

Pres Harding Interview 1 of 4

HARDING: I mean, like --

KAREN: Yes.

HARDING: [00:00:01] Because he collected blood for like
medical stuff and also on Sunday --

KAREN: Oh, no kidding.

HARDING: [00:00:07] Yeah. Everybody went there [at work?]

BUCKLEY: What? Where is this?

HARDING: [00:00:09] At Truslow's, Truslow Farms.

KAREN: And Truslow Boat House is actually where they're
going to gather for this event to celebrate.

HARDING: [00:00:18] Yeah. A lot of that stuff happened
across the river, too, you know, later. He had a piece
of property there.

KAREN: Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Who's that?

HARDING: [00:00:24] Old man John Truslow.

BUCKLEY: Oh, he's the guy.

HARDING: [00:00:27] Yeah, yeah. He sold his eggs and the
blood to like medical research or something like that.

KAREN: Yeah. Okay.

HARDING: [00:00:33] Yeah. He's quite a character.

KAREN: Sounds like it.

HARDING: [00:00:36] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: That's the same with them horseshoe crabs. They got blue blood and they use it to test medicine. The syringes and all that. Everything has to be checked with that horseshoe blood. And that's why everybody wants it so bad, you know. Process it and sell it. And they use it on all on the eye solutions and all that.

HARDING: [00:00:54] Oh, really?

BUCKLEY: Yeah, yeah. It's all tested here. Horseshoe crab blood.

HARDING: [00:00:59] It's unbelievable. It's unbelievable, isn't it?

BUCKLEY: So I'm going to leave this down here. You [crosstalk] get into it, okay?

HARDING: [00:01:06] Okay.

BUCKLEY: And when we do whatever we end up doing with this, it'll be you know, just you talking.

HARDING: [00:01:11] Okay. Whatever.

BUCKLEY: I'm not worried about me being on --

HARDING: [00:01:14] Okay.

BUCKLEY: -- full voice. But let's just start by just you saying hi and you can say where we're at and we'll go from there.

HARDING: [00:01:21] Well, hey. I'm here with Michael and his friend. And we're in my dining room sitting at the table here in Chestertown. And I guess, what is it? February, right? The end of the February.

BUCKLEY: Twenty-eighth, the last day.

HARDING: [00:01:35] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And you better say what your name is.

HARDING: [00:01:38] Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Pres Harding.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So is that your full, real name?

HARDING: [00:01:43] No. My real name is Warren. And my middle name is Preston.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:01:48] And so everybody wants to know if I'm named after the president, right?

BUCKLEY: So like Pres?

HARDING: [00:01:53] Yeah, yeah. But actually, my father was born the year Warren Harding was inaugurated. So that's where the Warren came from.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:02:05] But my Dad was a Preston. His father was a Preston. And I think it skipped a generation. Then there was like a couple of Prestons after that. There were a lot of Prestons in the Harding family.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And what'd your Dad do?

HARDING: [00:02:21] He sold cars.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Was he from around or where?

HARDING: [00:02:25] Cambridge.

BUCKLEY: Say the whole thing.

HARDING: [00:02:28] Oh, he was from Cambridge, Maryland.

Yeah. My Dad was.

BUCKLEY: Tell me about him.

HARDING: [00:02:35] Well... I better talk about something else maybe.

BUCKLEY: Oh, okay.

HARDING: [00:02:41] Yeah. Just sometimes that's not such a pretty picture.

BUCKLEY: Okay. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:02:45] If that's okay.

BUCKLEY: No. That's all right --

HARDING: [00:02:46] I'm sorry, but that's... He was a good guy, but had like a lot of problems, so, and...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I had one of those, too.

HARDING: [00:02:55] Yeah. So I'm going to have to pass on you know, really talking about that too much.

BUCKLEY: All right. Well, where should we pick up? You've [been in?] summers in Wingate down there?

HARDING: [00:03:05] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: You know.

HARDING: [00:03:06] Well, the first thing, that story they always told about myself and my grandfather was right after I was born in Cambridge Hospital, my mother and father were leaving the hospital with me and they had me in like a wicker laundry basket with some pillows and stuff, and blankets, and all. And my grandfather showed up there as they were coming out of the hospital. And he walked up to my Daddy, goes, "Here, Pres. I'll take him." And Mom's like, "Yeah. Just let him go ahead," you know. And so he took me and put me in the car with him and started to drive off. And Mom and Dad are following him, but it turned out that

instead of going to my parents' house, he just drove to Wingate. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: To --

HARDING: [00:03:53] To his house. Yeah. Well, see, he had five daughters. And he had had like one, two... four granddaughters. And I was the first boy. So that's part of the story there. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:04:09] But, yeah. They said that he just snatched me up and kind of took me off.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Tell us who your grandfather was.

