arms and I would help them, talk to them, cry. If they cried, I'd cry with them. If they talked about the way things were going on there, I would comfort them. Somebody told me I should have been the dormitory's mother because they had a mother of the dormitory or somebody at that time. They told me I should have been. I said, no, I don't need to be there. I'll just keep the bathroom clean for them. I'll just keep the hall nice and clean for them. Move stuff of their way and love them. This is what I did. Absolutely. When my husband passed away, when Christmas time came, they would give me hams, turkeys, the mother parents would come down and bring me shawls and things like to put over me like that. I got them home right now. They said, "You've done so good for my daughter or for my son." Not only that, I took in the boys because I was used to the boys, but I wasn't used to the girls. So, I had to learn to love the girls because I didn't raise no daughters. But I did raise some sons. Even the sons, they would come in and they would help me. Then they told me, said, "Now, if you want to get a rest, you don't have to overwork yourself and get tired, come on in my room and you can sit in there. We'll shut the door and they won't know where you are at." [laughter] But they were just that nice. But like I told them, I said, "Now, if you don't show no love to these students, they're going to do all kinds of ways in these other dormitories." The president of the dorm, he came over and he said, "I wonder why Queenland is so clean." But I said, "We respect these children. I do." I said, "If they make a mess, I'll tell them you're not supposed to do that." I said, "I'm going to clean it up, but don't do that and everything." I said, "That's not nice." I said, "If you live here, then you got to keep the place nice." I talked and I kept the bathrooms. God knows, they just couldn't understand how come my bathroom was so clean. But I said, you clean it up and then you help them to keep it clean because they're out here on their own. They don't know how to do these things. We are here to help them. Not only one way to keep the place clean, but we are here to teach them how to keep the place...

[end of track 1]

Carrie Kline: Before we do anything else, let us see what Rob Hurry has in mind.

Sarah Briscoe: Ask me something.

Robert Hurry: Well, I just have a few follow-up questions. After you worked for Charlie Davis, did you shuck oysters or pick crabs at other packing houses?

SB: No.

RH: Only Charlie Davis?

SB: No, no one but Charlie Davis. Because he was the only one that was near us. We didn't have transportation. He furnished our transportation. He put a truck on the road. That's what was so marvelous to do that, to get us there. A lot of times people give you a job without knowing how you're going to get on the job. But the beautiful part about it, he made it possible for us to get there. That's what he did.

RH: So, in recent years, you have just been picking crabs for the seafood markets?

SB: No. In recent years after that, I went to St. Mary's College up here. But before I went there, I'd done housework. My God, sometimes I think about the heart of an individual, a heart – because we were raised up holy, solely, and fully, I would put it that way, in the church. We were taught about God. We weren't taught that much about Jesus Christ as I am now, since I've been born again, praise God. Baptized in Jesus' name and Holy Ghost filled. We weren't taught about Jesus, but we were taught about God. Reading the Bible, we found out that God is love. You hear people professing, but you don't see them possessing too much. Now, I worked up there when Cedar Point – they called it Cedar Point – first opened up. After, later on in the later years, I got a job up there in these trailer camps. Well, they called it trailer camps, but it was these trailers, pretty big trailers. The lady gave me such hard work. I was wondering about her because she gave me quilts to wash. I pulled them out of the washing machine. I went to put them on the line. They were so heavy until this quilt fell off the line. I fell down on the quilt because I couldn't get it up there. Then she gave me a bucket. She gave me some cloths. "Now you get down here on your knees and scrub this floor." I've done just what she told me to do. I got down. I scrubbed the floor. She wanted me to go all up in the corners, around about. I've done all that she told me to do. Then I got a job another time at a place called the Blue Room. Maybe you may have heard about this in the – I think they've torn it down now. This was a beer garden where she paid me \$4 a day. I had to clean this bar. You can imagine just what it was like, the cigarettes, the toilets, and all. I'd done every bit of that. That was hard. Then after I'd done that kind of work, we had –let me see. I'm thinking about now before I went to St. Mary's City and got a job up there, the kind of work that I did. I didn't do any cooking, only at the church. That's the cooking that I'd done. But I'd done housework. After I left St. Mary's City and got a job up there – after I got to St. Mary's City, first, I got the cook job. Ms. Camp hired me there. Several men came in and took over the kitchen. Well, all the state workers had to be placed somewhere. So, they decided to take us to the dormitories. So, they put us in the dormitories. I worked there. We had three stories. We had the basement, the middle floor, and the third floor. So, we had to work there. I worked there with them for a good while. After I left there, then one of these ladies called me one Sunday after I came from church, and said, "Sarah, would you like to help me in-home work?" I said, "Well, what is that?" She said, "Caring for the elderly." I said, "I'll do anything that you ask me to do." Because she's a wonderful young lady, and she had four jobs she was working on. She had one job she went on during the week. She worked on there all that week and that weekend. Then she had another job that she went on the morning before she went on that job. She went on that job in the evening.

