Steamboat Era Museum Oral History Project
John Norwood McCarty Oral History
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Interviewer: CK, MK – Carrie & Michael Kline
Transcriber: NCC

John Norwood McCarty: [audio gap] Well, I wonder if we're going get any rain today.

Carrie Kline: Looks perfect.

Female Speaker: They're calling for some.

JNM: Yes.

CK: Count down, Michael?

Michael Kline: Okay. Go. Well, let's see. Maybe you can start off by saying, "My name is."

JNM: Yes.

MK: Go ahead.

JNM: Yes. My name is Norwood McCarty.

MK: We don't ever ask people their age, but maybe you'd tell us your date of birth.

JNM: Oh, 1916. Yes, that makes me eighty-seven.

MK: What month in?

JNM: At February 1st.

MK: February 1st.

JNM: Missed the groundhog by one day.

CK: [laughter]

MK: [laughter] So, you're bumping right up against eighty-eight years old then?

JNM: That's right.

MK: You'd never guessed it, would you, looking at him?

FS: [laughter]

JNM: Well –

MK: When you came out the door, she said, "Well, that must be his son."

CK: I did.

JNM: Great. Did you?

CK: I did. I thought you were your son.

MK: You'd think I'm kidding, but that's what she said. She said so.

JNM: Well, I'll be darned.

MK: Yes.

JNM: Yes, eighty-seven and I'm still playing in a dance band.

MK: Playing in a dance band.

JNM: Yes. I should quit. Maybe I should quit. This year I reckon I should quit already.

MK: Probably.

JNM: Yes [laughter].

MK: [laughter] What do you mean quit?

JNM: Well, I love it. It's something to do to keep moving. It's something to do anyway.

CK: What do you play?

JNM: Saxophone.

MK: Oh, man.

JNM: Saxophone and clarinet.

MK: When's your next gig?

JNM: Tonight.

MK: Tonight?

JNM: Yes.

MK: Man.

CK: They play at the nursing home tonight.

MK: Oh, man. What time?

JNM: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Just an hour. It's a bad night for us because we don't have our bass fiddle player and don't have a piano player. I don't think we're going to have a piano, but we're going to go anyway, but that's the type of job. We have to play around. Every year, we play there in Westminster and Lancashire and sometime for the officers at Warsaw and at Lancashire, the nursing home. But we play there for just a charity job. But all thirty years I worked at Dahlgren I played in a dance band. Ten-piece band. We played for Just Pine Band. I played twenty years in that. Then after some of them died out, they all died as a Big Band, which they called it the Big Band of Fredericksburg. Seventeen-piece band that the Big Band used to have. It was charity. They wouldn't play for any private party. It had to be charity so that all the businessmen got together to play.

MK: Nice.

JNM: Some professionals in there. I guess four or five professionals were in there. They're still playing but they play for charity that's almost dead. They started in [19]65. I was down here. I'd run up there sometimes and play on Saturday nights. According to DuVal Hicks – he was the lead up there and he was an attorney – they made way over a million dollars years ago for charity. So, I guess they've got 2 million by now.

MK: To start off, tell us a little bit about your people and where you were raised.

JNM: Yes. I was raised right down here, but the old farmhouse tore down. My son built up a new house there where the old farmhouse was. But all this land, we worked this growing up. All this land right here, they used to truck crop all in the [19]30s when I was raised up. This is a regular asparagus country right here. Well, it raised potatoes. Shipped potatoes those days by a barrel in the [19]30s. Of course, like I said, asparagus. When we were in one patch cutting asparagus, we could holler at somebody over here and Mr. Walker down below. We could holler at about three people cutting asparagus at the same time. Of course, we used to ship like I said, potatoes, early peas in the spring. They'd pick peas and ship them. Everything was shipped by steamboat way back in the teens and the [19]30s all down here. But we were all raised down here. My mother came from a Bellfield. So, my daddy was of course McCarty and married a Bellfield [laughter]. But I was raised right down here.

MK: What were your parents' full names?

JNM: Well, my father was James Ball McCarty. My mother was Alice Bellfield. But the Bellfields lived down here too. She had, I think about four sisters and two brothers of Bellfield. Of course, the McCartys, my daddy's brother, Frank McCarty, I had to go down to the ferry down there. He lived on that farm down there. We went to Ottoman School those days. But of course, Ottoman School is not there no more. In those days, you had to walk to school, little old mile through the woods there. Everybody walked to school [laughter]. But the old Ottoman School burnt down.

MK: What was the name of the school?

JNM: Ottoman School.

MK: Ottoman School.

JNM: Ottoman. It was a high school one time. It was up here. I guess it must have been about [19]34 or [19]35, they turned it into a cooperative up there. They used to store potatoes in the old schoolhouse. She used to raise sweet potatoes right here. They used to store them in the old schoolhouse, but they'd have a stove over here – it was a big place – a stove over there. But over in this corner, down below, they didn't get the right heat. So, it so happened the school burnt down one night. Of course, it didn't have any potatoes in it because we had shipped them. But they built another potato house. You might see it when you go back to Ottoman. I worked there for a couple years and people down here used to raise potatoes. You dig them before frost. We'd give them a week saying, "Now, dig all the potatoes." Two of us worked up there before frost. Well, they'd bring them up there. They had boxes on top of each other, square boxes. The first one coming would be number one. The next one would be number two on the boxes. We stored down 2,900 bushels up there of potatoes. Then we'd turn that heat on. Well, after they had a new potato house, they had a fourth floor, about 12 or 16 inches, and they put little, small heaters, all at the floors so that all the heat would come up even. Then it takes thirteen days to cure sweet potatoes and that's about it. While you cure them out, you have to watch the wall up there. If you see it washed up there, if you watch the potato house, you go there and pull that string and open that slide up there, let that dampness out. That's what we had to do. Then it snowed and you close them up. But if you go by Ottoman, you look over there in [inaudible], you'll see a potato house. At the back of that garage up there, you'll see a potato. When you ever see a potato house running from here to Richmond somebody, if you see those domes in there, you figure that's potato houses. But when they're cured, they were juicy. They were just as juicy as they could be a sweet potato. The people used to come up there those days and take a little sham we had and pack them in bushel basket and sell them in New York. Trailer load and sell them all in New York. But they didn't make too much money doing it. After all, they paid I think 20 cents a bushel for storage and curing them out. After all that work, well then here come along and start bean. After they started making all of their dishes and everything out of the beans, everybody was raising beans. You stop raising truck crops. Young farmers don't like to get up and cut asparagus and bend their back every morning cutting asparagus. They'd rather sit on the tractor and raise beans and corn now. So, that's where that goes. Now, it's very seldom. I think one around had but one asparagus patch. There are a very few asparagus patches. I think there's one down. Collin Berry had one, but you don't see many asparagus patches anymore. If he had a whole farm of asparagus, I think he could sell it every bit [laughter]. Yes, he could sell every bit.

MK: So, the potato house was constructed as a cooperative venture?

JNM: Yes, cooperative.

MK: Now, who organized that and how was it set up?

JNM: It seemed like the county agent or somewhere they borrowed. Way back then $5,000 was a lot of money back in the [19]30s. It same as I guess 25 or 30,000 now. But they borrowed that money. They not only had a potato house there; they had a washhouse there. They had a little

shop where you could come up and maybe saw some board lumbers there. They had a saw there. All we had to do is keep that thing running. They had a seed cleaner that they could come up and clean their own seed. We'd start the machine up and they'd put it in there and bag it up themselves. All we had to do was start that seedling up. Of course, we had a hammer mill to grind some corn if we wanted. Like I said, they had a washhouse and of course a potato house. Well and then it had the grain drill to lend out. Those days before the tractors come in, you had horses. If you want to go back and use a grain drill, you could go and borrow that grain drill for $2 a day, use it and bring it back. Most times those days with the fertilizers, you don't wear them out and the fertilizers eat them up and rust them out before you wear it out. But it was built for the small farmers that didn't have drills or something that they'd go up there and rent it. That's what it was for.

