

Female Speaker: Such a great turnout here to listen to some stories from the people who have been working the Bay for on and off for quite a long time here. There's a rich, rich history here in Cumberland County. So, I am really thrilled that you are here. Some of the people who have been living this life for so long are here. Meghan Wren, the executive director will be here a little bit later. She is coming in from California this afternoon. So, depending on the winds, we will see when she gets here. I do want to tell you all that this event is being recorded. If you have not noticed all the cameras around, the New Jersey Folklife Center is recording it. The Schooner Project is recording it ourselves. So, if anybody has a problem with any of the speakers, please let us know. Now, you can let me know as soon as I get finished here. Then we will not record you. But we would really like to capture these on tape, some of these stories here, so that we can let people know about how rich the heritage is down here and how wonderful the people are. We are going to start with Mister Joe Lore up here. Joe is one of the last surviving oystermen from the days of the sails. That is correct, right? What he would like to hear from you is he would like your questions about, what was life on the sail? So, if you could come up here, please, Mr. Lore? Maybe you could start out by telling us a bit about the boats you worked on, and some of the ways it was living life out there, oystering. I am particularly interested in some of the stories about weather and how you guys were faring during the tough weather times.

Joe Lore: Well, I never worked on anybody else's boat. I always worked on my own boat, and mainly was sail. Before, we take sails off. The state won't let us dredge oceans with our engines. I was on a boat at that time. We hired thirteen colored people. Our colored people come from a place called Shady Side, which was the name of a town about 10 miles below Annapolis. They come up here during the months of May and June, which was the planting season. Of course, during that time went on, you went into the planting by – you put down on your farm. Your farm, you had oyster stakes to tell you who's around that was. Then we'd lay there mainly from two to three years before we sold them. The market for selling oyster started for September. This whole planting season only lasted the month of May and June. That's all the planting season we had. You could go outside and buy oysters, maybe in Chesapeake or something and find them. But most of our oysters was planted in May and June. Then we had two things to happen. In Essex, they called it, [inaudible]. Then the water plants up the river, I have been told at that time that this water plant used up so much freshwater that the salinity of the bay changed. It reduced their growth, went up the bay further. Whether that's there or not, we fought that bill for our [inaudible]. They tell me that they run a steam train through the water that they used. So we have different salinity. We have done nothing in the oyster business after we had this disease, to the last two years. They began to plant some. Then we began to sell them. We plant those in May and June. That's the only two months we've laid the plant. You had to have sails to do that. You weren't even allowed to have [inaudible] on your boat. After being here, we just simply couldn't operate that way. The state changed the law, let's catch orchards [inaudible] and plant them.

FS: When you were seeding by sail, when you went to harvest, what months were harvesting?

JL: September. At first, when I started to go, we had to walk floats. In other words, you'd catch oyster in the bay, and you'd put them on a float. It's like [inaudible] water, and they carried better. There were certain times, we we/re selling the shells. Shucking house was a later thing.

People come up from Baltimore. Matt Manning opened up a shucking house. A lot of oysters are sold direct to him. He sold as far as California, by the carloads.

FS: Wow. That is pretty far.

JL: He had a man in Chicago who was a huckster. He sold [inaudible]. He had carloads of oysters, sent a carload of oysters that was sent to Chicago with a wooden car., and it was about 1500 a gallon in it. When we shipped to Alaska or California, they put them in a steel car. You can put 2500 gallons. That's all they sold to one man. The shucking houses were – I worked there. They shucked 1200 gallons a day, which were worth about \$2.50 a gallon. Well, I guess they're now worth \$50, something like that.

FS: So, you owned your own boat?

JL: Yes. I'm the last man up to Newport that's ever sailed a boat. There's some two or three or four people down there in Port [inaudible] still living. But I'm the last man up there that ever sailed a boat.

FS: Which do you prefer or which did you prefer, sailing or running with your...

JL: Turn up. Go ahead now. [laughter]

FS: I asked which you prefer, sailing your schooner or...

JL: Oh, no. Indian [laughter].

FS: What were some of the problems under sail that you had?

JL: Problem? Well, we didn't have problems. Wind just died out. You couldn't work. You had to go to the engine while you're doing work. Staying [inaudible] the whole time we were there. But when he was under sail, sometimes you're anchored, or you dredge overboard, or an anchor. The first time, my brother was an oysterman, he was trying to teach me a little something. The wind died out pretty very long hour. He went to sleep. He says, "When the boat gets to going, we'll throw this dredge overboard." Well, I sit there staring and staring. I thought the boat was going right fast. I dropped the dredge overboard. In half minute, he run out and busted his drugs all to pieces. He hollered up, said, [inaudible]. I said, "Well, tide, we're going [inaudible] runs fast. [laughter]

FS: Did you ever spend nights out on the bay?

JL: Oh, yes. Yes, we left Sunday night. We never got home till Friday night.

FS: Oh, several days out.

JL: Well, we got home Saturday night – Friday night, always home Friday night. We left Sunday afternoon. We lived on the boat. Actually, we had a cook. At first, we had a wood

stove in the cabin. That's where the cook was at. In order for him to have breakfast before sunrise, well, he had to have a hot stove. We slept back there. I'll tell you, it got hot because he started his fire about 3:00a.m. It was still up front. It was coal. They were firing that stove.

FS: How was the food?

JL: Good food.

FS: What would a typical...

JL: We had pickled beef. We had a big crock. Storekeeper, he bought and sold it. We took that. Then we had all the ham we want to eat. I said the only two real meats that we had and a lot of rice. We were all right. I think maybe I gained weight going on the boat. [laughter] Eat it or not – or else. I married a second time. I said to her, "I don't care what you cook, I'll eat it."

FS: What would a typical breakfast be like?

JL: Oh, we'd have ham and eggs and potatoes. We were fed well. No one ever complained about that. Well, it was bad when it rained. We had raincoats, rain hats, everything, but very nice.

FS: Would you work in the rain?

JL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. When the wind blows, we work. [inaudible] they stopped.

FS: How many people could you have sleep on the boat?

JL: Well, we had twelve men to separate the shells from the oyster. I had one man as the cook. We had thirteen men on the boat. I think wage was \$80 a month.

FS: Mr. Lore, did you ever hear of any women working on those boats ever? Did you ever hear of any women working on those oyster boats? Was it always men?

JL: Is there any women aboard? No.

FS: Never? Not even one? [laughter]

JL: No. This was all physical work. You had to be down on your knees all the time, separating those shell. You come up in the dredge. That's the container that was hoisted up off the bottom. Oysters have armored shells, the oysters, and you were allowed to have a certain percentage of shells in a bushel. So, you had to pick out the oysters. So, shells wouldn't grow into anything. You didn't want them. When they got a good haul, I stood them back, covered it up with oysters that's been caught.

Male Speaker: Mr. Lore, how fast did you have to be going in order to be able to dredge?

JL: How fast? I suppose 5 or 6 miles an hour.

MS: Okay. That is when you would put the dredge in the water? In other words, you had to be moving at a certain speed. Now, if you only were going like two or three knots, you could not dredge. Was not enough?

JL: So, you had to have a certain speed to drag the dredges. Had one on each side and they had teeth in them. Unless you pull them on the bottom or they didn't catch anything, the boat was moving all the time when we had sail and when we had engine.

MS: How much wind did you need to push the boat along to dredge? How much wind did it take? How fast? Well, the wind velocity.

JL: Well, you govern the speed of the boat by shortening sails. If you went too fast, all the dredge would go up with an eye on them. If it was too fast or [inaudible, you made the sails shorter, and the boat go slower. You had to control the boat that way.

FS: Someone mentioned that the sails were different colors. Someone mentioned to me that the sails were different colors.

JL: No, sales are white.

FS: They were always white?

MS: They were the handmade sails. The machines were later sails. Sails were strips of canvas outside, maybe 2-foot wide, and sewed together by machine or sewn together by hand. Now, the trouble with the machine sails was if one of the threads broke by the whole sail, all the stitches come out. The hand sails was more expensive because of the cost of sewing by hand. They had a lock on each stitch. At first, we got the new boat was made in Greenwood's. Her name was *Margaret Fowler*. She was a different design altogether [inaudible] the boats. The man was named Joe Fowler had her built. He had a man. Our town was, I think, [inaudible]. He had a [inaudible] go aboard. He bought them all a white suit. [inaudible] That was the first new public, all new boat, I guess I don't know, [19]20 or [19]25 or something like that.

MS: Mr. Lore, was that in 1925? What date was that when they built the new boat, the *Martha Fowler*?

FS: What was the date the *Martha Fowler* was built?

JL: I think [19]25. In [19]25, I think.

MS: In our museum, somebody gave us a model of the *Martha Fowler*. It's a nice model. We have a model of that boat.

JL: Well, all the boats after her were made on that model. Before then, the old boat was different. [inaudible]. Now, this is one thing off color I want to tell you a little bit. So,

everybody had to go toilet, sure thing. Well, there was nowhere to go to toilet or no water at that time. There was no bill of health. One side for the captain, wooden guard. So, he would tear up the side of the boat was left off. So, he could sit there and do his business. The new boats got car. An old boat, there is a front parlor to sit. [inaudible] I was starting to use cans at that time.

FS: Has anyone asked you, Joe? I know it seems like each season, there is some kind of story on the *Meerwald* where we kind of laugh about it and keep telling it. Then the next year we talk about it again. Are there any kind of stories you remember that were kind of funny – something a crew member did or something that kind of became something you talked about each year?

JL: Well, I'll tell you this. When these new boats were built, they raced them because it had nothing to do with oyster boats. They raced them. The *Margaret Fowler* was a good boat. I think the old boat, one, was a *City of Regan*, and I'm not too sure about that. Yes, there was a little bone of contention on one of them over on the wrong side, which was wrong. She won. It was quite a lot of – this man here, you remember, don't you? But a bone of contention who won, whether the *Margaret Fowler* won or whether the *City of Regan* won.

FS: What do you say, Arthur?

MS: I think the *City of Regan*. [laughter] [inaudible]

FS: I guess it depends on which boat you are on, how you felt.

JL: The *Margaret Fowler* was what we call good light weather boat. In other words, it had enough sail to take care of things. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I don't know what else I can tell you.

MS: How many boats, Joe, did you have along the line or just the one boat? How many boats did you have in your career?