But she worked for six days then. That was from Monday up until Sunday, but it was in the evening. She said, "I need to be relieved." So, I went on that job down there. I had no nursing training, no more than what she had told me. I had the Drawdy lady. I worked for a gentleman up here on Route 4. His name was Ralph Strickland. Maybe you've heard of the Stricklands. He was in his nineties. I was taking care of him. He was in the home with his grandson-in-law and his granddaughter. They couldn't get the scent out of his mouth. They said that his teeth or dentures or something, just kind of odor, something of that sort. He said, "Sarah, do you think you can help us?" I said, "Sam, I don't know, but I'll do my best." God knows I went in that place. His granddaughter had three little children. She was pregnant again. I think she had two while I was there. I'd taken care of him, her little children that she left there, done all the dishes, cleaned the place up, and bathed him. I had to put him in the shower. I had to put clean clothes on him, wash his clothes, give him his breakfast, give him his lunch, and he said to me, he said, "I never thought that I'd find a person that would care for me like my wife." He said, "Sarah, I would marry you if it wasn't for my family." I said, "Mr. Strickland, don't think about that." I said, "I'm not here for you to marry me. I'm not here for any of that. I'm here to give you my best." He kept his money laying around. He said, "Sarah, I know you're not a thief." Because with hundreds of dollars that he left there, I picked that money, gathered it up, tied it up, and said, "Now, Mr. Strickland, here's your money. Now, you put that money – " He said, "Sarah, put it away for me." He said, "When you come in tomorrow, you can get it for me." He said, "Because you are not a thief." I said, "Mr. Strickland, I didn't come here to steal your money. I came here to take care of you. I'm taking you out to lunch." But the one thing that I didn't care about, and I had to challenge him with that. He always carried a pocketbook loaded with money. He and I would go to lunch. With him standing there opening up this pocketbook to pay for our lunch, there were some guys that were standing over his back. Now, he was in front. I was standing beside him. These guys on his – and I could see them looking down in his pocketbook. I said, "Mr. Strickland, I got to talk to you about that. Because," I said, "I refuse to take you out to lunch for you to carry all this money with you." I said, "Them guys could knock you in the head and knock me in the head, too. They're trying their best to get your money." I said, "If you promise me that you'll leave that money home and just take enough out for our lunch, I'll take you out to dinner." The family had taken all this money from him. But they knew him so well up here in this bank. I could take him to the bank. He'd go up there and tell them people that he wanted money. They'd give him money. He didn't even have to present his bank card number and everything like that. I said, "Mr. Strickland, that's not the way to do it." I said, "Now, you're supposed to obey your family. If your family doesn't want you to do that, then don't you do that." I said, "You know something? I'm not taking you to any more banks because you are disobeying your family. I don't like that you do something." So, I worked in in-home care. God knows I couldn't hardly get away. I worked for – God, I hate for you to have to – but I worked for Judge Briscoe's mother. Maybe you may know Judge Briscoe. I've taken care of his mother. I kept her in my home. I dressed her up. I carried her to church with me. I've taken care of Helen McCaffrey up here in Cedar Lane. I brought her home with me. I've taken care of her, but her daughter was so hard on her. I said, "My God, how could you be so hard on mom?" I said, "That's your mother." That's why don't...