MK: So, a drill is a machine for –

JNM: For drilling wheat baler and that kind of stuff, a drill. So, that's what that was for. Now they didn't have any hay balers or nothing like that. All they had were drills. One time they had a pair of mules to lend out if somebody wants to work the garden. Sometimes they could do that too. But sooner it got rid of them. By the time I started working there, the mules had gone. I only worked there for a couple years until I went to Dahlgren.

MK: How many farms did this co-op serve? How many farmers participated?

JNM: I reckoned about fifteen or it could have been a lot more because a lot of people started moving down here. Once one or two start moving down here and they'd come up and borrow something like a little mortar or something else, dig a well or something else like that. So, it started way back. A few at a time started moving down here way back in the [19]30s. Of course, ever since then, they really moving down here fast now all around these rivers and creeks and everywhere now. Yes.

MK: So, the McCarty's, your dad came here from somewhere else or were they one of the older families here?

JNM: Yes. Well, it starts way back. They came from Ireland, I guess. My great granddaddy, they started in Richmond County and a lot of them came down here. My great granddaddy was up here in Richmond County on Laurel Grove. Then my granddaddy, they came down here. My granddaddy used to live down here, what you call Spring Hill as you go across the ferry. Then of course, my daddy, he was up here at the Greenvale. His mother died when he was a youngster. The two boys lived in Greenvale with their uncle. They called Uncle (Chitner?), I believe it was. But then he used to work some – the building's gone – up at Green Bay Road. It used to be it at Speakeasy there. Then that blacksmith shop. He worked in the blacksmith shop sometimes. Those days when you were coming home beside the road there, you called it Speakeasy. They all called it Speakeasy because you stop out and get a drink of whiskey. It's just like you go in the bar today. But in those days, they called them Speakeasies. Mr. Kirkham used to be the foreman on the road up there. I used to work on the road for a little while. Because he lived at Mollusk, he said it's surprising people come home from work, horse and buggy or maybe riding a horse. They'd stop by and get a drink. Coming down those steps, he

said half of them would always stumble coming down the steps because he'd go in there and have a drink and they would attention would come on home. But a friend came in and said, "Well, come on, have one on me." He'd have another rum. They called it rum but it was whiskey. Most of the time it was apple brandy. By the time he had another one, by the time he was getting ready to get home, why he stumped his toe down? He was getting his buggy and he couldn't get the right slip. Mr. Kirkham said, "One man came down there and he got a couple or so drinks on an empty stomach. He finally got on the horse and fell off on the other side [laughter]."

MK: [laughter]

JNM: But anyway, that's what they called the Speakeasy. But here I guess about three or four years ago, storm blew the top of it and a man built a new house there. That's that. If you ever see it, go up the road here, before you get to Mollusk, you see the long cedar tree and two fields on each side. Men built a new house there, but that's where it used to be. I often wonder about taking a picture of that old house that some Black people lived in. I never did, never could find a picture, never did take a picture. I should have had a picture of that old house [laughter].

MK: Was it a Black-owned business or did –

JNM: No. The business way back when they stole whiskey, well the Speakeasy, that's white people they had in them.

MK: They were the white people then.

JNM: Yes.

MK: Where did the liquor come from? Did they make it there or did they –

JNM: Well, those days somewhere in the woods, they made it. Yes, I'm sure they made it somewhere in the woods. Well, I guess some are being made somewhere today. Lots of times back in the [19]30s, bootleggers they had way back the woods somewhere. Yes, because I went up there with my daddy one time. We used to have a big orchard over here. I used to grind apples. My daddy, I went up there one time, he sold three barrels of cider to Robley. He said, "Now, I want one barrel for myself and one good." Most of the time it was one barrel of cider and they'd steal it. You'd get about four and a half or four gallons of whiskey Bradley. I went up there. My daddy, he was getting up in age before he married my mother. My mother was about twenty years younger than he was. When I was learning how to drive, I could just drive then a 1937. So, I carried him up there at night and went down the woods, him, and old man back. I was young, so I brought that Jimmy Joe boat, four and a half gallons of apple brandy. Then it took me about twenty years to realize if I had stepped in a stump hole and broke that jug, that'd been the worst thing I could have done. I didn't realize when I was doing it, but for years and years I kept thinking about it. This morning, I had stumped my toe and broke that thing out, it would have been terrible for those [laughter]. Of course, down here slashing wheat, everybody helping everybody's slashing wheat. Sit a jug out there every now and then, people get a drink of whiskey especially before they come in and have a meal. When you help each other those days,

all the women had a big table setting for you and everything came out the garden. You didn't go to buy at a grocery store. You had either cabbage, ham, or anything else. Eat beets, everything in the world. You had a big table waiting for you when you got through slashing wheat. Well, you wouldn't get through but when 12:00 p.m. came, I'd sit down and everybody go in there and have a big meal. But that's the way they worked. Everybody helped each other. They didn't pay nobody. They helped each other those days.

MK: So, that jug of brandy was righthanded.

JNM: Well, sometimes that jug of brandy was little handed and of course Dr. Pierce, they'd always have to give him about a half a gallon. He always liked that half a brandy himself. He'd give him half a brandy. My daddy would give the neighbor some too. So, he'd give it away. Of course, we'd take a little sip. We'd mix some sugar and water and we'd take a little sip ourself. We were only about ten years old or so we. But we didn't drink a whole lot. We'd just taste it, that's all [laughter].

MK: Did they use it for medicinal purposes if you had a chill or a fever?

JNM: Yes. Sometimes they do that too.

MK: What do they call that?

JNM: I don't know. They just take it. But they always put some water and sugar in it and they'd take it and just drink it down. Then if we had a real bad cold, in those days you had a Vicks salve. We'd rub the chest with Vicks salve and warm sleep [laughter]. I guess just as good as they maybe, I reckon. We got by anyway [laughter].

CK: [laughter]

MK: Did you come from a big family of children?

JNM: It was four boy and two girls. Yes.

MK: Tell me what their names were.

JNM: Yes. Well, my oldest brother, he died the summer. He was in Mayfair. I was down in Kilmarnock. He was my oldest brother. There was James McCarty. Then next one, Francis McCarty, Mayor Dawson, then we had one Corey McCarty, but she died way back in the [19]30s.

MK: What was her name?

JNM: Corey McCarty.

MK: Corey.

JNM: Then two brothers, Damon McCarty, and Darren McCarty. They were in the service, but all of them are dead now except me.

MK: You're the last one?

JNM: Yes, I'm the last ones. Yes [laughter].

MK: So, where were you in that lineup? Were you the youngest one?

JNM: No, I'm not the youngest one. Darren and Damon were the two youngest ones, I was next. Well, James and Francis, Corey. Well, I was the fourth one, yes.

MK: You mentioned your tenth year a couple of times. What would a typical day on the farm have been like for you as a ten-year-old? What were you expected to do? When did you get up in the morning? Tell me about a typical day on the farm.

JNM: Oh, yes. Well, everybody had a job to do those days. When I was ten years old, you got up early and had to cut asparagus. In fact, when I was ten years old while the rest of them were cutting asparagus, we'd cut the roll up and cut down and then breakfast we were ready. Then I had to roll the wheelbarrow with that age, ten years. Yes, early in the morning. When you got home from school, why, you always had a job to do? Get in some kindling to make a fire. Everybody had a job to do those days. Yes, when I was ten, well, you needed kindling to make a fire. If you didn't get it in, you weren't going to say, "Well, Junior, I guess he was tired." No, you didn't get by with that. He'd call you up and come down and get it the next morning so you wouldn't forget it. See, next time you wouldn't forget it. Then of course, when out in high school, my brother used to drive a school bus. When he finished school, I drove it for two, three years. In those days, you could drive a school bus. You can't do it now. But I drove a school bus a couple years. When you got home, then you had a lot of work to do. We had 2,500 Leghorns. We had to feed, pump water, and put laying mash in there when you got home from school. Of course, my brother helped me too some. Then you had to pack up eggs. You'd pack up a crate of eggs.