JL: With a sail, we had one. And that's where we got an agent while we had two. By the way, the boat is being rebuilt, Bivalve, down the Bivalve, turn left, just before I get the old church. You'll see the boat being built there is the *Ada Lore*. That's the boat that I owned. She's all timbered up and get put on her. I don't count on there being my last time to get to it. [laughter]

FS: Who was Ada?

JL: Merrell. This was done to her. That's a boat that the state owns.

FS: Well, a schooner project.

JL: Several hundred thousand dollars or something, but this man, rebuilt the [inaudible]. I saw his [inaudible]. He's from Connecticut, and he's paying for all. They have been working on her now a year. I don't think I've ever done another year.

MS: When was the *Ada Lore* built? Was that older than the *Fowler*?

JL: Or *Chester*.

MS: 1923.

MS: [19]23, you said?

MS: Yes, that's what it says. It was built as the *Emma Evans* or something like that. Mr. Lore, did you buy the boat? Did you have it built. Or did you buy it from someone after it was built?

JL: We bought the *Ada Lore*. We bought her off of a shipyard people that owned the shipyard. I think probably depression common at that time, maybe. I don't know whether this is true or not. Two brothers owned the shipyard, and each one of them had a daughter. One was named Catherine, and the other one was named Elma. When they bought her, they named her the *Catherine Elma*. They didn't want her, but they bought her because I think she wasn't getting paid for. They wanted to get her money back somehow or other. So, they bought her. They used her a little while, two or three years. Then we bought her off of them.

FS: I have heard stories that at the time when the industry was really booming, people would light their cigars with \$100 bill. What do you have to say about that?

JL: Oh, well, it's like I say, I think wages was \$80 a month for these Colored people. So, there wasn't much money around, really. So, in our small town of Newport, there was one man that had a Hudson automobile. Another man had a Buick. My father had a Studebaker. Those are the three cars in town. Where my father lived, had a bridge over a ditch. [inaudible] This man that had the Buick automobile. He had a son staying with Charles. He and his wife weren't in very good terms. He caught them riding. He caught her with another man. He drove up on the side of where them. The car went fast. They couldn't try to get in this car there. They fell on the ground. [laughter]

MS: Charlie Boy Johnson.

JL: Yeah. You don't know anything else I could tell him. Do you? [laughter]

MS: No, I think you have done very well. Very well.

JL: I can't tell you how many what we call new model boats was built. Did you know?

MS: How many? No, I'd have to think about it. Probably, I would say eighteen or twenty anyway.

JL: Yes, probably.

MS: They were characterized with what is called spoon balance, to cutwater.

JL: They built them very quick there at the [inaudible] shipyard because they had a lot of help.

MS: Most of them were built within, I would say, the four- or five-year time frame.

JL: Yes. Stone was built on the...

MS: From about 1926 to [19]31.

JL: Yes.

MS: What is the *Ada Lore* named after your wife or your mother?

JL: My wife. She's being rebuilt down here. You go down the Bivalve, and you see her.

MS: One interesting thing is that I understood that the *Margaret Fowler*...

FS: Can you take a seat up there? Thank you.

MS: Just been told to me by Frank, my brothers, that the *Margaret Fowler*, when she was built, cost \$25,000 with this new suit of sails and cooking utensils and everything ready to go. Now you know what it costs to rebuild the *Meerwald*.

JL: \$200,000.

MS: About 750,000.

JL: This boat that we bought and renamed, she was all equipped with beds and dishes and everything. \$17,000.

FS: The *Meerwald* was 18,000 when she was first built.

JL: Yes.

MS: That gives you some information on the effects of inflation.

Meghan Wren: There are a couple of other fellows who I know spent some time under sail and were around early on. Maybe if we get a whole panel up here, we can get some back and forth going on. Oh, Meghan Wren, by the way, sorry to kind of show up at the – as things are already started, but I changed around my schedule so I could be here tonight. I just arrived from California, so, a few minutes late. I think John Dubois is here with us. Would you want to join us up here? Maybe we can get some stories going around? We'll get some questions going. Do you want to join the group up here?

John Dubois: No. [laughter].

MW: I know we did this with flyers and by invitation. I have not had a chance to check in on who all is here. Is there anyone else that has got some stories to add that wants to sit up in the

hot seat for a little while? Bill?

JL: We'll get Billy up here.

MW: Good. How are you doing? Good to see you. Oh, you can stay up here.

MS: How old are you now?

MS: Let us see, this is ninety-eight.

MS: Ninety-eight, are you?

MS: No. [laughter]

MS: I'm eighty-nine.

MS: Eighty-six. You beat me.

MS: Good to see you there.

MW: For those of you that have not yet met all of our guests here at the end, we have got John Dubois, who has worn many hats. He actually operated vessels and built them. He worked at the shipyard in Morristown. He has done a whole lot of – has spent a whole lot of time on the water. He has got just an incredible memory for detail. He was a very big help to us for historic detail, for the restoration. Bill Biggs grew up in Bivalve and has pretty much been mucking around for quite a while. I still see him mucking around in Bivalve. That's a great photo collection too. What we like to do here is have something like this, with different focus, with some regularity. At some other time, we would like to have people bring their photos and share them with us so that we can kind of let those help us start the conversation here, see what memories they spark. Walter Hinson – oh, I'm sorry, Arthur Hinson. I know that. [laughter]

Arthur Hinson: That's close.

MW: Sorry. I do not know where that came from, but Arthur on the *Shepard Campbell*, operated the *Shepard Campbell* for many years. You can see her sails. He generously donates to the museum. They are set up in the exhibit over on Main Street. I know he brought his family for a reunion on the *Meerwald*, and it was really neat to hear the stories that that sparked. I think Joe should join us back up here, so we can have some back and forth with the whole group here.

MS: I will help you.

JL: I have trouble getting up.

MW: Now, I think we have some more chairs if there is anyone I'm missing here. They would like to be on the hot seat.

MS: Get Mort up there. .

MW: Come on, Mort.

MS: Mort, if I've got to get you a chair, you've got to come up here. Come on.

MW: Charlie Elmer worked in the area here and add another kind of landside perspective to it. Charlie, you want to come on up here?

MS: Come on, Charlie.

MW: We have another chair up there. Here is another one. Come on, Mort, you've got to – Mary Ellen?

FS: No. I have a lot of memories, but I do not know a lot about it.

FS: She was one of those women that wasn't on the boat.

MS: But they had one of the bigger ones in the business, *Mary Ellen*.

MS: That's right.

MW: Well, for those that are a little less comfortable about coming up front, maybe we can – do not be shy about piping in. I know there are a number of people here that have probably a lot to add. We hope to hear from everybody.

MS: I'd like to get back to the floating the oysters. I think we could pick up a few points there, that initially the oysters were floated at the mouth of the river. The reason for floating, of course, is that they took in the freshwater and become bloated. They were fatted. In other words, an oyster was poor in meat, that puffed the oyster up. Then as years went by, they had a typhoid scare. Then they moved the floats up to Bivalve. It's the other way around. They started at Bivalve. I'm sorry. They started at Bivalve because there's more freshwater. That's where the typhoid scare started. Then because of that, they moved the floats to the mouth of the river. They were there until some time when the shucking houses were under way at that time. Eventually, I guess it's because of bacterial scares that they had, the state made them do away with floating altogether. Now you can correct me on that, the rest of you.

MS: We went to Dividing Creek after that.

MS: Did you? Okay. I don't remember that.

MS: The water still tasted better than New York City drinking water.

MW: That is scary.

MS: But the oysters being plumper, that was called the shucking house profit. In other words, it

took fewer oysters to fill a can.

MW: Oh, I see. So, that was very important.

MS: They gained 20 to 30 gallons a lot of times on oysters, which the oysters were paid for. The shucking was paid for. It was clear profit. That's where the shucking houses came in.

MS: I had something. When the Colored people started shucking, they got paid so much a gallon. But the gallon was a 10-pint gallon with a round on it. It's called a skimmer that took the oysters from the Colored people. He measured, and I got twenty cents or something like that for a gallon, When the union would come here, they struck a pot and struck 10 pints for a gallon. Then when the NRA come here, they made them stuck. They paid them for eight-pint can.

MS: Chesapeake Bay.

MW: Now, when I spoke with the Meerwald family, they said that they had a kind of a foreman type fellow who gathered their crew for them. He'd go down to the Chesapeake to do that.

MS: They did.

MW: Is that pretty common, or was that something that was...

MS: No.

MS: No, they done that in spring of year because they had enough men around here.

MS: Then after that, it seemed to be like a family affair where they'd come back. We didn't have any real trouble until the Second World War. They built that bridge across the Chesapeake. Then they went to work over in the shipyards. That's when we had to go using the young fellas. We call them jitterbugs. But they didn't even know how to tie a line. We couldn't use them. That's when we went to power in the forty-three.

MS: Your brother went down Shady Side looking for his crew. He looked for Joe Blow or whatever. He talked to this young kid, "[inaudible] around here by that name?" So, I'm Capt. Walt Hinson. "Hey, Dad, Capt. Water here." [laughter]

MS: I can remember when he was going on his first crew. We went to the little Oasis bar. That's where a lot of them hung out.

MS: Where was that at?

MS: In Baltimore. We got, I guess, five or six right from the bar. They came to Jersey with just the clothes they had on at the bar. In other words, they didn't have a jacket, didn't have anything, didn't have oilskins or boots or anything at all. They just got half crocked, I guess, [laughter] when they decided to come. They came along and got half of them turned out all right. The other half, not so good.

MS: Better than the young ones. The young ones who got in the [19]40s after the war started you'd have them to payday, if they hadn't borrowed it all by payday. Friday night, they'd be knocking on your door wanting money for the following week. You didn't dare let them have it because you'll never see them. Weren't any good.

MW: So, we will have the whole panel up here. Are there any other comments on the rumor about the \$100 bill for lighting cigars?

MS: Well, I asked John if he'd done it. He said no, so I didn't have a big...

MS: I would never verify.

MS: My boat would need too much fixing.

MS: But they did have their racetrack here. They had their big cars, lady friends. They had a whole ball of wax.

MW: Always they. [laughter]

MS: I'm not going to mention any names.
I would not mention any names.

MS: There was a racetrack?

MS: Oh, yes. They had horse track stands and the whole works on the back street.