CK: No. We do not want any of this stuff on tape. Now, Rob was asking you about – let us get back to picking crabs.



SB: Okay, okay.

CK: The more recent times, did you pick for individuals? Talk a little bit about that.

SB: Yes. I picked for the gentleman that sent you here, right in my home. Because he came to my home and he said – matter of fact, he met his – I'm glad you didn't tape that in the beginning. But I was just talking about the different jobs that I was on. I didn't want you to tape that at all. But he met my daughter-in-law, his mother, down on the base, and he wanted someone to pick some crabs for him because he had a business. She was asking my daughter-in-law. She didn't know she was my daughter-in-law. She was talking about crabs. She asked her, did she know anybody that would pick some crabs for him. She said, "I know." She said, "My mother-in-law will." So, when my daughter-in-law came up, she told me about it. So, I said, "Yes, that's good." But I said, "I've got to hear it from the head man," that was Mike up here. I said, "Now if he calls me, I can talk with him." But I said, "You guys got on that base talking." I said, "I'm not going to deal with y'all because I've got to hear it from Mike." So, Mike's mother went home and told him. Mike called me. I picked up crabs for Mike right in my home, eight or nine boxes of crabs stacked up just like that, my sister and I, right in my home like that. By picking them up in my home and picking them nice, he came down and got them, carried away all the shells, everything like that. So, that was the only– oh, I picked something too for Ron Stone. Maybe you may have heard of Ron Stone. You've heard of Ron Stone?

RH: Yes.

SB: Well, I picked for Ron Stone. Ron Stone's father brought him here. Then Ron Stone came to me and asked me how he could open up a business. I was telling him how to open up a crab house. So, that was the little crab house that we had there, but it didn't last long. Jackie, did you know Jackie? Jackie's wife? Jackie, you know his wife?

RH: No.

SB: I worked for – taking care of Ron's father and him and done a little crab house down there for him and everything. He worked down there for a while. Then somehow or other, the inspectors got on him and everything. He had to close up. So, he closed up.

RH: Where was his crab house located?

SB: Right down here to St. Michael's. You turn that road right down there going down to St. Michael's.

RH: Is that Freeman Road?

SB: I think so, I guess. It may be Freeman Road, right down there to – because it's another blue building built up there now, right on the corner. I think it's...

CK: Insurance?