MK: Pack up eggs?

JNM: Pack up eggs. Had to get up eggs and then pack them in crates. A crate of eggs used to hold 30 dozen. We'd pack them up fast when we'd get home and we'd clean them with vinegar so you wouldn't lose all that gloss. That's the way we used to do it. We were coming home from school. That was our job from coming from school. Well, we went down to Ballard on a big farm down there. Well, before we get to [inaudible]. We went there one day and Mr. Broadus was on that big farm. He was working down there and he had to about four children. Mr. Broadus was telling us that yes, he got a job for every one of them when they come from school. He said, "I mean to say they got to do their job." Well, Charlie Base said, "How about this little fellow there?" He was a little fellow. He didn't go to school. He said, "I got a job for him too." The man had a lot of cattle up there. He said he got to go around different pens and turn that spigot on and fill those tubs up. He said, "I don't want to catch them dry." He was a little fellow [laughter]. But before I went to Dahlgren, I was taking census in 1940. I finished one job and

they gave me another one. But anyway, I went down at Merry Point over here. First at Merry Point, then it went to Nuttsville. Joe Louis was popular in 1936, along that area. He was popular. When I come writing down, I had to put in older children and all these Black families. I was going to put that old children all down there. It didn't sink in at first. I wrote a lot of Joes. So, I went in Nuttsville up to here home and I wrote down I got three children and a little fellow came around the house about two years old. I said, "Hey, I haven't been here in my life, but I bet you his name was Joe." Asked his name and he said his name was Joe Louis Lee [laughter]. But anyway, that's the way that goes.

MK: You did the census in 1940?

JNM: 1940.

MK: What was the condition of Black families in the area that you surveyed at that time?

JNM: Well, I'll tell you they were working people. They worked at oyster houses on the farm and everything else and lots of time in school bus. I cared but lost time to different churches. Back in those day, you didn't have transportation like you have now and they were good. I'd go there at the church and maybe down to the store, two places to pick them up. I came over to the next county. Sometime on the weekend like Sunday, I'd come here and there. Oh, they were nice. They'd treat you and they'd appreciate you carrying them. But now of course they got transportation and everything else now. But back then, they didn't have transportation. But they were all good those days. They were good working for you. They were good. But of course –

MK: Were most of them renting where they lived or did any of them own their own farms?

JNM: No. I'd say most of them owned their place. Owned Paula's place or somewhere. Very few rent. Most of the time they owned a small place. They inherited it from their parents or something other. I'd say the majority of them owned it in those days, yes. It's almost like it now. Most of them own places now. Some have trailers and of course those days they didn't have trailers. But you have trailers now. Some of them have moved in there.

MK: Where was the Black school at that time?

JNM: Way back in the [19]20s, it used to be one right up here at this church.

MK: Used to be what?

JNM: It used to be a school up here about three or four grades right up at this church. It's not over but a mile from (Hepp?) Road.

MK: What was the name of the church?

JNM: It's Hartfield Church. It's right next to Hartfield Church. I believe the building is torn down. The teacher walked from Millenbeck. She walked to school and taught those children. About 2 miles she walked every day, the teacher, and walked back. That was the late [19]20s

and early [19]30s. By late [19]30s and [19]40, they built a new brick school between Ottoman and Mollusk. It's up there to the left now. That was the school they had. But I don't how far the grade it went to. Maybe sixth grade or so in there. But that was the last school. Then A. T. Wright had a high school down to White Stone. After I went to Dahlgren in [19]41, my brother was telling me some of them around Mollusk had a little bus run down to the high school. So, some of them went to high school. That's what he told me.

MK: They had a black high school then?

JNM: Yes. A. T. Wright High School down in White Stone.

MK: Oh, yes.

JNM: Right in that area.

MK: Well, that'd be a long trip then.

JNM: Yes. But I don't know how long it lasted. So, I lived, somewhere in the [19]60s or what year, down here.

MK: Well, getting back to the farm for a minute, you mentioned early peas and asparagus and sweet potatoes.

JNM: Yes. Oh, let me see. It could have been anything. I've known people, oh, ship crabs. The last time you'd go down the wharf there, you'd see crabs. They could have come up the river. But on a farm sometime people had a big oyster. They'd ship apples. Oh, strawberries. I forgot strawberries. They shipped a lot of strawberries to Baltimore. Yes, a lot of strawberries. Now see, the last steamboat coming down here was the *Potomac*. I think up until about I would say really around 1932, I think it stopped because trucks had come in hauling in. But then he had *Middlesex* come in here one time I remember. Maybe the *Potomac* was having some work done. I remember *Middlesex* coming in here for a while. But the last one was the *Potomac*. They stopped in all these wharfs across the river. (A banner, Lewis called Wickes?) outside of the river. On this side of the river, Manasco that's up here. Then they come all around to Millenbeck. We went to Millenbeck right down here. Cut down here and went to Millenbeck. Had another wharf, an Ottoman wharf. Then went across where that ferry run across, which is called Merry Point. That was a wharf that went across there and it went on down. I think there was a couple down at Weems. That was the last stop. Then they'd go on up at night if you want to go to Baltimore. They didn't have the bridge up here across this Rappahannock then. Richmond was just as far away as New York with us. I went to Baltimore when I was small lots of time. Hadn't even been to Richmond on account of the bridge.

MK: You didn't have a bridge then.

JNM: Didn't have a bridge until 1927. Now when that steamboat comes down from Baltimore, they'd come down and unload things for the stores like barrel of molasses, sugar. Ginger snaps used to come in the barrel. These big scent cakes used to come in. All that came in. Bananas

came in a great, long crate which was this high with all that. While they were unloading some stuff, they'd take on asparagus and everything else and go back to Baltimore. That's the way it was. They had those old truckers on there. They call them truckers. They rolled these things. They were trained to go fast. They had plenty of us going from one wharf to another. So, they were trained and all of them were Black. But they were trained to work fast. They would shove those things just as fast as they could and unload that stuff just as quickly. Quicker they load it, better the man gets onto his next wharf. So, it was exciting to see them, how they could shove their road trucks around there and pick up that stuff and load that just as fast they could. Of course, while they were unloading it, they were loading another produce on. Captain Archie Long, he was a captain of the old *Potomac*. I learned from his boys. We used to play down at Weems years later when he'd come down and make it around. When he'd come across that point down Weems, he'd always give his wife a couple toots. He was passing by heading to Baltimore [laughter].

MK: What was his name?

JNM: Captain Archie Long. He was a captain of the old *Potomac*. Archie Long.

MK: Was he from here?

JNM: He's from down at Weems.

MK: Weems.

JNM: He lived down there. That's where his home was. He had two boys. One was named Little Long and I can't remember the other one. I can't remember his name. But anyway, he lived at Weems. I don't know how often he got home [laughter].

MK: Well, you suppose her heart skipped a beat when she heard those two little toots from him?

JNM: Yes, I guess that's what they told me when he was passing by and got this load on these wharfs, oh, he'd give a couple toots on that old *Potomac*. Yes, he did.

MK: Now tell me what river we're on right here.

JNM: Oh, this is Rappahannock. Now, this Rappahannock goes upstream on Fredericksburg and comes around, hits the bay going on up Potomac that's in the west. But meantime as you go on around, it's little Corrotoman River comes up in here as you go across Merry Point over here. That's a ferry that go cross down here at Merry Point. That's been there ever since my day. I don't know whether they'll ever get a bridge or not. But anyway, people that live there they use it and go across to Merry Point. When you come through Ottoman, there's a road here this way. That takes you down to the ferry.

MK: We saw that road, yes.