MS: You all walked down, it used to be Warren Street. They've changed that street about four different times.

MS: They had more money in this little town for person than any little city in the United States. When things went bad, the IRS had an office up here in Fort Morris. A lot of them settled for 10, 15, 25 cents on the dollar. They set an office up here. There was a lot of money made.

MS: There was a lot spent too. It wasn't all on boats either. [laughter]

MS: No one even had a gambling hall in Atlantic City.

MS: Yes, well, it was normal practice like then during the depression, oysterman could make maybe \$75,000, which was great. But then I won't say every oysterman, but some in similar circumstances, they led such a grandiose life that when it came time to plant again the next spring, they'd have to go to the bank and borrow money. They did. This went on from year to year that way.

FS: So, they weren't much different than the crews you're telling us about, right?

MS: I'll say the old crews that we got from down there, they had their homes. They had their schooling. They had their gardens, chickens, poultry, pigs, and they were nice people that came up here in May and June. Then they'd go home and crab the rest of the season.

MS: Right off season for them.

MS: Yes. They were nice people. I enjoyed them.

MS: They only draw two or \$3 a week. At the end of the season, they took all the money home for their families.

MS: Where was home?

MS: All up and down eastern shore.

MS: Yes, they were nice people.

MS: The best crew that I ever had was the cook's three boys. He had three boys at the wages. They worked. Pop said so.

MW: How old were they?

MS: Young boys, seventeen, like that. He had three boys. He didn't want them to get far.

MS: He's a good cook too.

MS: Joe, speaking of cooks, did your cook like to fry everything in bacon grease? I mean, you might have bought him Crisco, but they wouldn't use it.

MW: How was the food?

MS: Excellent.

MS: Your arteries probably didn't – [laughter]

MS: Breakfast time, get down there, 3:30, 4:00, big platter of liver, fried liver on the table, and ham, the same way. They'd eat up a whole ham one meal.

MS: They all ate in the aft cabin?

MS: Oh, yes.

MS: Everybody? All the boat people?

MS: The only one thing you had to do, you'd always say a little prayer to make them wait till the whole crew got there. You got no food.

MS: So, sometimes the long-winded prayer.

MS: You say a blessing went with it. But that's the only way you could control them. I had good crews.

MW: What was the meal schedule like after the early breakfast?

MS: Well, you'd have the early breakfast because usually you'd be laying out. If you did, you'd get the anchor up and get underway. Also, you could be on the bed at daylight. We worked from daylight to sunset, sunrise to sunset, and made a long day, then we had dinner around 11:00. Then we had a meal in the afternoon. Then the cook always had stuff sitting out if you want something later on to snack.

MS: I told the captain. He said, "I don't mind working eighteen hours a day, but six hours is just too short to sleep."

MS: Yes, well, lots of times we would get loaded up there, and we'd go down. We depended on the wind. Sometimes you'd have to sail all night to get back up the bay again to work. It made long days. But when you don't know any different, we didn't think anything about it.

MS: Yeah. We had known any better, we wouldn't be on this boat. [laughter].

MS: It wasn't long learning, though. I wanted to get on the after end. When that dredge went, it wasn't a whole lot of fun.

MS: I see these graceful pictures of, like, sixty schooners all going off on Sunday night.

It looks very graceful in the photograph. Was it really that graceful when everybody decides to leave at the same time, and the guy inside wants to go before the guy on the outside?

MS: Smaller boats and all, they had to leave early to get up there. Now a lot of what was so-called new boats, the bigger ones, they'd leave maybe midnight and all and sail up and be on the grounds in the morning. But with a smaller boat and things, you couldn't do it. They usually, the first two weeks, we stayed aboard for the first two weeks. Then that would mean we'd work on that Saturday and on. Then after that, would come home, and we had a day to get our grub and water and stuff back aboard the boat. Patrick dredges up and go back for the following week. But the first of the week was usually two weeks. You get a little scurvy by that time.

MS: So, I'd say two weeks today.

MW: How long did the season last?

MS: Oh, two, four months, May and June, and that was all under sail.

MS: You people think that there wasn't any engines in the boat. You see this thing hanging on the back of that boat there? That's got an engine in it. You were allowed to use that to go and

come – sometimes you couldn't tell your oyster ground. There wasn't a bit of wind. You were allowed to put that under your stern and push the boat. So, it wasn't 100 percent sail.

MS: But no way could you use it to drudge oyster.

MS: No.

MS: When you guys were on the grounds, were the boats pretty competitive with each other, cutting each other off or anything like that?

MS: When we're working up the bay on a natural bed, yes, the big boats took charge.

MS: Did they?

MS: Yes. We had one old fella there. He didn't care which bough went on port or starboard. He'd go right through the fleet. But I guess the big boats, they did.

MW: I guess there must have been some, once in a while, collisions here and there?

MS: Yes, yes. We've had several of them come in the shipyards with the bowsprits knocked out. The old boats davits off of them. Well, William C. Lore, you remember that day was up there, perfectly calm, and his main fell down? Come down right over the wheel box and broke his jaw boat right into, and his engine fell out. There was no air.

MW: Was it just that they hadn't noticed had been rotting?

MS: No. What happened, they used to have liners up in the mastheads, same as on the *Ragan*. They'd go for twelve, fifteen years, and they got rotten. Now, when he was sailing, the sail took a strain off of it, the air. But when it got calm and it's laying there, a little bit of a roll thing fell right straight out. Then George Bell, before the war went down and rigged it up, put sails on it and took it up the bay. That's how it got fitted out. It really saved the boat, because she laid there with water for years, firewood floating around, no care.

FS: I understand he was not too happy about it being commandeered for the war.

MS: Well, it's just that's the only thing saved him. The only reason he got anything at all out of it. But George fitted it out and used it, that one spring, and the government took it. We took the spars out of it. They cut the waist off of it and used it for a fireboat. Then after the war, I was in *Bell Bay* ship and put the top timbers back and built a big pilot house on it and put a new engine in it. That's when Clyde Phillips bought it.

MS: I can remember going down looking at the *AJ Meerwald*. My dad, he was thinking about buying it at the time. Grass was growing right up in the scenes.

MS: He's right. She was neglected. The water in the hole and they stole all the brass deck plates out. They used to put salt in them to keep them from rotting. Somebody had taken them

on. Rainwater had gone right down in it. It's a wonder it was ever saved at all. Had a rough life.

MS: How many boats did they take and used for fireboats in New York Harbor, Second World War?

MS: Well, they took your boat. [inaudible] one you had.

MS: She was a fireboat, New York Harbor.

MS: The *Eleanor Robbins*, too. They took her for a boat.

MS: The Jenny Riggins, was she taken for a fireboat?

MS: [inaudible] I heard that. I don't know.

MS: The only Jenny Riggins [inaudible]. They bought that. Then it must have been the [inaudible], she was taken down for freight in Gulf of Mexico.

MS: hat's where *Mary Ella* went too. Down in Florida?

MS: She went to pieces in the Chesapeake. She got farmed in Chesapeake.

MS: No, I was always told, *Mary Ella*, they took her to Florida.

MW: Maybe we should ask Mary Ella.

FS: They were freighting lumber, and it caught fire.

MS: Well, I was told they...

FS: Somebody had bought it.

MS: They took it to Florida. They took empty bottles to Cuba and brought full ones back. [laughter]. At least that's straightened out. Now she's your lumber schooner instead of rum runner.

FS: I think she did freight something before the lumber. I don't remember what it was. Do you, Walter?

MS: They freighted tomatoes for one?

FS: Oh, well, they traded tomatoes all the time in the summertime after the oyster season was over.

MS: In Baltimore, I think.

FS: From Mount Royal. They would load up baskets of tomatoes all the way up. I don't know how many baskets, but we used to go with them.

MW: Where is Mount Royal?

FS: Mount Royal is over by...

MS: Bridgeton.

FS: Yes. It's further than Bridgeton. I'm trying to think.

MS: [inaudible]

FS: Yes. There's a little creek that went back in there. The farmers would bring their tomatoes in baskets. They would load the baskets on the boat. Then they would go out. I remember the little creek because daddy would take it. He had to back up and go forward and back up to get around the bends in the creek. Took forever to get out of the creek. At that time they had the canal, but it wasn't like it is today. It was just a canal, that's all, nothing on the sides or anything. We'd go through the canal down to Baltimore and go to the pier down there. Then they had a conveyor belt. There they would put the baskets of tomatoes at the canning house down there and unload the boat. Then they'd come back and take another load down. But they did that in the summertime to bring some money in.

MS: The schooners used to haul tomatoes out of Bridgeton, the camels.

MS: Yes. Every year.

MS: Yes. Mr. Richards used to buy tomatoes and load them onto schooners and take up the camels out of Bridgeton every summer.

MS: I heard there was something called the oyster police. I guess I had two questions. Why did you need police in the oyster industry? What did they do?

MS: You would think an oysterman would steal. [laughter]

MS: Was there some kind of...

MS: [inaudible] Your business was no better than what your neighbors were. You had good neighbors. You were fine. But I had one. I'm not mentioning any names again, but I'm pretty sure it was Billy [inaudible]. I had a ground down off of Thompson Beach with quite a few oysters on me, had a natural growth. I knew he had been getting over in it. So, we went down there. Of course, he didn't recognize it was a powerboat, got up in the ground and went up the side of him. I said, "Capt. so-and-so, what are you doing in here in this ground?" "Oh," he says, "we shot a duck. We're over here looking for it." [laughter] Our dredges over board, men down, calling on deck, piling them up. He left there. Later, I caught him in another ground I had up

outside of [inaudible]. In that time, he went out of the ground, come up to Marshalltown, dropped his dredges and things off and took the boat up to Millville and stripped it. He never dredged again after that. But it was no better than your neighbor, none whatsoever.

MW: On a similar note, I was told about a time when the river froze. There happened to be one boat that...

MS: That was in Cape May. That boat was down there doing a land office business. He could get up into the grounds from Cape May. But we couldn't get out from here to watch boats, couldn't get out. He was loading boxcars full in Cape May, shipped them to Baltimore. He did two or three years for that.

MS: Did he?

MS: Yes.

MW: So, you can tell us the name, I guess.

MS: Pardon?

MW: I guess that name must be public knowledge.

MS: Well, it is public knowledge. But yes, a lot of young folks, offsprings, and things. I wouldn't mention any names.