SB: No, no. This is sells fish. It sells fish. It sells crabs and everything. Lord, have mercy, Kellam, Paul Kellam. Paul Kellam was getting ready to open up a crab house down here to win. What was the name of that place where he was going to open up a crab house at? Lord, have mercy. God, he was going to open up a crab over that field. But the people said they wouldn't allow him to do it because of the scent. They said the scent was going to be in the community, and they didn't want that. So, let me see. Lord, have mercy. I was going to pick for him because he used to sell me crabs and everything. I used to pick some and take them. People would come and get them from me like that in my home. He said would open up a crab house, but they wouldn't let him do it. This other gentleman down here that's on that same road, they won't let him open up a one because they said the inspector was too hard on him and everything. So, Kellam has got a building right here as you go down 5 and before you get to St. Michael's Church. St. Michael's Church is right there, and this road goes right there. There's his blue building sitting right there. He sells crabs and oysters and fish. I bought fish from him and everything during the summer and all like that. So, his name is Paul Kellam. He's a very nice young man, too. He came to the house. He'd sit down. Him and I talked. Ron came to the house and sat down. Him and I talked. I was telling him different things that he had to use, had to have. He had to have stainless steel tables, stainless steel pans, and these cups and things like that. How you got to wash them in this solution and everything. I said, "You've got to have this solution. Because if you don't, the inspector's going to get after you." They're not going to let you sell these crabs because you've got to have this stuff sanitized or whatever you would call it to put this meat in and everything. Then you've got to see that the people pick it good. I said, "A lot of times, people come in and won't wash their hands. They're just going on to work." I said, "You got to have a solution, for them wash their hands and then dip their hands in this solution before they go picking these crabs to keep down the germs." Every time the inspector would come down there, he passed there. But he was good and slick. I thanked him for being that. Because whenever the inspector would come in, he'd come and get a pair of my meat [laughter] up there. But he was all right because he's the boss man. It's up to him. He does whatever he wants. I had nothing to do with that. That was his business. I had nothing to do with that. All I had to do was to pick his crabs and pick them right. This is what he did. We picked there for, I guess, maybe a couple of years. We worked there and everything and all. That's what he did with that. But I told him, I said, "You got to see to your people that they put hairnets on their hair." I said, "A lot of them go around these places and cook and do it, but they don't wear no hairnets." I said, "A lot of them have fallen hair. When you get something that got hair into it, now that's a trick." I said, "You got to see that they wear hairnets and everything." So, he came to the house. He stayed there a long time. I sat down in the dining room. We talked a good while about the different things that he needed. So, when he got it all up, he had a lot of good pickups. He'd done real good. But somehow or other, it was just a lot of work for his wife. She drove crabs to Baltimore. She had a big truck. They hauled crabs to Baltimore. We picked and everything like that. So, I worked there. Then we worked with Paul. He never got his crab house because they wouldn't allow him to get it. I asked him last summer what he was going to do. He said he would love to get it, but he didn't know what the health department would see him do like that. So, he didn't get it last summer, I do know. But I told him, I said, "Whenever you get it, I'll help you if you need some pickers. Once you get it, I will help you to do that." So, we went down and bought fish for him, but he didn't get any crab house.

RH: How many pickers did Ron Stone have working for him?

SB: Let me see. I believe Ron Stone had at least about fifteen.

RH: Fifteen?

SB: Yes. I think he had about, at least fifteen pickers. Because he had a floor cracker table. Because my son over there, he cracked some floors down there, too. Then he shucked oysters at night, too. He shucked oysters at night also. Because Sister Carla, was the one that – she helped him shuck at night because she was the one that went up there and had this oyster shucking contest. Because he was looking for someone. He asked me to go, but I told him no. I haven't been able to oyster shuck so long that I really didn't want to go back to even try to compete with anyone like that. So, I didn't go to neither one. Because he wanted somebody to come up there as a crab picker, too. But I wouldn't pick on either one of them. So, she went up with the oyster shucking with him and everything. That was many years after Charlie Davis. But after Charlie Davis quit, he said Dick Law came in from over Calvert. He was from Calvert and his sons and all of them. But they say he was a hard man. So, I didn't try to pick any crabs under him, neither shuck any oysters because I didn't want the hassle, absolutely. Because when you know what people do, there's no need for you to put yourself in these things like that. So, I told him, "No." I wasn't going to pick any crabs for him, and I wasn't going to shuck any oysters either. So, I didn't do either one. So, Charlie Davis' the only one that we worked for. Then Ron Stone picked up on one, and Paul Kellam. Then I picked some for Mike right up here after he – I picked some in my home for him and everything. Then after a while, he opened up a little place and started picking. I think at that time, I was at St. Mary's City working. Then the other girls went up there and worked. My sister and my cousin and different ones went up there and worked. Then after that, he just stopped completely. Then he had us – he demands that we can pick so many in the fall. So, in the fall, we would go up there and pick some for him, enough for his business like that. So, last fall, I went up there, me and this other lady. We'd pick some for him, enough for him to carry over to the spring like that. So, we'd pick some for him. But like I told Ron, I said, "You've got to have stainless steel tables, things that don't have any creases in them." Because if you've got something that's got a crease into it, then germs can go in there. But when a person's washing the table, they aren't going to go down and do the creases and get all that stale, sour stuff that – Lord knows. [laughter] They're not going to go down and do that and get all that stuff out. I said, "If they called for the stainless-steel table, you can just wipe right across, like that." When you wipe across that, you wipe off everything, all the germs and everything. You got to use this water with – what is the stuff you put into it to make a solution that you put into it? A lot of people use Clorox for that. But he does that. Mike has a very nice – now you've been there. He has a nice, clean place. We worked there for him and everything. That's what we'd done last fall. We worked there for him. I enjoyed working up there. It's just the distance, so far. That's all. It's the distance, long ways. But we went up there and worked for him and picked up his crabs for him and everything. But that's the only place that I worked. In other places, I've done other little jobs. I liked it very much. But I don't want to do oyster shucking anymore. I don't want any crab picking in particular, not steady. I really don't want any steady, that there. So, that's good. Y'all got two things not to put in your book. Cut the tape off, please.