JNM: Yes.

MK: So, these workers on the wharves that were loading the boats, they could really move fast, you said?

JNM: Oh, they were trained to move fast. They could move fast and it didn't take them long to load it either. Oh, people used to ship calves and everything else. You shipped calves by a steamboat. Yes, they had a pen right there on the dock to put them in. Yes, they shipped calves. I guess, well didn't many people raise sheep, but I guess some places they probably shipped lambs too. I don't know. But I remember a lot of calves were shipped there. Yes, shipped onto to Baltimore. They heard those calves at nighttime, I'm sure then. But meantime now, you can get on a steamboat long, about 4:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. Went down here in Millenbeck. You went to Baltimore. Get on there and be in Baltimore the next morning to get a state room. I don't know what the state room cost, about a dollar or a dollar and a half or something. But that next morning you'd wind up in Baltimore. Like I said about Richmond, that was too far away. Now, when they got this bridge across here to Rappahannock up here at Tappahannock – well, you know where it is, that bridge. You probably went across it. Now they had a dedication. All the businessmen in Richmond got together, had a big day in Richmond when they dedicated that bridge. They dedicated that bridge two, three days before Richmond. I don't know what day but I remember April 7th, 1927 was a big day in Richmond. Everybody, the whole Northern Neck up to go. Everything was free. You could go in a restaurant and have a free meal. They'd give you cigars, cigarettes. In some places they'd give you a few gallons of gas. Old Model Ts were going up there. Those days, Model Ts, Essex, Dodge, I guess those were the main ones going to Richmond for the big day. The reason I remember it so well is because my daddy had bought a horse on April 6th, went past to Nuttsville. I don't know how old I was, but I could figure out how old I was because I was born in 1916 and this was 1927. So, that's how old I was. I brought that horse down the road, a young horse. He was scared of cars. I saw all these people dressed up. I knew they were going to Richmond. The old Dodge, Overland, and Model Ts, everybody was going to Richmond that morning for the big day [laughter]. My brother went but I didn't go out and brought the horse down road. But he told me a lot what's going on. Of course, a lot of jokes were told up there with that day too because I think Mr. Forest up here, he carried his whole family up there. He had an old, big Dodge and carried his family up there. He went in the restaurant to eat, yes, and come out. So, Mr. Forest said he wasn't used to the city so he was getting ready to turn around Broad Street and go around that way. So, the police would say, "Hey, you can't make it round there. You can't around there." Oh, he said, "Yes, I can make it." He said, "My company is not quite this big. I can turn around in that [laughter]." But they had a time up there [laughter].

MK: [laughter] When the country meets the city, huh?

JNM: Yes. Some people who went in Richmond hadn't been in a city in their life. Some boys down here, they weren't very educated. But I think it was, what, two or three of them went as brothers and carried their daddy up there and they got up in Richmond. They wanted to know what's down there on the other side, on the next street. So, it seemed like they went over there and they then went to see what's down there. One of them said, "Hey, you know, we'll never find our way back to the car." He said they didn't look at no street numbers then. They didn't know about street numbers. So, when they made one corner, one of them had a piece of chalk

mark in there and marked the chalk so they could get back. Can you cut? Can I answer the thing? Didn't have a stone. So, I went down there and put all these –

CK: Little markers.

JNM: I got the markers put down. They'd give it to me. I put them down and stayed there two, three more years. The lawnmower hit them up. I said, "This isn't nothing." So, I told the senior warden, I said, "This isn't nothing." He said, "Well, I'll tell you what to do. Go down and put down four or five years, it won't look so bad on the budget." He had a young boy, Thomas Gale, who would come over there. We bought them and we'd put them down. I think we'd put down what, thirteen or fourteen. Church had some money so we put them down anyway. Church paid for it.

MK: Getting back to when you were eleven years old and everybody went to Richmond and you stayed home. But you heard these stories of a couple of fellows that got lost in the downtown.

JNM: Yes. Well, these boys one of them thought and said, "Hey, we'll never find our way back." They started marking the crosswalk.

CK: [laughter]

JNM: Every time they'd make a turn out on the street, they'd make a crosswalk to get back. They said they never thought about looking at the street. That was the first time they'd been [laughter] in Richmond. But another thing I got to tell you, see those days if you had Model Ts, old baby older, and everything else right on the road, the tires weren't good, you'd have a flat tire. My brother said you couldn't hardly go a mile from here to Richmond, if somebody wasn't stopping and pumping up a tire. The main thing you had those days when you had a Model T, you'd need a pump and some patching because if your tire went flat, you take that thing off, patch it, take your pump, pump it up, put it back on. That's what they did. I can remember because we kept a Model T there for him. I had a cousin, we called Summer (Tapskit?). He was the one on these old merchant ships for years. Never was married, but last time, he left his Model T in the shed down there. Once in a while, I used to drive it when I started driving. But if you had a Model T, you better carry a pump and some patching. That was the main thing you had to carry and everybody did. But my brother said all up and down the road, boy, everybody would stop and pumping up tires. They'd go flat. But the rims weren't as good as they are today. But you just had flat tires those days. Sometimes if you went up or down a couple miles or maybe 5 miles to the church, it was hot. Sometimes you'd have a flat tire either going or coming. That was a usual thing those days. You'd certainly have a flat tire. But to talk about that cemetery up there, why it's an old cemetery. I guess we put down about thirteen or fourteen, like I said, of stones that people didn't have. Back in those days, lots of time they had money, but they more or less white people with medical bills those days. They didn't have Medicare like they have now. Lots of time I knew some of the families. I knew pretty all of them some way or another. So, we'd put down a stone about four or five a year until we got them all and everyone up there got a stone there. So, the church paid for it because the church got money. See, the church up there – I don't know whether you want to hear this now. But anyway, see Ms. DuPont, the Balls are buried up there. Stores when you go back, all those Ball tombs up above grave, she

was kin to the Balls. She used to donate some money when she was living in the cemetery funds. So, they don't need no money. They take her interest to keep it up the cemetery. So, they got enough money to keep up the cemetery. If they wanted some more money, they could get it anyway from Newport Foundation if they run short. They put down a roof last year, I think about 75,000, a slate roof. Well, they got enough money. If they had to put on another roof this year, why they could do it [laughter].

MK: Your dad, his middle name was Ball.

JNM: Yes.

MK: Was he some kin to the Ball family?

JNM: Way back, yes. My grandfather was named Ball too. His name was Gene Ball McCarty.

MK: So, let's go back to being eleven again and you're out working in the fields. Were you aware of the movement of the steamboats? Could you hear them from where you were or did you see them?

JNM: Oh, we could see them, yes.

MK: What was it like when the steamboat was coming in? What happened?

JNM: Oh, I tell you, when we went down there with the horses – now ours wasn't too bad, but some horses there when they left us – he'd always give you a whistle when they were ready to leave and he'd watch the horses because it might scare them. Some of them they did, but ours weren't frightened. But some horses down there, man, they were scared. They might take off because they always blew that whistle when they were getting ready to leave [laughter]. But no, we'd be over here working fields or something for years, we could see that steamboat go up the river, see when it came down. We could see it when it got down. When it came down the road, we could meet that steamboat. We could get that Millenbeck wharf before the steamboat got there. Because when it came down the river, it'd go by (a banner?) over there and we could beat them down there if we were carrying asparagus and strawberries and whatnot like that, yes. But when you grow up on a farm, it doesn't matter what age you got, you got a job to do. You always got a job to do. A lot of strawberries. You go there sometime if it rained, do anything else. But he'd have you pick grass with strawberries. So, you always had a job to do. Of course, in those days you had to work the horses in the field cultivating corn or planting. See, they didn't have tractors those days when I was eleven. You worked with horses. We had three horses we used to work. Of course, we worked a lot of truck crops and you had to cultivate a lot of sweet corn in the garden, cucumbers. You raised everything, potatoes, everything else. Of course, you raised wheat too. But like I said, everybody helped each other. But regardless of your age, you had a job to do [laughter].