MS: He actually went to jail for that?

MS: Yes.

MS: The only one actually that ever went to jail for that.

MS: Actually, we had him went to jail now for rumrunning. [laughter]

MS: That's the only one that ever went to jail for stealing oysters.

MS: Yes. That's what the fronds was in my ground were afraid of. So, they went up, stripped their boat, and then let it sink.

MS: The story goes on the one on the rumrunning that the government confiscated the boat and drove a piling right through her.

MS: Oh, I'd see that down in the James River. She was up at Delaware, loaded, going up in Delaware. They got frightened and left the boat. Then they left. The boat was up there. The engine still idling. The boat drifted for about a day or two before anybody went on it. When they went aboard of it, they found it full of whiskey. So, then the government took the boat, unloaded it, took it to James River, put it in there by Hampton Roads and drove pounding

through the deck, right through the bottom so they couldn't ever move it again. That was [inaudible]. It was in Whistle Lake.

MS: Several of the oystermen caught bottles of Golden Wedding all the time.

MS: That was on the back creek. Instead of oystering that afternoon, we all quit and went dredging in the mouth, going up into back creek. We were catching cases of it right in the burlap bags. They'd be about that big and tall, just like they'd been thrown overboard. They all quit. Up the ship [inaudible] , there was a lot of it dumped too.

MS: I had that boat of mine, when I left, I'd been that night put out. The guys along side of me said they'd caught a pint of Golden Wedding. They just laid it under the winders there. They looked around. They saw somebody shooting at them. He said, "Hey, who took my whiskey?" They put it in a bucket of water and released – and keep a little pressure on it. It'd been all right. [inaudible] He exploded his whiskey. So, he didn't get a chance to drink it.

MS: Brought in here and a lot of it was dumped just below [inaudible]. The next day, they was down there in all kind of boats, including the mayor of Millville and his brother.

MS: [inaudible]

MS: You've heard that too. But anyway, my neighbor across the street put his up in the attic. His son got somebody to call him to come over to Salem, said they wanted to see him. He went there and stole his whiskey. I thought he was going to kill him. But they took the boat. It was the rest of the whiskey on it, to Morristown and hired a watchman on it. Then the next day, they come there. There wasn't a bottle of whiskey on it. No sign of anything, the case or anything. Boat was empty. The watchman was still aboard.

MS: I can tell you an interesting story on –

MS: You remember that.

MS: – on the whiskey story. My brother Frank took the *Walter Bateman* at the time. He caught some sacks of Golden wedding.

MS: Yes. That's right. That was back then.

MS: It was toward the end of the season. In other words, they brought the boat up to Morristown and had the deck corked. The fellow's name was Bill Valentine.

MS: Oh, God. Yes, I knew Bill well.

MS: Bill, he found the whiskey. First thing we knew, Bill was going down trying to cork the middle of the plank. [laughter]

MS: He was breaking his own seams.

MS: They unloaded a lot of whiskey at Lanning's Wharf in Chansey River too.

MS: That's right. They bought a lot of it down the west creek with horse and wagon on.
[inaudible]

MS: Yes, they made it to market because they had big trucks, staked body trucks with canvas tops, would come through Bridgeton with a big car in front and a big car in back from Lanning's Wharf.

MS: On the upper railway, we had one of those rum boats in there. They came in there, had been shot up with machine gun fire, loaded. We was over there plugging the holes on it. The Coast Guard come up, walk around and look it and left. But we also had one with a big one, old 110 fish boats out of Cape May, made regular runs to Camden. The police were there while they unloaded it all and escorted it in the trucks going into Philadelphia. But they never really enforced it until they made it a federal act. Then we had two friends. They were local citizens, went to jail. One of them was in Sing Sing. He was in a bakery. The other was a plumber. But they were local people. But that wasn't for stealing oysters. It was from rumrunning.

FS: It might be interesting to some people that are here that the state put all the bills on the watch boat. Wasn't that a state boat?

MS: Yes, I think you're right. Senator Reeves, I guess, was the...

FS: Yes. Senator Reeves.

MS: Yes, well, that was built in Dorchester, too. Yes, she was a quarterdeck, a nice boat, and when they rigged it up, she had a cook and all on it. It was always nice to go in there to get some warm bread or something.

MS: It was two main watch boats, that Jay Hammett Lake and the Furman Center. Furman Reeves.

MS: Jacoby had a watch boat for a while.

MS: They used her for years. They had a hatch on her front. They put a forward hatch on it. They put a nice, like a cabin on it, set on it, and the galley was down in there.

MS: She was before the Hammett Lake.

MS: Yes. The Hammett Lake cut the mast down on that while she was afloat. Yes, they took off about 10, 15- foot of both spars and did it without taking the mast out.

MS: In fact, one man was on the watch boat. He had arrested his neighbor for stealing oysters. I'm like, I don't make no names either. He said he felt bad about that. But he caught him stealing oysters. So, he had to arrest him.

FS: Well, I remember they used to take a lot of the state dignitaries out on the watch.

MS: Yes. Well, I think that's what they built it for, take them guys out.

FS: I think so too.

MS: Atlantic City, they took them out to Atlantic City, same boat. They put the awnings up on top. They'd go to Atlantic City.

MS: One time, Earth Day, and they towed the *Meerwald* up to the shipyard. Somebody asked about the *Senator Reeves*. Our people was there. I said, "I was told she sold for 1200." He said, "No, it was 1500, but she's up off Brigantine, somewhere out there."

MS: Oh, she went to pieces on Brigantine Bar.

MS: I have the working model of the *Senator Reeves* when she was built.

MS: Was the *Reeves* built as a watch boat? It had the lines of a pleasure boat.

MS: Built as a watch boat.

MS: It was built as a watch boat.

MS: Yes. It wound up being a pleasure boat, I think. [laughter]

MS: Well, Barney Crozier was captain.

MS: Yes, there's a good picture of it in that collection of photos.

MS: I remember the rig.

MS: I have it over in a museum. Any of you folks want pictures, you can go to that library and take photos of those pictures. But I did that because I had so many people that had pictures loaned out and asked. I never got them back.

MS: Welcome to the club.

MS: Yes. Well, I know.

MS: Gene and I were talking a little while ago. I was two years, one time getting pictures back. Another man, wound up with him, didn't know he had them in his file. So, I went to see him. He said, "No, I don't have your pictures." He wrote me a letter, said, "I'm sorry I lied to you. I got your pictures. Don't even know what I'm doing with them." But I did get them back. So, it took me two years. So, I quit loaning stuff out.

MS: So, you have your crew out there for that two weeks. I mean, if you're done oystering for the day, what'd you do for entertainment while you're out?

MS: [inaudible]

MS: You need no entertainment after drudging all day.

MS: If there was no wind at all, we'd lay with our dredges. Now, if you were up the bay and partly loaded and could get down, you would drift with the tide, you could – as long as you kept moving, you'd catch oysters. Sometimes you could catch oysters the southwest line. Remember that bid was in there? But other times, if you were up on a bed not loaded, you'd lay there to your dredges. They might play a few games of cards or go take a nap. But we had no trouble that way. No trouble.

MS: What about on Saturday night? What did you do?

MS: Well, they were short on Saturday nights.

MS: Saturday nights were strange. Of course, somebody asked about what some of them did for entertainment. But Billy had seen it. Arthur has, too. He used to have bosses come up from Baltimore with ladies for entertainment. [inaudible] You've seen it? Yes. They did.

MS: Yes. James, he called me up about it. I've got a lot of stories, but I can't tell them in mixed company. [laughter] I'd be kicked out of here.

MS: These are facts. That's the reason I wouldn't mention any names.

FS: On weekends, there used to be a lot of excitement sometimes when they stab each other and kill each other.

MS: Yes. One murdered and four beat down here.

FS: Yes.

MS: Then they came down, one season. Of course, at that time we used to have a lot of oyster scowls. I had them too. But they came down there. They must have arrested sixty or eighty people down there for shooting crap on a weekend. Do you remember that?

MS: Yes.

MS: That's what they did. They had some well-known people there.

MS: Well, they kept pretty good order because they had a real good sheriff.

FS: That was Uncle Dan, wasn't it? My Uncle Dan Adams was a great big man.

MS: Oh, he was a hulk of a man.

MS: When he kicked the door in and see that great big foot coming in, everybody settled down.

MS: He had a lot of respect.

MS: Yes, he sure did.

FS: You had Carl Robbins for the justice of the peace. Uncle Dan would be hauling them down to Carl Robbins. Uncle Dan could just take a hold of him, that was it.

MS: Did any crewmen go overboard and drownings or anything of that nature?

MS: Oh, yes, dear, your boat that you've got had three drowned on it the first season. What they'd done, they'd put the – I seen it afterwards. They put the foot chains up far when you stand on it, go out and raise. They put them on there with open hooks, instead of using a shackle with a bolt through it. The eyes opened up. It was heavy sea, surging, pushed your mast and everything else, put a strain on it, but the extra weight on there, the eyes opened up.

MS: So, would you call it a dangerous job for crew?

MS: What was what?

MS: Would it be a dangerous job for a crewman, do you think?

MS: Well, you wanted one hand for yourself all the time. You wouldn't be hanging on. Yes, it was dangerous. But when you're both wasn't equipped or fitted out right then you were in danger. That's the same as those guys. I was up there one day. Old man John Sharp went in there with just a little light air. He was coming past me on the windward side. They went to take down her jib. A fellow fell off the bowsprit when he went by, mate back there. He reached over and got a hold of him, pulled him on. But yes, if it had been real bad weather and blowing hard, the man couldn't swim. He'd have been blown. He'd have been blown.

MS: What about other kinds of danger out here on the Chesapeake? They had oyster war.

MS: Yes. They come from Virginia into Delaware around – Maryland and Virginia over the line. Yes, they shoot at them with rifles down there.

MS: Then if you had somebody you didn't like on there, that's how they paid them off.

MS: You paid off with the boom. That's right.

MS: Get back out there, have them go reach the sail or something like that. They jibe it over and knock them over. They actually did it.

MS: I heard about that. Did that happen around here, too?

MS: `We didn't have it in Jersey.

MS: No, I never heard anything on our bay here.

MS: But one thing too, down there they would share boats. I'd be on the way in and get the guy up there and reef and see. They roll the wheel down. There's one less share you got to put up. The guys worked with me. I told them I was going to pay them off Chesapeake style. No, no, no.