CK: There is only one thing that I was thinking about that Hanna asked me last night that I thought you might know something about.

SB: What is that?

Hanna Thurman: Oh, I had asked Carrie if there were any tent meetings around here, like camp meetings.

SB: Camp meetings, no.

HT: Revival?

SB: Revival, no. I haven't heard of any.

HT: When you were growing up?

SB: Oh, yes. When we were growing up, it was camp meetings like that in the church. You mean church camp meetings?

HT: Yes.

SB: Yes. We used to have camp meetings around here. They'd put up a tent and have service in it. That's what they call a camp meeting, isn't it?

RH: Yes.

SB: Isn't it? Yes. We used to do that because we had one from up here on the fairground from Headquarters Church, a free gospel church of Christ. We had a big tent put up there on the fairground. We had service. Our bishop came down. He spoke and everything. It was very good. We had lots of people that got baptized in Jesus' name, Holy Ghost filled. He ran the revival. So, I do know of that one.

HT: But when you were down at Mount Zion Church?

SB: No. I never heard of any tent revival down at Mount – we had revivals, for instance, all-night service, like that. We'd have all-night service for a couple of days or nights, where you go in the midday, and you stay all night and have breakfast. You come home and go to midday again and have service all night like that. But as far as tent revivals, I never heard of any.

HT: Was church pretty nice back then?

SB: Well, it was a lot of older people. There weren't too many, but the older people made the children go to church, like my father made us go to church. He didn't have to make me because all he had to do was tell me, all of us. We were ready to go and everything. He carried us to church with him and all. But church, I don't know, back in those times, it wasn't exciting to me like it is now. Church is really exciting to me now because we have been taught how to praise the Lord. We've been taught how to sing and everything, choirs. We've been taught how to say hallelujah and how necessary it is to do that and how necessary it is to give God the praise. I've

been taught all of that in my middle-aged days and everything, since I've come to the Lord in the fullness. I've always been in church all my life. But I really didn't know that I had to be born again of the water and of the Spirit. I didn't know I had to receive the Holy Ghost. They didn't teach us that in the Methodist Church. We didn't get any of that until I came into holiness. When I came into holiness, then they let us know that we had to be born again through the water baptism in Jesus' name. I know you don't want to put that on your tape, but anyway, I'm throwing it out there. Anyway, we need to be born again. When I found out that I had to be born again, the lady came and told me I had to be born again. So, I talk...

CK: I am sorry.

SB: Go ahead. I talk foolish, but she told me I had to be.

CK: I just want to thank you for this interview.

SB: Well, I thank you so much.

CK: Thank you so much.

SB: Yes. I'm sorry that I...

[end of transcript]