MK: Now, how did you get these produce that you were raising, how did you get it to the wharf and when did you take it and tell me all the details of going to the wharf.

JNM: Oh, we loaded it on the wagon.

MK: You'd load what?

JNM: On the wagon.

MK: What did you load?

JNM: Well, anything we had; strawberries, potatoes. Anything you'd load on a wagon. It went down in a wagon and sometimes a double-horse wagon because you might have three or four crates of asparagus. Sometimes when strawberries come, you'd have four or five crates of strawberries. Then when they dug potatoes, they were in barrels. Not these big barrels, but barrels so well. But a good, strong man could lift one barrel. Sometimes you'd have a whole body put up with potatoes.

MK: We were talking about getting things down to the boat on a wagon.

JNM: Yes.

MK: How far was it to the wharf?

JNM: Oh, to the wharf.

MK: Tell me everything about it.

JNM: Well, every morning you cut asparagus when spring came. You'd cut asparagus up until July. Then you'd bunch it. Most of the time my mother and maybe my older sister-in-law, they'd have a bunch of asparagus. Had a regular bunch, put down and put a string around it and then cut off with a butcher knife. That's what they called a bunch of it. They'd hold a dozen. Each crate would hold a dozen bunches. Well, last time we'd have three and four crates. But we could get that asparagus ready even though we'd go to school. We were small, we'd go to school, and my dad they'd have it bunched up by 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. Then they could go on there. But sometimes I'd go to the wharf too, but when I was small. But anyway, he'd carry it all on down while we'd gone to school. He'd get on down to wharf about 3 miles and with a wagon, sometimes double-horse wagon because we didn't have a truck those days. That's back there when I was about eleven. But now, of course we had a truck about 1928. Of course, not on asparagus. By the time strawberries got ready while I was picking strawberries, we carried them too. Sometimes you'd have three or four crates of strawberries and three or four crates of asparagus at the same time. Then maybe later in the fall, maybe you wouldn't have anything. But maybe you'd dig potatoes. Now I can remember when we carried one load of potatoes down there, pretty she ever saw. They rode back. They were shipping to Baltimore. I can remember one name Evans way back here through merchants up there. I remember one time they said, "Don't ship anymore because they won't pay freight." Potatoes wouldn't pay freight. That's how cheap they were those days. Now, look at them.

CK: Which wharf was that?

JNM: Millenbeck. We went to Millenbeck wharf.

CK: How do you spell that?

JNM: Millenbeck, M-I-L-L-E-N-B-E-C-K.

CK: Okay. Thank you.

JNM: That's Millenbeck. That was the closest wharf to us, Millenbeck.

MK: Can you describe that wharf? How long was it? What did it look like? Tell us everything about that wharf.

JNM: It was all over on the water, but it was deep enough for steamboats. Now, it was hard to have a wharf over here because this wrap had rubber where we live, it goes well on out. You'd have to build a long wharf. But that was a building on each side. You had a long building there for the fertilizer when the fertilizer came. Or if you carried down certain things that you went in inside there. It didn't stay with the sun until they came and got it to pick it up. But I dare say when that wharf started, it's not far from here to that road, because the water went down, like I said, deep. So, you didn't have to go far out there to put poly in there. Of course, the poly over there didn't last like it lasts. They didn't have crystal poly, they had oak. They dried up all that down. It only lasted so many years, you had to repair it again. But down at this wharf, well it was a long, big building, long enough to store fertilizer and everything else you'd want in there for that. That's the way it was. Thurman Foster stayed there for years and years. In my day, he stayed there. He ran that. When you carried that thing, he'd put it down. He had to make a note of it. Wherever way we could, he made a note of it and shipped it on. But this was a trucking section all around here. It's not like now, it's just corn and beans. But asparagus patches were all here. Lettuce road all down here, everything. Oh, another thing too, you could go all these houses don't matter if people were Black and white, everybody raised chickens and maybe one hog or two. So, all that, of course it's all gone now. But you wouldn't find many homes that didn't raise chickens around here, especially out in the [19]20s and [19]30s. If you went to a church supper, you wouldn't go to go to supermarket like they do now. If you went to church supper, well you'd go in the meat house. Well, like you could go year-round, get some ham at the meat house. Or most of the time everybody had a creek or somewhere that they'd go fried oysters, stewed oysters. They'd make a cake. They'd carry butter beans and all that kind of stuff. But you didn't go to the store to get it [laughter]. That's different from now. Now, [laughter] you go to church something, you had to go to supper, you can't have something, you might have to go to the supermarket [laughter].

MK: That's great. Tell us about the local store in the community, where it was located, whose it was?

JNM: Oh, yes. A lot of stores those days back in the [19]30s were on the border, but they're all gone now. As far as you can go on down here at Bertrand, he had an oyster house. Used to be a store down there. Millenbeck where the wharf was, it came up here about 50 yards a store. On

top of the hill, the store there. It was a post office too. The steamboat used to walk up there with the mailbag. But there was a store there, but it's no more there now and another store.

MK: Which store was that?

JNM: Mr. M.A. Lewis runs a store at Millenbeck. It's right up the hill from the wharf. He was the post officer there too.

MK: What did they have in the store?

JNM: Now he didn't have too much in his store only because he had a post office. But now, [inaudible] down there, what you call Millenbeck, now that's what's called Slabtown. A lot of people used to call it Slabtown. Well, you see it right up here, Slabtown Road. Well, now it was two stores up there. Now, that was just as big as it is down here. They would have had a barrel of molasses. A lot of people used to go there and get molasses every week carried in a half a gallon jar and they wind through the barrel. But one thing you had to get those days is you'd get molasses, kerosene for your lamps, and sugar and of course you got other things too. But anyway, you always had to get some kerosene every now and then and you got it from the stores. But lots of times you didn't get any meats. You raised your own meats way back there then. Now in later years, I'd say the [19]40s where when people come and got refrigerators like store pit Ottoman after he got refrigerators and everything, come and sell meats and stuff. But way back in the [19]20s or early [19]30s, you didn't sell any meats.

MK: What was the society of the local store like? Did people go there to socialize, to chat or talk, to put Horseshoe? What did people do at the store?

JNM: Well, in later years, they did that. Later years when I was driving the school bus, say later years like [19]36 along in there, I went from Lively High School all around to Millenbeck, come around the circle, went all around the Beach Creek, make that circle, come out. The last door would be Senora over here, regular store. He sold everything, anything you'd want, I'd say. Pretty everything you'd want. But what used to get me, most of the time if I had some change in my pocket, I'd put with all his children, I'd stopped there and get me one Mr. Goodbar. For a nickel, they were great, big Mr. Goodbar in those days. I'd eat that coming home. But what used to get me when I'd walk in there, if it was a windy day, the wind would come up. While all the oystermen couldn't oyster, they'd come into the store and sit around on his feed bags. Sometimes he would sell feeds, corn, or anything else. They'd be sitting around chairs. The stove would be in the middle. They'd be sitting around with chairs on feed bags and you'd see the whole store full on a windy day. They'd be telling this great, long yarn, you know they'd do that and be eating peanuts and putting everything but eating peanuts in there. When I walked in there, once the client got me a Mr. Goodbar, my feet never did hit the floor for the peanut hulls.

MK: [laughter]

JNM: It's something funny about that. Lots of times I'd go back on a Saturday and my mother send me over to get something at the store. He just swept up that floor and she'd just be smooth and shiny as anything in the world. I don't know what that peanut hull done, but it must have

cleaned the floor. She'd be just as smooth and pretty and shiny as you want to see. But you could go there and get material to make clothes or some kind of clothes if you want to or something like that if you want to. Well, they sold that kind of stuff. Like I said, putting everything else like sugar or dish powder or anything you'd want that he sold with that.