MS: This ain't Mary Ellen talking about. One of the main things that happened on here. We had murders on them too, like that. We had one I was on. The cook had one eye. His eyelid – apparently he'd been in a fight and was cut off with a razor or something. His eye was open all night long when he laid there in the bunk. He was put, made a good sweet potato pie. But he got in an argument with a fellow one weekend down there. He conked him with a frying pan, killed him. Then on your *Meerwald*, which you have, when Clyde Phillips owned it down there, we had one fella on there that was an excellent cook. But he'd had a pet raccoon on there. He had a name, a box for a while. But we had one fella going there. He wasn't just right, he'd been over there in Burma, summers, in the war and come back. But the cook asked him one day, would come down to Monday morning. He had a nice mustache trimmed and all. Cook asked old Skinner. He was sitting at the table. He says, "How do you like my mustache?" Well, Skinner looked at it. He says, "Well," he says, "You're either a barber or so and so." I never seen it so quick in my life. He snapped a razor out, had it right on his Adam's apple. "Now," he says, "which am I?" "You're a barber." [laughter] The same token, Martha had been missing the pictures off the wanted people in the post office. So, she got to watching that. She seen a hand come in there one day through there and snap, card was gone. She looked. It was our cook on a *Meerwald*. She notified...

MS: They still do that on *Meerwald*.

MS: He barred the crew. So, he was wanted for murder down south. He murdered a man in the warehouse. But the people up here, he'd been associated with him. He'd been in their church and helping them. They fought like the devil to keep him here. But they couldn't do it. But that was the *Meerwald's* cook. So, I had to go get another cook. A lot of strange things happen.

MW: I heard about some kind of fishing excursions and family affairs out on the boats in the off season. Any recollections of that kind of thing?

MS: Oh, we all did.

FS: Yes, everybody did.

MS: Everybody did. I'd be out there with a group of them, especially holidays, 4th of July all days, and be out there. They didn't want to come home. I'd have to throw the bait overboard. A lot of them took cruises, went down to Chesapeake, up at Delaware, Bordentown, up through there. It was a lot of family affairs.

MS: Did you ever go to Bowers Beach or the Big Thursday?

MS: Oh, my gosh. Yes.

MS: My father brother used to go furnish the music for.

MS: What's a Big Thursday?
What is that?

MW: Tell him what a Big Thursday is, Charlie.

MS: I don't know. They wouldn't take me.

MW: It was the first day of the season, right? The first day of the oyster season over there?

MS: Yes. Then they used to take oysters from here. Well, Dr. Hoffman and them, they used to take them to Wilmington. They used to go up there and lay there. They'd get a hold of oysters and go up and sell them. A lot of them went to Bordentown. A lot of them spent their whole winters just going up there and selling oysters off the boat. Even the Millville, they used to have one laid there below the bridge, selling oysters.

MW: Do you remember any family excursions on an off season?

MS: We'll go out fishing. Not really. Not family.

FS: Friends.

MS: Three or something like that.

It wasn't interesting, like carrying the fishing parties. They get more interesting—

MS: When they had a lot of fish in the bay, they used to bring – on the weekends, they used to run trains, special trains down here. Billy remembers that, and the oyster boats would carry them over from Bivalve. I think it was about \$5 a head. But the worst trouble that I had was that I ran out of Anglesey. They would go around and sell tickets to drunks in the saloons. When I got them, they were already drunk.

MS: Taking a party out from the brewery and having several drums of beer on board.

MS: That's no place to drink.

MS: Oh, terrible.

FS: Do you have some of that sort of experience?

MS: Moonlight rides. They bring excursion trains down for people to go out on their schooners

and moonlight.

MS: We used to have family outings on Labor Day, Sunday. I remember family would come down from Philly. One particular Sunday, out of nine cars coming down, eight of them got speeding tickets. They were supposed to leave at like 8:00. They'd leave Philly late. [laughter] We used to every year, had family outings. Then we had a group. Mr. McCauley. They were steeplejacks. We used to take in fishing once a year. But they would climb the mast and jump off. So, we'd have to go back and get them. It was always a lot of fun.

FS: Somebody has always got a fishhook in their finger.

MS: Oh, yes. In their ear. In the behind.

FS: Somebody on board always had to...

MS: You could cut them off.

MS: Yes, I cut a few out, but my patients all fainted. [laughter]

MS: You're a poor doctor there.

MS: One time, I had a big blue crab. You going to show a guy how to put to sleep? [inaudible] [laughter].

FS: Wow.

MS: I saw a dog shark one time take a big hunk right out of the man's stomach.

MS: He'd do it.

MS: He was drunk, fooling around. He sobered in a hurry.

MW: I bet he did.

MS: Much of any other commercial fishing here or crabbing or anything at the time.

MS: [inaudible] Well, you make about four years in one year. Well, actually, a fishing season or a dredging season or whatever, you had May and June. One year you went up the bay. That was two months. A year while you shad fished. Well, that was, what, four to six weeks or whatever.

MS: It started in February.

MS: If somebody started counting up the years on you, you'd be about 200 years old in a little less than no time.

MS: But they'd trotline the crabs in the [19]20s. In the later years, they got into potting them up

there. But Delaware Bay always has produced a lot of crabs. In the winter months we would take our oyster boats and go down this side of 14-foot in that mud. We'd dredge down there. At that time, they used sugar barrels that hold about three bushel, actually. But we got \$3 a barrel. They were shipped to Chesapeake where they picked them. That's what we got for them.

MS: Was there any picking here?

MS: Any what?

MS: Any picking houses?

MS: Herb [inaudible] had a picking house down their [inaudible].

MS: The boys did too.

MS: There were two.

MS: Yes, boy's shucking house.

MS: What about soft crabs? They do much soft crab here?

MS: Oh, yes. I had property down here that I sold to the Reid brothers. No, it wasn't me. Who did buy it from me? But anyway, the Chesapeake Company came up here and put the tanks and things in there.

Now, is that still working?

MS: It is working in the summer.

MS: Yes, that was my property where that is. He'd load them down there and take them away and drop the trailers. But they had trouble with them to learn out they had to filter the water. It was too much dirt and stuff in them, for the crabs. But they're doing it now, he said this summer. I bought that property for \$800 and a double-barreled Stevens shotgun. [laughter] Yes, there's a lot of odd things.

FS: How old were you all when you started up the bay?

MS: I was about fourteen, actually. I was still in school. But they let us out early so we could go on the boats. Anybody was big enough or old enough, you worked. You didn't sit around.

MW: That's what our dad was, fourteen, when he started.

MS: That's right. Yes. Went on an old [inaudible] sloop [inaudible]. It was a nice sloop, real nice one. Later on...

FS: How about you, Billy?

MS: Pardon?

MS: I don't remember. See, me, I've been on boats all my life. I was right down five. So, I've been around them all.

MS: I had some boats. I had two, one they call the alphabet, JW, no, CW and SPS. Yes. Now they owned a Langhammer in the [19]30s before I went with the Navy.

MS: Yes, I remember that.

MS: She never did have an engine in her whole life. I sold her to Doc Sharpe before I went up there. After the war, well, was later part during the war, I bought the *Maggie S Myers* [inaudible]. That boat was built in Bridgeton. She's still afloat. She was built in [19]94.

MS: [19]93.

MS: [19]93.

MS: Arthur, how old were you when you went up the bay?

MS: Well, I guess a little complicated. I've been acquainted with the oyster business, I guess, since I was ten years old. I wanted to be an oysterman. Dad said, "No, you have to go to college." So, I went, but I wound up with the oyster business. But I had captains take the boat. But all my life, I've been associated with the oyster business. But at the same time, I was a chemist for thirty-seven years.

MS: Joe, how about you?

MS: How old were you when you first went on an oyster boat?

MS: Oh, I got out of school, seventeen, eighteen.

MS: When he was young.

MS: I heard a man, like, talk about a Big Thursday. What was Big Thursday for?

MS: I can't tell you. They never took me over there. I was too little.

MS: Well, Bill Riggins, he had a boat called the [inaudible].

MS: Tell him up there.

MS: Big party. Big party.

MS: He was having trouble with a friend. They were supposed to fight it out on Big Thursday.

MS: In August, I think it was, one Thursday in August.

MS: How are you doing, Jack?

MS: All right.

MW: If there is anyone that doesn't know Jack King. He's the mayor of [inaudible], aren't you? Jack, when did you start working on boats?

MS: When I was in high school, I used to go down and join up in the county orchards. She used to come in the 1st of September. I ride my bicycle down and count oysters. [inaudible] You had a wooden basket made by [inaudible].

MS: I still got some.

MS: Yes. We picked up two orchards. Two on his hand, two on our hand, tie them together and put them in this basket. You sat on the rim of the basket. I don't know as many guys left that ever county orchard. Maybe you did.

MS: I did.

MS: He did.

MS: Well, all I do is walk across the street and jump the scow and go to work.

MS: After the nights got shorter and stuff, I worked there about a month or two. I graduated from high school in [19]46. So, it was about that. Me and another guy bought a boat in 1956. I think it was a real boat. When it went bad, I drove a truck all over the United States for [inaudible]. Every time I thought it was a place where they had some groceries, South Carolina and North Carolina and Georgia and Florida and Maryland and Delaware, I take Venice Mays Trucking there and set a spell. [laughter]

MS: Yes, but we had two local trucks carrying oysters to California run into each other out there, right out in the open. There was nothing for 50miles either way. Davis didn't come out of success until one night Frankie Janko was running one run right up in the back, the other truck. He wouldn't pay off because – collision people wouldn't pay off because, one, they were both company trucks. Yes, but it's not as much today. I loaded Ronnie Bevins with 304 bushels, and I sent a 110 bushel down on Cabott. I'm waiting on another truck for a couple hundred. I sent fifty to New York. That was today.

MS: Yes. But you know one thing, when I was shipping to Philadelphia and New York, I always had to put a few extra bushels on. Those fellows would sell some before they got there, regardless. They wouldn't take too many, maybe four or five sacks gone before you got the market.

MS: Years ago, they used to freight orchards out of Long Island. They had them great big

camps, big oysters, and take them down here to stones and run them down to Baltimore. They had old captains ready to Oyster bar there and out in Smithville. They'd stop, unload a few. I think they got about 12, \$15 for driving all the way out to Shelter Island.

MS: I run them from boat down there to [inaudible] for several years, winter months.

MS: Not many left that ever sailed a boat, and there's not many left that ever counted orchard on a scale. I'm probably the youngest one. Billy was a little older than me. I remember him doing that to me.

MS: You mean I'm older than you? [laughter]

MS: I'll be seventy in two weeks. I don't know how old you are.

MS: I won't to tell you.

MS: But orchard has had its ups and downs, I've talked to a lot of people and know a lot of people in the orchard. It's all over the country. They say that you can't raise orchards anymore, anything higher than fifteen or sixteen parts of saltwater or a thousand or whatever it is. Ronnie Bevans plants a lot of oysters down there. He keeps his in about fifteen parts. They got nineteen parts up the bay on Shell Rock. 1935, they had a starboard report. I don't know whether many of them left or not. Luther Jeffreys had one, and I read it. The southwest line was fifteen parts. They never used to bring them down there to old Miles Gandy and plant them in on that ground way inshore there, the last one in about halfway down from False Egg Island to Island Point. He'd leave him there. Then he'd go out. I heard Norman tell it, he'd go out there and get some of them oysters and shake them. See if the water run out of them, said not time to replant them yet. When water would come out of them, then he'd let Norman Jeffreys go replant them off to [inaudible] down in deep water where they get fat.

MS: Where they're catching oysters now, bringing them to market. When we were up there, planting them on our beds and then replanting them, like he says, we take them out to [inaudible] so they fatten up for market. But those oysters were so small. They're about the size of the end of your finger. You get a real bad breeze of wind under the main boom. It would blow some of them overboard. The wind would blow them out. They're that light. But the salt content, when I was in the business, they had record then of about thirty-some years and had increased every year. An oyster, like he says, they'll stay alive maybe up to nineteen or twenty-one parts, but they're not – like he says, it has to be less than that to really thrive. But we use too much freshwater out of the Delaware River that you can't ever expect to have an oyster business again, unless they can find summers on a globe that will live in that condition. But so far, they haven't.

MS: But some of these guys in Virginia, there's a guy down in Brass Neck, Virginia, John Vigilata, he went down there from Long Island. His family had a big duck farm up there. He went in the clam business. He went down and bought this place. He's got a guy from Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences. They're hatching out the young oysters and putting them in floats. They leave them in fifteen parts, twelve to fifteen parts. Then when they begin to show up that they're getting a little disease, they move them up into five parts and leave them there for thirty

days and move them back down. He said they won't get fat, but at least we can sell them on shell orchard.

MS: In France, they do real good there. But most of theirs, like you took these metals and dug pawns in them. They can regulate the amount of water that flows in and out of them. They've been real successful there.

MS: When I went to high school in 1942, a guy lived up there in Newport on the curve where the school is, Don Bass, where that Newport Service Center is now. He had his wagon, a little express wagon, like a kiddie pool, put a pair of tongs on it, walked down to Beaver Dam and rode down to Joslin Ponds with the tide, catch a bushel or two of oysters, put them in that little wagon and take them up there and shuck them. Edson and Turner had a bus, thirty-nine international. About once a week, Don Bass would come on the bus with a market basket like that and have pints and quarts of oysters in there, take them up the bridge, and sell them around the Cumberland Hotel. People used to make a living just off the land. You can't do it anymore.

MS: I remember that little red lunch wagon, Hansey and Bridgeton sits there. He used to come down and take all the stuff that we called out. Like you said, he's calling out of the baskets. He'd get the trash, take them up there, and chuck them out. That's where he got his oysters from. He was there every week.

AH: A story like this, an old Black fellow came into the museum one day. He was telling me, when he was young, he had a skiff. He would go out with hand tongs to get oysters. He says when he was young, he supported himself and his family doing that. Then he would take the oysters and sell them, like you say, in Bridgeton and around here.

MS: [inaudible] would buy orchards and plant them. Then Luther Bateman – what was that guy's name on that?

MS: Dan Harris?

MS: No.

MS: Teddy Bateman?

MS: Beef Head?

MS: Beef Head, yes. [laughter]

MS: Yes. He'd run the booth for him. Joe would buy a pot of orchards with me to [inaudible]. He bought oysters year-round off them.

MS: You guys, you better not put an oyster down and let him see it laying down on the dock anywhere. He'd pick it up and do something. He'd never destroy an orchard.

MS: Jonathan died in 1968, about eighty-five then.

MS: A millionaire. They owned the ferry system over here, Newcastle. He owned in the bay. But when they wanted to see his – the IRS wanted to check his books and accounts, he brought out baskets, I mean, and piled them, sitting out there on a dock all loose. Everything he had was thrown in these baskets. They had to sort it and come out with it. But by the time they got done working on him and everybody else involved in it, there was nothing left. There was nothing left.

MS: You all seen the bonfire out there, the papers they didn't go through. [laughter]

MS: Yes. This is the truth. That's the way he done business.

MS: Yes. There was something going on in town. If you look back, the oyster industry wrote a book to the governor, addresses the governor of the state of the oyster business in here. There's still some books around that, about that.

MS: The only one had this great big oysters like that. Somebody call up. All right. Bye. Bang down with receiver. You want them? He had a price for his oysters. You paid the price or goodbye. He slammed his phone down .

MS: [inaudible] used to come down there hunting, Joe and Danny, down Turkey Point. Joe was at odds, something over ground. They didn't pay the lease or something on the ground. Joe then took it up. Well, then thought he didn't do right. See? So, Leonard get the captain there, old man Leach. He get him to go out there and pick out two or three bushels, nice, round, single ones down there to deep water, just fat as pork. He'd get up there. Leonard set this basket of oysters up on the well. Had a little fenced in place there with an open well on it. He'd set it on top of that. Had a lot of people there, their friends from everywhere. Well, then he'd stay there and open them oysters up. Look at that. How fat that one is. He said, "Joe can't buy one of them." [laughter] They were at odds over this ground. A lot of characters around them days.

MW: What are some other nicknames?

MS: Coon can.

MW: What was that?

MS: Coon can.

MW: Coon Can?

MS: Marty Lee.

MS: You don't talk about – you remember old Winky Dink? [laughter] He was about 6- foot, big, raw-boned man. So, one day down at Bivalve store, he said, "Bill, you know what?" I said, "What ink?" He says, "I started the show with a bushel clams. I fell overboard. Now I have a half bushel clams." I said, "Thank God, run that by me a little slower." So, what it amounted to,

he started assuring he had a bushel of clams. He fell overboard with it. When he come up, he had half a bushel of clams. He brought them ashore with him. But he had made a basket clams like that. [laughter]

MS: I read about before new Jersey claimed...

MS: Some of them did come over here. Yes. But we also had people from Jersey, went over and worked in Delaware for Newcomb. They was replanting oysters onto their ground. But they also had some ground of their own they planted on. Joe knew it. I talked to him. He says, "Yes, but I'm still making a profit." They're stealing off of him, and he let them go.

MS: What did you pay for your permit for your lease like...

MS: Well, what used to be around \$2 or so. Then they dropped it to, what, 50 cents when things went bad.

MS: What was the total square footage or yards or-

MS: Well, the grounds were in acres, but they varied. Some of them were little 6 to 8 acres. But if you had an oyster boat, you needed about 16, 18 acres to work on it, be able to handle your boat. But I had 700, 760-something acres at one time when the price was up. When it started to go bad, they couldn't understand what I was selling some of it. But I knew the salinity had been raising. The oyster business didn't look good. I was working for Stan Bateman at the time. A lot of the grounds up here on the shore sand were dead then. That's when that disease started showing up then. But that was because of the salinity was too high. It gets over [19]21, they can't live.

MS: Now we're a little better vantage than they are in Long Island now. Long Island lost a lot of oysters this year, this fall. MSX got them. But you see, I'm wondering, maybe in Long Island, the Hudson River comes down, but it goes right on out to the ocean. Most of the Long Island sand is fed from the rivers in Connecticut and Rhode Island, and the water comes in from the ocean. Anybody don't have fifteen parts for oysters for this Dermo and MSX, they're in trouble. Now got up to nineteen percent on some of the beds, shell rock sand, and they begin to die. But they lost 40 percent in some places. But then we caught a good gross.

MS: In my time, I think what caused the biggest damage when they started taking water from a Delaware River for New York City. The biggest part of their water comes from a Delaware watershed.

MS: They've got big aqueducts running over there.

MS: They've got tunnels.

MS: That dumps in the Hudson River and goes on out and don't come down to Delaware River.

MS: We've had thousands and thousands of homes and industries on the river, the freshwater is

gone. A lot of the water is used three or four times before it ever gets down here.

MS: In 1957, when he had MSX show up, was it really dramatic for you guys in the industry or is it...

MS: Oh, yes.

MS: What happened that year?

MS: [inaudible] said it made us all equal. [laughter].

MS: I had not. That was right. I run the grounds that was completely dead.

MS: Oh, Bill Berry and Herman Berry was buying crabs down there. They had a ground up that went on the southwest line had some Chesapeake's. They rented some oysters out of James River in there. They called them Chesapeake. They were round, single, about that big. I remember Bill Berry saying, "That'll make a handsome ground. Next fall, we're going to leave them. Next fall, they got 500 bushels of them. They planned 5,000, James Rivers there, Chesapeake.

MS: . I used to buy down there in the Catherine Elma, James River, and bring them up here for Stillman's. Now, I'm selling the guy in Virginia Beach, the guy in Norfolk, guy in Newport News. The James River don't have many oysters. They're doing some down there. Now, this guy, I do a lot of business with, Ronnie Bevins, he bought that Lake Howard ground down there. They give us two or \$300,000 for that. But that's way up above the ridge in the fresher water. Anything from the bridge down, they can – Mobjack Bay, that's where we used to load down there just below where that bridge is.

MS: You're buying that Joe Brice, did you that Hogan Brice?

MS: I didn't buy one bushel of it. The guy I knew, a guy down there named Jack Johnson and Buddy Wilson's uncle there. He said some of these oyster farmers up here, went down there, and stayed in the motel, said they'd get up and raise the price the next morning on each other. All he had them guy down there was making plenty of money collecting that brush on Chincoteague side. A bunch of oysters that big, bring them up here, and they don't loose – trucks, ten-wheeler trucks, bring them down there and shove them overboard and take them out and plant them.