CK: Do you remember those feed bags?

JNM: Yes.

CK: The patterns on those feed bags?

JNM: You'd see them hanging on clothesline and sometimes they could make things out of them. They were good bags. Yes. Then later on, sometimes they wouldn't have anything. But then you'd see them on clothesline way back [19]38. On average, they'd wash them out and you'd see "Southern States BBL Food at Baltimore Feeding Grain." You'd see that printed on them. You could see them on [laughter] clothesline. I saw many one of them on the clothes lines. Yes, indeed. But everybody forgot all about that now. But that was good material, those feedbacks.

CK: It was.

JNM: Yes, it was good material. It was good.

MK: Now you've mentioned church dinners, church socials and the Speakeasy and the store. How else did people get together and what did they do for enjoyment as a community?

JNM: Oh, now another thing, back in the [19]20s and maybe back in the teens, but I can remember in my day, they also had the camp meetings. But the camp meetings died out about the same time that the steamboats died out. Now, I've been to all three of them even when I was small. Now, I used to like go to Wharton Grove down here. You probably know where Wharton Grove is, right down across the river at Weems. You go down here to Millenbeck, everybody saw lots of times. The Wharton Grove, lot of times people wouldn't buy boats from Middlesex County, all the way it went. It had a long wharf. That wharf run, oh, I don't know where it was a hundred. It could have been a hundred yards, I don't know. It was a longways out there because they had to have deep water boots. I can remember I was small. They charged 10 cents. I don't know whether it was 10 cents a person or what it was to keep up the wharf. But anyway, these houses you could spend all the week, a big tabernacle in the middle. This long wharf would go to Wharton Grove down here. You'd go on a bridge and walk ashore. Then it had another one, Morse Grove that's up country here. But that burnt down way back. I don't think they had any service but why they got in and burnt that down? There's another one. I don't know whether this in much Moreland is a social line Lancaster County. That's still being used. Sometimes they'll have a special meeting down there maybe every August, (Kirken?) Grove. There's a big tabernacle there and still there. Most of the time you'd have a big attack and sawdust on the floor. That was Kirken Grove. But Marvin Grove after they stopped having service there and Jimmy Wharton, his daddy used to preach down there. Because I was small, I wasn't going down there. But then his son, Jimmy Wharton used to work down there to that record office and

Kenmar was my brother. He used to write a lot of things down, but every summer down there, he kept those houses for a few years. People would come down from Brisbane or somewhere and stay a week, like wait out in the water and catch a crab and that kind of thing. The reason I knew, he'd want some cantaloupes. We used to raise 2 or 3 acres of cantaloupes. Sometimes I'd carry down two bushels at a time because a lot of these houses filled up. He had to fill up but with people staying there in a week and they had a big kitchen in there. You'd think it was a stable for the horses and all. But it was good. He had these tables in there and sawdust on the floor and it had these cooks in there and cooked on wood stove. Great day man. He could cook you some hotcakes, but he wanted cantaloupes. So, I used to come down two, three times, two bushels at a time, a cantaloupe for all those people to stay in the homes.

MK: Now, years ago this was, you called it a camp meeting.

JNM: It was a campground. Now another thing I'm missing.

MK: Oh, campground you said.

JNM: Well, yes. They called it the Wharton Grove Camp. They would say camp meeting. You could say camp, but I guess it was Camp Wharton Grove. Now, they called it camp meeting. Well, if you want about August, it'd start with one then the other it wouldn't run the same week. But if you wanted to see somebody, that's when you better go to camp meeting because they're going to all be there. Sometimes people that live in this county and live up next county, they wouldn't see each other until they went to camp meeting every August. That's when they'd see the friend. Well, they wouldn't see them until the next year when they went there. So, that's when everything would meet there. Most of the time that was in August. The camp meeting was in August.

MK: Well, what happened at the camp meeting?

JNM: Oh, they'd have a service just like they do in church. Have a church, a big tabernacle. If you ever want to see one, Kirken Grove is still standing. They have a service there every year. I got a picture now. Before we leave, I'll show you what it looks like. Like I say, if you want to see somebody, you had better go to camp meeting because they're going all be there. Well, boy, now another thing I left out I wanted to tell you I learned from other people. But back in the [19]20s and I guess early [19]30s, I built a steamboat. A lot of people come down to Irving and Weems on a steamboat. They stayed there all the week, go fishing, go crabbing around the shore and catch a steamboat, and went back next week. They were staying in the hotels down there. One would pass word to the other. That was quite a thing back in the [19]20s. Of course, I learned that years ago from different people because I wasn't down there. But I learned it from different people. But I talked to a lot of them from Baltimore that came down. That was a great thing. That was their vacation. They were looking forward to that, to come down in the country and stay [laughter].

MK: Did you ever have any strangers get off at the wharf where you went to trade? Were there people who you didn't know that would appear in the community or was there anywhere for anybody to stay here?

JNM: Well, I guess down here, I don't know anybody that stayed down here that came down. I don't know anybody. It could have been somebody that stayed off the boat that I didn't know right here. Now, a lot of people there had nothing to do. Like my sister one time, she went to Baltimore. A lot of them right here went to Baltimore because there wasn't any work. They couldn't go to Richmond because of transportation. They'd get on a boat and go to Baltimore. But a lot of them came back too. We'd come back maybe summertime, stay a week, get out a week, like that. But I don't know when basically it was lost or anything, but not as many around here as it was in Weems down there and had a place to stay down there and urban, they had a place to stay a week. But maybe there were a few around here, may come home and stay a week. I don't know what that was and not just for my brother. He was older than I was and he knew people were coming down there and staying a week. But boy, down here we had one fellow come down. I don't know where he came from but his name was Strickler. He seemed like he was a professional ball player. He used to tell us some things about playing ball. We had a Chesapeake League down here and played ball back in the [19]30s. When it first started that way, he gave us a lot of help. I never did know where he was from because I was about the youngest one on the team at that time. But he gave the boys a lot of know-how about baseball, a lot of tricks in baseball.

MK: Tell us about the first time you ever went on a steamer to Baltimore.

JNM: Yes. I was almost too small when I went. But the first time I went to Baltimore, we went in a 1928 truck. We had got a truck then. My sister who lived up had a board house. So, I don't know more much about steamboats growing up. My sisters and all of them were on the steamboat. But I was too small to remember anything.

MK: You never took a steamer to Baltimore yourself?

JNM: No. I didn't have no reason to. But the rest of them did, but I didn't. The only time I went, like I said, when we went up there. When we went up there, my sister had a board house up there and we went in a truck. First time we went up there, we carried big boxes of Holly Christmas tree and went in a 1928 truck. Then she had a safe, she wanted to get out her way. We brought her safe back when it came back [laughter] and a piece of furniture and that kind of thing [laughter]. But I used to go around in Baltimore lots of times after that, lots of times because I'd go up there and she had plenty of room to stay. We'd go up there and stay like a weekend, a couple or so days like a holiday. It was Thanksgiving, we had a couple days off we'd go up there. For Christmas, we had a couple days off we'd go up there. Most of the time I'd find my way down to Baltimore, go down to Hippodrome or somewhere where the big bands come in. I used to like to hear them, so I'd go down. I'd always sneak down there whenever I could.

MK: Did you have to take chalk and mark the corners to remember where you were going?

JNM: No because I knew most of the time Baltimore is a square not like Washington and I could find my way around. It's what I used in Washington, but I could find my way around in Baltimore.

MK: So, where was the Hippodrome?

JNM: It's down on Howard County way back way that I remember. It's been so long ago, but I guess it's still there. But I used it for something else there, all I've seen. There was so much change there. I guess it's still there. We used to go to Ford Theater once in a while too. I forgot what street that on. Of course, the rest of them I'd go by myself. Every time I went to Ford Theater, I went with my brother or somebody, a brother-in-law or somebody and go by myself.