MS: Look like a bunch of bananas.

MS: So, they raised the price on each other and raise the prices.

MS: [inaudible] half inch to an inch wide, and I guess long and all down in these fingers, there was bores in there, that they brought here from the Chesapeake, when they showed them off, all these bores all over the bottom the trucks, all over. So, they probably didn't help our bay a lot either.

MS: I didn't buy one bushel, but I had grounds planted around me. I never got anything. No return at all.

MS: Well, people didn't plant it.

MS: Got it all over the ground till that stuff rolled all over the place.

MS: They planted all summer long.

MS: Brush oysters had a lot of dermo in it when it was brought up.

MS: Had everything in it.

MS: Well, we didn't have no dermo until they started bringing that stuff out of Chesapeake, I believe that's where it come from.

MS: The origin of the dermo, the first wave of dermo, that was started back in the early [19]50s. They started to bring huge quantities of it. They didn't have any seed to plant. They brought up huge numbers of both lower Chesapeake oysters as well as the brush oysters. Every place that they planted oysters from the south, they had dermo. That was the suspicion in 1957 that that first mortality out there, deep water, was due to dermo.

MS: I first seen it on Shoal Sand.

MS: Shoal Sand, they had some too. But most of the mortality in [19]57 was confined to that one area. That's where they had planted a lot of fresh oysters. Well, it turned out not to be dermo.

MS: Whiteburn, he had one of his buoy grounds off towards 14 foot. He had that Hog Island brush clear out there. It had rolled. So, that stuff rolled all over the bay. Everybody got it. Well, he wondered or not.

MS: Joe Lore, Nicky Coleman claims that he was the only man ever made money on brush. He had a ground there and said it was like a hole there. Everybody's washed in it on, he said. I don't think he'd go around telling that, would he, Joe? How much money he made because everybody's brush washing on his ground.

MS: He was the only one made any money then. Nobody else.

MW: Well, I know you and Nicky were pretty good friends. I know I heard a couple of stories from Nicky before he passed on. Can you share any of Nicky's favorite stories?

MS: Let me tell you about Nicky Campbell and his marriage.

MW: I think we should hear about Nicky.

MS: Do you think you want to hear about it [inaudible]. He left her. He married another woman. She didn't suit him either. So, he left her. He married a third time. Who do you think he married?

MW: His first wife.

MS: He married his first wife.

MS: [laughter] Nicky was a bird.

MS: She's still living in Newport. She's ninety or something.

MW: Well, Nicky was quite an entrepreneur, wasn't he?

MS: Yes, yes.

MW: He used to tell me about going to sleep with a shotgun next to him, because he was worried about someone who did not like how he did business or...

MS: Yes.

MS: He had a gun on the boat when I was up there. Kenny Robinson and Nicky was buddies. When I started dredging boat in the early [19]60s, middle [19]60s, they wouldn't tell me what I was doing wrong. We tried to hire a captain, couldn't hire one. So, I said, I'll get two weeks vacation from driving truck and go dredge a boat. So, Nicky, he was a bird. They wouldn't tell me what I was doing wrong, wouldn't tell me a bit of what I was doing wrong, and make fun of me. Well, they didn't bother me none because I was learning from it. See, they was telling me what, but they'd say, "Look at him. That comes up, feller with that long – look how much chain he's got up. Man, had to out too much change." All kinds of things they'd say. I learned by just listening to what they had to say back and forth to him. They wouldn't tell me how to how to do that. Nicky was a bird. But getting back to dermo, they was bringing some orchards up here a while back in the late [19]80s and maybe early [19]90s, late [19]80s, somewhere in the [19]80s, late [19]80s. They was putting them on a boat. They was getting them from Chesapeake and putting the small ones on a boat and taking them out and planting them here on first oyster grounds after you got outside the tongers line. I told Ronnie, I said, "You know what these guys are doing? They're sorting out the big oysters and taking these little Chesapeake's out there and planting them." I never heard Ronnie cuss too much. He said, "Oh, my God." He said, "They're not doing that." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, that's the end of the business." That's where it started. Dermo started this time, in shore. Old man Boyd Robinson, they left some grounds to some of their kids. I went into the shellfish office, and here was these Robinson brothers grounds that they'd thrown out some of the next generation. So, I took it up. One of them has solid growth in their eighty, number eighty-two, number eighty-three, about 30-some acres of them, solid growth. But the dermo was 100 percent infection with a five incidents. By fall, went out there and couldn't find a live one nowhere. I had another ground off shore, had a little growth on it, that was that was like 80 percent infected with an incident of about two. I did run some of them washes, but that killed every oyster in the river and every orchard on the

[inaudible] bed. It started spreading right offshore. That was the end of that. Now, that Robin's boy, Bobby Robins, runs some from down there too, down there to Pierce's right off the first grounds you come to off of the land there, in Cape May County. That's been in the Robin's family for years. No dermo in that. Dermo don't spread like SMX. SMX will spread. It stays there longer. Dermo is more localized. If you plant oysters, and Ronnie Bevans said, Ronnie plants a lot of oysters, he'll plant a 100,000, 150,000 bushels of oysters a year himself. He only carries 168 shuckers. He said that you got to go – if Dermo is here, you've got to plant over there where there isn't anything. Kenny Turner planted two weeks out there, the year that – [19]91, when they all died. Kenny done the best because he planted way off there, way offshore toward the channel on old ground that these Robins threwed out, and I took it up. He planted on there. He got the best turnout of anybody because it was in an isolated place. Dermo don't travel.

MS: It's the proximity.

MS: Dermo won't travel like SMX will. SMX is an intermediate host or something that will travel.

MS: We have six years bad everywhere. We don't know how it's transmitted from whatever the intermediate host is to the oysters. But when it's bad in one place, it's bad everywhere. Whereas, dermo, it's very related to how close you are to dermo-infected oysters.

MS: Did it affect up the natural seed beds?

MS: It's all the way up to Arnold.

MS: Oh, I'm not too sure of that.

MS: The answers don't get as high.

MS: The prevalence is the same, but the weighted prevalence, the intensity of the infections gets less and less and less as you go up. It gets to the point where it doesn't kill the oysters. The salinity gets low enough so the oysters are infected, but they don't die.

MS: The weighted prevalence is the amount of, if I'm right, is the amount of plankton that you're able to consume and continue with life. As the weighted prevalence gets higher, they starve to death. Is that right?

MS: Well, that's maybe that's one of the theories as to why the oysters die. But that's only part of the story. There's also a toxic factor. They call it the cytolytic factor. The actual tissues come apart inside the oyster, whether they're feeding or not. I'm talking about how dramatic it was in 1958. I remember going out. Norm Jeffries invited Doc Nelson. Doc Nelson, of course, needed someone to drive us. So, he asked me to go along to go try their grounds on the. That was a typical holiday on Labor Day weekend. We went out to try his grounds. They had the family and all his friends, and boat loaded with people. They even had an extra cook. They had a cook and an assistant cook on board. We started trying grounds right up here in the cove. There are a lot of dead oysters. We moved offshore. There were still dead oysters. In fact, Doc Nelson had

me on my hands and knees counting boxes. He didn't believe me. He said, "Count it over again. You must have made a mistake." We got out to the edge of where Norman had oysters in New Jersey. They were all dead. His face was getting longer and longer. He said, "Well, but I've got those oysters over in Delaware." He was in partnership with one of the hands over there. We went over to Delaware to try the grounds. They were all dead in Delaware as well. But it turned from a celebration into a funeral really.

MS: Well, they died a year later in Blake's Channel in Delaware than they did in Jersey. They died in Jersey in [19]57, [19]58. [19]59 and [19]60 was when they died in Delaware, one year later.

MS: Had had planted Cape Shore oysters in [19]57 in Delaware.

MS: He made good on those.

MS: Well, that's a [19]55 planting made good on. The [19]57 plantings, he lost it all. [19]55 plantings, he made three to one or four to one. We don't know. We have the numbers on that.

MS: Did he tell you what he did when he took them over there too?

MS: He broke them up with ice. I remember Martin on the boat.

MS: That's what he did. You would think he would kill everything in it, but he didn't.

MS: Brought them through ice choppers, two ice choppers up on the balcony. He shoved them in the ice choppers and ground them up and put them overboard.

MS: He must have killed two-thirds of them when he did it.

MS: Eight or 9 thousand spat per bushel, don't make any difference.

MS: [inaudible] planted down there for years. They went to the shucking house with Bill. They never got any return.

MS: There were many mortality factors in that area.

MS: But when the last season I planted, I planted the nicest oysters I ever got out of Delaware up on the seed beds. I went out 1st of September to look at them. I opened them up then. All you could see in there, you could look right through them, and just see the veins in there. Just starved right to death. I didn't even get my planting back on that.

MS: That's the way they were this far. We had an awful time selling oysters because they're not fat. If it wasn't for some of these guys that you see the shells you're [inaudible] – when it left Jersey and Maryland, went to Connecticut picked up in volume, and James River, a lot of them went out to the James River. Well, the guys, the dealers down there would start selling at James River. A lot of people that I sell oysters to, twenty-five to this guy, fifty to that guy, and a guy

down in Virginia Beach, he ordered a hundred for Monday. He was using Louisiana's. They're bulking on Louisiana's. But that's where the bulk of mine go. They were so poor. They just begin to pick up a little bit now. I noticed I opened some new beds today. They had fill the shell out. They had lost the veins like you're talking about.

MS: That's no good. I've never seen a time since I want to get back in the oyster business, and I was in it for years. No way. Tough battle.

MS: Are you getting a decent price now, or the Louisiana oysters are still...

MS: No, we're selling for twenty, twenty-one.

MS: They've got enough money to get into it. You've got enough money to stay out of it.

MS: You're right.

MS: [laughter] Old Frankie Moore went up there Joe Nichol's mausoleum. He opened the mausoleum up, looked in the casket. He got to leave Joe a check. See, take his money, leave the checks. No money in there.

MS: My daddy used to [inaudible] about that. Do what you do if you like it.

MS: Well, I think you have two, haven't you, Jack?

MS: Oh, yes. [laughter] I don't want to quit yet.

MW: How about the little guys? Talk about the mosquito fleet and the people that tonged and...