MK: Speaking of theater, wasn't there a theater that was on a boat?

JNM: Yes, floating theater used to come around to these wharves. Well, they wouldn't tie up to Millenbeck. They tied up to a wharf where the steamer didn't come most of the time. If it had room, they'd tie up on the other side. But Bertrand down here was a good place to come into Bertrand and tie up what they called a floating theater. It was a flat bottom moat. Last the time we used to go up here. We used to go up the road and come down you'd go to Tappahannock. They had some good shows in the floating theater. Had a little pit band down there. Had some good shows. Yes.

MK: Did you go?

JNM: Yes, I went once or twice. Then at the time of the [19]30s, had tent shows come around here too. Did pitch a tent, say at Ottoman. His name was Mr. Barker. He had a nice, big tent, had these silent movies way back, silent movies. Most of the time, it would be these cowboy shows, Western. Man, you'd go there and had those silent movies on. Then when the talking movies came on, that was something. Boy, that was really something. But I can remember that. Now when my brother James got the first school bus, 1928 truck, he had a school bus, now up here at Ottoman they had a little overtop store. Mr. Dunman had a regular old country store and had everything in it, but it's two stories. He had a theater overtop the store. You'd go around the back and you'd go upstairs, have these old movies. Sometimes these people that shows come around and stay there a week, people go every night. That was a regular thing in those days. Sometimes we'd go up there different nights, but I don't guess it cost you over about 15, 20 cents to go [laughter].

CK: Where was that?

JNM: Up at Ottoman.

CK: Ottoman. His name was?

JNM: The overtop of (Dunman?). I know his brother's name, Howard Dunman. But his name was Dunman, written out of him. They called him Hi Dunman because some of them thought he was so high. I think his name was Hiem. They changed to Hi Dunman because some of his prices were kind of high.

CK: [laughter]

JNM: So, I think his name was Hiem Dunman. The building is still there. If you pass Ottoman like you're going to the ferry, you'd go down there with a hunt yard, that two-story building, and you'd see the door on the side where you'd go up steps. Those days it used to be blacked up. They'd always have one show come around. His name was Rags. He was blacked up and no one came around. His name was Rastus.

MK: Blacked up means?

JNM: He would black up himself like old Elvin used to do. Well, one of them was named Rags in one show and Elvin used to come around. His name was Rastus. Of course, they'd put on quite a show those days. Everybody thought they were good.

CK: He was blacked up too?

JNM: Huh?

CK: He was blacked up too?

JNM: He just put make up, Rags was. Then the other show had one that blacked up and they were Rastus. But we saw it. They were minstrel shows. They'd black up. But that's what they did. Well, that was entertainment. That's all you had to do right in those days. You'd go up there. Now, no one comes around Mr. Barker. He used to pitch a tent up in Ottoman written Ottoman. He had a big tent and he had his movies too. Something to go there, but something to do when you had nothing else to do. But I forgot what the movies was when you go there. It wasn't over 15, 20 cents to go in [laughter].

CK: Can you remember what shows they had at the floating theater?

JNM: No, it was kind of small. I don't remember. They had some acts on the stage or something. They had something in there. Sometimes they had a little thing going like you see on the court on television. One guy got up there and the judge said, "I'll fine you $5." He got up there and get a smoke out there he said, "I'll find you another $5." Well, the third time he wanted to say something, he'd give the $5 first and then said his word [laughter]. That kind of stuff went on [laughter]. Then they'd have a little picture and have little movies too. It'd have little movies, old Western too. But then they'd have acts between that. Then it had a little pit band, maybe about one saxophone or trumpet or something and piano and maybe a guitar had a little pit band would play. But they were really good. They were good and used to draw crowds. The floating theater, they used to draw crowds.

MK: Draw a crowd.

CK: [laughter]

JNM: That's a long time ago.

CK: So, these bands would play behind some of the acts or behind the movies or how did that

work?

JNM: No, I think they played between acts or something like that if I remember. Yes, we played between acts.

CK: Have a singer maybe?

JNM: Yes. Well, as I remember because I was kind of young then. But I can remember they might play while you getting in. They'd play some numbers while you were coming in. But maybe when that show goes off, they'd play a number and then maybe the movies would come on or something like that like the pit band would do. That's the way they did.

MK: Fill in.

JNM: Yes.

CK: What kind of numbers were big back then? What were some of the names of the tunes?

JNM: Way back then in the floating theater would be maybe "Somebody Stole My Gal" and that kind of tune. Let's see. Gosh, as many as I got, I can't hardly think of them. Lord. You could find some little tune. I know way back in the [19]20s, we found a tune here about a year ago, the "Moten Swing." But that had started the Moten Brothers way back in Kansas and it came live again. So, we were playing that here about a year or two ago [laughter]. The Moten brothers, they were playing. They from Kansas, they had a band and they started right after World War I [laughter]. But now let's see. One came out way back there, "Let A Smile Be Your Umbrella." I remember that way back in the [19]30s too. Lord. Oh, "Bye Bye Blackbird" was something that hit way back in the late [19]20s, early [19]30s. Yes, that's one song. I remember that too. So, a lot of songs I can remember. I could play them, but I can't remember the title of them. There's a lot of songs I could play the melody of them and then stop to think what is the title of it? After you get up in age, you forget a lot of them [laughter].

MK: Do you remember the first radio that came into the community? Did your dad get a radio or who had the first radio?

JNM: No, the first radio we knew anything about was my cousin. His name was Austin McCarty. He was my first cousin, but he was older than I was and lived down what they call Level Green that's on the road as you go to the ferry. The first radio I know he got. Then I think someone got up to Warsaw and maybe two three more. But down here, he's the first one I can remember. I don't know whether there was more than that, but he's the first one I remember who had a radio. Seemed like to me the first one, he had the earphone he put up to his ear to him if I'm not mistaken. But that's the first radio.

MK: Did people used to crowd in to listen to it?

JNM: I guess they did, the neighbors and all sometimes. Yes, they used to do that. Now, the first one we had was an old Silvertone radio down here. But we didn’t have Kurt. The stores

those days before they had Kurt down in Lion and had a 20-volt Delco. That's what we had. Stores had one, we had one. We had lights on it and one refrigerator hooked through it. That's it. That's all we had. But that was what they called a 20-volts Delco. It had glass batteries on the shelf down in the shed somewhere. Because I'd come home from school, most of the time I'd put up about half a gallon of gas in that thing and run it, charge the batteries up and that would be it. Most of the time I could hear it cut off when I went to bed way down there. You could hear it down the shed. But we didn't put it in the house down the shed. But the stores all had 20-volts Delco. But we just had an old Silvertone radio. I might have it now upstairs somewhere. My daddy he'd get up there. He was an old man. He used to hear Gabriel Heatter. He used to have that Gabriel Heatter everyday news. He'd hear news. He had to have Gabriel Heatter. Regardless of what happened, he had to hear him every day. Yes, that was back in early [19]70s, I guess. About [19]30 or at [19]31 maybe before we got current.

MK: Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful stories. We're going to have to come back and do some more sessions with you. I can see that.

FS: [laughter]

CK: Might be fun to come back and try to record some of the music that you played from that era.

JNM: Well, I wish I had some taste to give you. We never taped any of them. They used to tape them in Fredericksburg when they were playing in the big band. What happen DuVal Hicks, they had money enough to buy all radio recorders and everything else. They had money. We'd go play for a dance job and had a man there, an electrician, who would set up mics and recorder. We came back to the next job, a rehearsal and DuVal said, "Now it looks like to me that trombone has got a bad note." Then next week, he'd come back and trumpet something got a bad section or something of that. But he could figure out the trombone. Then I think about the third week or so, he came back and said, "After second intermission, we're not going to record anymore because I believe some of us are playing in whiskey."

CK: [laughter]

MK: What key is that?

JNM: Whiskey.

MK: Oh, whiskey.

JNM: He said, "We are not going to record anymore after a second [laughter] intermission [laughter]." Well, that's the way Lionel Hampton wrote the "One O'Clock Jump." We played that for years. The "One O'Clock Jump" was a good tune. But he got the idea way back there. Those days when you played all around in Chicago, those places, the hours were from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. There were nightclubs. I know we played at one at Culpeper. Every time we went to Culpeper from Fredericksburg, it was 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. up at that Pot and Kettle Club. We were at Pot and Kettle Club from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. But anyway, Lionel happened. He

got the idea. The reason he wrote that "One O'Clock Jump" was because you had as a usual thing, ten minutes of each hour. So, you got ten minutes. Well, the manager always got a stopwatch to time you. Maybe some of them stayed too long. They might go to the bar and stay too long. Well, lots of cases. The piano player came back, the drummer came back one at a time. Well, ten minutes up, he'd start on the piano playing something. The drummer was playing something. Maybe here came a saxophone player, he'd play something. That's where he got the idea of the "One O'Clock Jump." That's the way the "One O'Clock Jump" was written. You have an introduction. They did put an introduction to it. Give you a piano solo, then they give you a sax solo. Then they all come in. That's the way they got it. Of course, by 1:00 a.m. they were ready. He called it "One O'Clock Jump." Well, they were ready to jump in. After a couple trips to the bar, they were ready to jump. So, that's why they called it "One O'Clock" [laughter].

MK: You've seen sometimes, haven't you?

JNM: Well, a little bit but not like some others.

MK: Well, this has been absolutely fascinating.

CK: I hate to leave, but I think we have to [laughter].

JNM: But I enjoyed playing with them. I enjoyed it too.

MK: We certainly enjoyed hearing you talk about it.

JNM: Well, I was just talking. I don't guess it'd do you much good.

CK: Oh, it will.

FS: Oh, it's just rich material. It's so helpful.

CK: You just paint a picture of that times like only you can.

JNM: They asked me some questions when the other preacher got there oh about ten years ago at Point Chapel. I got talking. You asked me about the church and what. When a new preacher come in, he'd ask you severally, "You've been around here?" "Well, I've been around a while." "Well, somebody told me and said you've been around here just for long." Anybody else said, "Well I don't know about that." He got talking to one day and I told him about half people used to go on horse and buggies. I said, "Well the last horse and buggy that came to church was Mr. Sanford." It so happened Mr. Sanford – you know these trotters on in the race trace, you know, try they call them trotters – it so happened he got one of them, I don't know whether it run in the race or not, but that's way back in the late [19]20s and early [19]30s. I told him that last horse and buggy to come to church was Mr. Sanford. So, he'd ask me some questions. I said, "Yes. Well, Mr. Sanford, if he got out on the road, all those old baby over in Essex and [inaudible], you wouldn't catch them to Ottoman because that old thing could flop. I came to find out, my brother-in-law told me, he said he thought Mr. Sanford had got one of those trotters that used to

be in there with the races way back in those days. You know the horse races?

CK: Yes.

JNM: Well, that thing was just pretty. His name was Hampton. That horse was just pretty and Mr. Sanford had got it. I can remember because we had a baby over them way back in those days. My brother used to drive up there and all that stuff. But if he got on that road out here and got a start, you wouldn't catch him to Ottoman because that thing was a truck [laughter]. Had a pretty horse all the time.

CK: Didn't have a flat tire either, did he?

JNM: He didn't have a flat tire. Those days before he died, one of his children or somebody got him solid rubber tires and put on his buggy. He had solid rubber tires on it. Of course, in those days, roads weren't at all, it was dirt road. Old Hamptons could come to Ottoman and that was about 2.5 miles. Hampton couldn't come. That was a little step out for him. But I talked to Mr. Sanford one time and he was telling us at church, he said, "Every Sunday morning," he said "Hampton perked up." He said he knew he was going to church. He didn't know what suit he put on, it was perfume he had on or something. But Hampton perked up because he left the trot anyway and said Hampton knew he was going to church. He said he got this buggy one morning. He said, "Now, let's go to Hampton." He said he wasn't going to stir him. He wasn't going to do nothing. Let him go where he wants to go. He said he come right on up to church and stopped and went to the same tree and tied him. Stopped at the same tree. Those days when people went there, most time it's like in church they had the same pew. They tied the horse to the same tree [laughter]. I was small, I can remember that much [laughter].

MK: So, old Hampton knew his tree, didn't he?

JNM: Old Hampton knew his tree. He went to the same tree.

FS: It was like the old horse and buggy doctors. They could treat all the patients and then nap on the way home because the horse would just go right on home and go right on in the barn.

JNM: That's what Dr. Pierce said. Dr. Pierce said he had two horses. He said it was so dark and rainy some nights. Of course, they only had a lamp on his buggy. Dr. Pierce said his horse carried him home many night. If he hadn't cleared his home, boy, he said he didn't know where he was going. Yes, I remember Dr. Pierce saying that. He said his horse carried him home a many night. Of course, literally there wasn't no traffic on the road. I'll tell you another thing about a horse. I can remember going with daddy and the horse and the horse won't go down the middle of the road. If they see one coming, they stay to the right. They do that anyway. Because we had one man, Dawson. His name was Dawson. It said he used to take some kind of [inaudible] or something out of those days. I never knew what it was. But minute he went to Millenbeck wharf and got back in his buggy; he was fast asleep like his. I'd go down with my dad to the wharf and he said, "Now look at Mr. Dawson. He doesn't even know we'd have passed him. He's fast asleep." But his horse is on the right side of the road.

CK: [laughter]

JNM: Yes, sir. His horse stayed on the right side and no problem getting by him.

FS: Yes, might not be bad to go back to those days.

JNM: [laughter]

FS: It'd be nice to know you could get in your buggy and be tired and just nap until you got home.

JNM: That's right. Yes, I never thought much about it until Dr. Pierce said his horse carried him home many a night, dark and couldn't see.

MK: Did your dad like to trade horses or did you keep the same three horses most of the time?

JNM: No. We kept three horses until one of them died or something other. He kept the same horses. He used to be a waterman in the younger days. Last time he used to go I understand on the Fredericksburg in the old bugeye he had carrying Judge Emery, Ben Oyster every time we were up there. He had a friend of his or something other. He'd go to Fredericksburg in the old bugeye. In those days, he'd sail up and sail back [laughter].

MK: What's a bugeye?

JNM: It's with a sail on it, got something like a buy boat that got a sail on it. They called it buy boats, but it's a bigger boat. An oyster boat can buy oysters whole about oh, five hundred bushels or so. They'd call them buy boats. Well, that's the way that bugeye looked. In fact, I was too small, I never did see it. But my oldest brother, he could remember.

FS: You know Larry Channing? He's written a lot of books about the water and he writes a column for the *Southside Sentinel*. He just finished publishing a book about the buy boats.

JNM: Oh, yes?

FS: Yes, he did.

JNM: Oh, yes. Somebody else I reckon with that buy boat. Yes, you're right.

MK: It's got pictures on it.

CK: He's got lots of pictures in them. Nice book.

JNM: That's right. That buy boat. You're certainly right about that, God.

CK: He's been working on the research for that for about three years.

JNM: Well, that's what we used to call them buy boats because they used to go in the rock and buy oysters while they were already there. I used to see them at Darwood. I worked on the bridge and had those binoculars down the river and I could see them come up on Sewell's Point and they'd be buying oysters. I could tell there a bigger boat than the rest of them. In fact, just left there, just below the bridge when the oyster season come in those days, I'd look over there, it'd be so many boats looked like me, they could step from one to the other.

FS: I've heard my grandmother say that.

JNM: Yes

FS: She said you could walk from one to the other sometime.

JNM: I believe you could course a lot of oysters were bought there in those days. I'll tell you another thing, around flowing beach –

[end of transcript]