MS: Oh, the mosquito fleet at one time, Dividing Creek was the main one in that. They had this dozens of boat packed. When I was young, I was around, I guess 350, 400 boats left. There had been up around 500 at one time. But you could tell along the river banks when they had a real bad spell and all. The vessels that were sunk and the whole river was lined with them. Hard times, they would throw them on a bank instead of trying to keep them afloat. But then even in the [19]30s, it was the Depression years and all like that. But we did have oysters to sell. Now, I sold a lot of them at 75 cents a bushel, but we had something to sell. But when they got up to \$6 a bushel, which I thought was an awful high price, we had nothing. But the Depression years, we made out better then what you can now.

MS: Them oysters down there to where they're running from down there to Pierce's, they're worth \$25, \$26, \$24, \$25, \$26. But they're fat. They're really fat.

MS: What they used to do too, Herb was in on that. They used to plant them on that Cape Shore. But you didn't dare live in a winter, count the ice. But they put them there for summer, hotel trade in Cape May, and it was a big business. They put thousands of bushels down there. They took them up to the hotel trade in Cape May County.

MS: Old Luther Jeffries and I – Luther said – Jack, he bought out Doc Sharp and some of the Doc Sharps business. Luther said, "I've got to run some oysters." He said, "You got any market?" I said, "I don't know, but let me see." So, I called old woman Plitt of Chicago. "Well, we're not handling that money, but," she said, "we'll take some." So, I called up Oscar Nelsons. He worked for Kennerley, H.B. Kennerley. He was buying Long Island for \$10. Luther had a ground in there in the Moore's bed. He shucked him, only got \$7 shucking them. So it was about that big, Luther run that shucking house down there on the wharf. So, I said, "Well, we'll go upstairs here and talk to Oscar." So, I called up Oscar. I said, "Oscar, you're buying in Long Island oysters with a struck bushel." In other words, the bushel didn't have no round on it. See. So, if you put a big round on it, you get a bushel on a quarter. So, I said Oscar – and he had most of the business. I knew what was going on. I drove truck. I knew what was going on. I knew the best way you could find out, out on the turnpike, when he went in to get something to eat, ask him what stops he had. He'd tell you every one he had. I got this one in South Bend and that one Calumet City. So, anyhow, I said, "We'll sell them to you for \$9." Old Luther fell out of the chair. He shucked them, couldn't get seven and a half through his own shucking house. I said, "We'll sell them to you for \$9. You don't have to go to New York." Oscar, talk real slow. He said, "Well, Jack, let me tell you. I'll try a few." So, we got him a hundred bushel together off that Moss Bed, sent them down to him, and then he started in. Then two or three other people got into it. Then Luther said – this was like in July or June. Luther said, "Season ends in..."

MS: [inaudible]

MS: No, no, that was later. Luther said, "We can change this law." He said, "I got Doc Haskins on our side." He said, "I found old Fenton Anderson. He was an old-time waterman." Old man Fenton, he wouldn't give. He wanted to do it the old way, start September the 1st and everything. They were a little business in the summertime. You get a dollar or two more in summertime. You could shucking them. So, he said – he went out a council meeting. He got the resolution passed that they try it summer dredging see. So, Luther says, "I can get this old Dave Hart." He was a mucker lobbyist for the bunker interest. So, we called him up. He said, "I want \$1,500 now. If I don't get the bill passed, I get the 1500. If I get the bill passed, you owe me fifteen more hundred." So, that was the year they had started the income tax bill about that time. He was arguing up there and the Senator Dodd put in Atlantic City Press and some damn seafood bill. He's talking about some damn seafood bill. That was the one Luther was trying to get through. But I know Dave Hart. He had a smooth tongue. When he talked just as easy going as he – [inaudible]. Everybody in the state house, he went there. He got five or ten working days from the time we gave him that \$1,500. He had the governor's signature on the bill. He got through the Senate before it went through the Senate and all kind of thing. It was having some time off. He was slick. I'll tell you one thing. If it was any grease on any gears, he put them on there.

MS: Luther sold that business out to those lawyers. They want to get out of it. He says, "How do I sell it?" He says, "Find some damn fool like I did." [laughter] They lost money on the deal.

MS: [inaudible] had some fun. We get down there to Chincoteague with old Buddy Burton. Luther, we want to sell some stuff into Canada, half pint and pints and stuff. Buddy Burton has

been selling a lot of clams up there. Buddy Burton was a pretty bird, too, and went down there. He gave us a whole list of people to sell to, everywhere. I used to sell to export a lot of oysters into Canada when there's oysters around. But so, anyhow, we had some oysters. They was shucking them about 4.50, \$5, and the shuckers couldn't make no time. They were all bunched up and stuff. So, this Reggie Stubbs called up, he said, "I've got a guy from Louisiana up here wanting to buy some oysters." He said, "I can sell him a load, but you've got to overload the truck, load the truck heavy." We get down Chincoteague around that scale and wasn't no more scales. They got down to Frank Miles. Frank Miles run a soup house for Campbell soup. So, we sent a load down there about 375 bushel on that old international. We had our load. Next morning, about 6:00, Old Lee Robins come jumping in jellybeans restaurants. "Old man Frank Miles called me last night, said they must have done \$5.65 to his machine down there." He stopped over. They had a lot of oysters in [inaudible]. Well, that let us know where, what's his name, sent him. Then we begin to load them for down there. They had that key pole thing, key pone or something thing there in Hopewell, Virginia. They closed the whole James River for it. Well, we hauled them down there and so did Lee Robins. He had a conveyor put up. Jim Garrison bought half a dozen trailers and hauled them down there night and day, down to that soup house. But old Lee Robins come jumping out about 4-foot high in there. Lee was trying to shuck him. He couldn't get nothing out of him shucking it, but he could sure sell him down that soup house. Yes, a lot of things happened. Probably since I've been in, I've seen the greatest change in it, and I don't know what's the next change will be. But to be one come out, some of us managed to stay here. I don't know how. Yes, it's been fun. Luther used to say anything is easy. Anybody can do anything is easy. It takes something to do to make things hard. So, we take something to do to get the hard job done. So, we decided that we were going to try to mechanize the industry, me and Luther and Bobby Morgan. So, they went down and put some oysters in the clam thing. They want me to go, but I couldn't get away. Put through a clam machine, clam sorter. Well, they went down there and tried that and that didn't work. So, they come back up there. I said, "I'd seen something will work." I said, "A guy had a clam sorter, had a round drum like that with bars in it. They'd rolled it over slowly. These clams would drop out, see. They had them different sizes." So, I said, "I'll tell you what, you get two truck rims. We'll weld some rods on the outside of it and turn it and put it – tilt it a little bit and turn it with a crank and get down. So, we built one, put it over there to Dorchester Shipyard, and it got three or four bushels. We killed every oyster that was there, broke the gills off of them.

MS: Not only that, Luther, they had a cold vibrating machine they put on one of their boats and tried it too.

MS: That was to get the shells overboard, see. So, we'd walk around there. On Saturday and Sunday, we'd spend over there on the boat trying to figure out how we was going to put this machine on there and make it work. See? So, I said, well – we decided, well, we'd put one machine to take them back. The other machine would take them forward out of conveyor, out of this drum. See? Well, then how are we going to get the shells overboard? So, we didn't want to raise the side of the boat. We went through something. I looked at Luther one day. I said, "You know, Luther, five years from today, we'll look back and think how doggone dumb we were." But then everybody got – you couldn't get labor. You have trouble. We designed that machine to sort the shells out from the oysters. It worked pretty good, I have a couple of guys picking the other bunches or something out of it,

MS: Dredging boats in there, where we used to have sixteen, eighteen men on. Actually, the captain could run it all day. But usually you had somebody with him to keep him company. But then again, if you had any on deck, would maybe to throw some shells off. That made an awful difference, employment.

MS: But we're down to where we're at now.

MS: Zero.

MS: Almost zero.

MS: But we had an equal then, right. That's being equal. The good Lord made us all equal. Took it away from the rich, and he took away from the poor.

MS: I think I've got to go back home.

MS: When oyster business went, I was smart enough to go ashore and go to work. I got a pension coming every month. I kept fooling around with this oyster business, crabbing, I wouldn't hide that.

MS: I got to go sign up for my Social Security sometime in the next two weeks. [laughter]

MS: Look at all that back money going. He can buy another boat with all that back money he got coming. Buy another old wreck. Fix it up.

MS: You haven't applied for it yet?

MS: No.

MS: Have you been paying in the full amount?

MS: Yes, pretty much.

MS: You're good for 1200, 1400 a month.

MS: Go sign up for now. [inaudible] Get down there to Stuart, Florida and sit around with old fogies and listen to their problems. [laughter] Look, I was married three years out of [19]69. That's pretty doggone good for a guy like me. So, I got married again in January.

MS: You found another woman, have you?

MS: Yes.

MS: God help her. She got something to put up with it, I'll tell you.

MS: Yes, I guarantee you that. [laughter] Yes, I can still see that judge running, and you tried to run over him up in the front yard.

MS: Yes. Tore up his shrubs, right?

MS: Yes. Well, that was another story. They tried me, but, you see, they was on the wrong side of the lawn. I was on the right side. You can carry a big stick when you got somebody on the wrong side of the law, and you're on the right side. You carry a big stick. Remember that?

MW: I know this could go on all night. Yes. I think we really could do it again. I am sure there's some stories that came up in the minds of some of the people in the audience that would like to share them. I hope that we will have an opportunity to do this again. I think we will do it in the spring again. Maybe if people can let us know in advance of what kind of – if you have suggestions or particular questions you want to see covered, or some stories you want to be sure get told, talk to us in the interim. Were there any quick thoughts in the audience, that you are just dying to share with us this time?

FS: Actually, the next time you have to pick on some of the characters that's if we don't have a few already here. [laughter].

MS: Right. Well, we're all right.

FS: There were a lot of interesting characters that passed through Bivalve.

MS: Well, Marty Lee, Kenny Rodman said, oh, Marty Lee, he could walk. He's got tie votes for a five abreast. Old Marty Lee, he always tied on the outside, so he had to steal something off a one. Well, let me say one thing while you're all here and I know you're all in their Schooner project. But I think that's one of the nicest things could happen around here is preserve that. You people that had part in it, I want to thank you because it does me a lot of good because I'm looking out for one.

[end of transcript]