HARDING: [00:04:17] Oh, well, he was Brownsie Parks, Bronza Parks. So he lived in Wingate. He was born right at the turn of the century, 1900. He died in 1958. And he did a number of things. He worked on the water as a young man, started a seafood packing house at one time. But he's really renowned for his boat building. And I'm going to say -- what did my Uncle Ralph tell me? He build 438 boats. Of course, he had big crews there at times also. And you know, he started off with one skiff in the yard. And one thing led to another. And I actually have some pictures. I wish they were here

so you could see it. But when he was building the *Rosie Parks*, and the *Martha Lewis*, and the *Lady Katie*, the three skipjack sisters, on the other side of the yard, there's some pictures from the top of the boathouse. In the other field right behind the boathouse, he was wor -- they had 19 workboats of various sizes going. And then there were like four boats inside the shed going.

BUCKLEY: They were building them all.

HARDING: [00:05:31] Yeah. Yeah. They were just cranking them out big time.

BUCKLEY: He had a little company going there.

HARDING: [00:05:36] Oh, yeah. And --

BUCKLEY: Was it named just after him or was it named, it had its own name, or?

HARDING: [00:05:42] No. He just had a sign that said -- for a while he used to say B.M. Parks, Boat Builder. And then it started to say B.M. Parks, Designer and Builder of Boats. He went that far to say that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Wow. How'd he get his name? Do you know? It seems like a unique name.

HARDING: [00:06:05] It is, but you know, I don't know what the story is behind him having that name. There's some different names in the family. There's like a [Lazberry?] and you know, other generations back. But you know, I just don't --

BUCKLEY: Is that their first name?

HARDING: [00:06:23] Yeah. Lazberry. Mm-hmm. Yup.

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible] --

HARDING: [00:06:28] You just don't know how they come up with that, but...

BUCKLEY: I know there'd been a lot of nicknames as you go in these watermen communities.

HARDING: [00:06:36] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And sometimes they stick on people from the time they were just like real little, and then it just never changes.

BUCKLEY: So some people didn't even know they had another name is kind of what I heard.

HARDING: [00:06:50] Mm-hmm. Well, you know, in Wingate, they were all part of a regular phone book. But if you go in Tangier Island, they have their own little phone book written down. And it'll say like Donald [Thorne?]. And then it'll say Thorny. Then it'll say

like Robert Eskridge, Ooker. You know, so-and-so.

Tweet. (laughter) Yeah. Because that's all they you know, they know. So you know, those things stick.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:07:19] Yeah. There's a fellow who worked at my grandfather's boat yard and you know, he worked on the water, too, but he worked there part-time. And his name was [Koosie Koo?]. Who knows? All I know is when I was really young, you could always tell when Koosie was coming home for a visit from the surface because my grandmother was making tapioca pudding.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:07:46] She knew you know, what all these guys liked. But, yeah. Koosie Koo. You know, go figure. (laughs) You know? I don't know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Ooker's been a voice of the Chesapeake Bay.

HARDING: [00:07:57] Oh, yeah. Yeah. He's a great guy.

BUCKLEY: The mayor.

HARDING: [00:07:59] Oh, yeah. He's a --

BUCKLEY: The mayor of Tangier Island.

HARDING: [00:08:02] Mayor of Tangier Island. Yeah. Ooker.
Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. What do you know about your grandfather's
work on the water? Did he tell you anything about
that?

HARDING: [00:08:12] Well, I know that he was a dredger.
And I had a --

BUCKLEY: And what's a dredger?

HARDING: [00:08:18] Oh, well, he had a skipjack and he
dredged oysters. And really you know, all those men
back when I was young, they would fish and crab and
they'd all do all right. But when I was young, the
oyster was the king. That was the money crop. When
oystering came in, everybody was smiling. Everybody
walked around with big wads of \$20-dollar bills, you
know, and it was really the end of the heyday.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:08:47] But he had quit dredging pretty much
before I was born. But he did it as a very young man.

BUCKLEY: When were you born?

HARDING: [00:08:57] I was born in 1951. Now, his brother,
Orville, who the *Rosie Parks* was built for, he was a

dredger. *Martha Lewis* was built for my grandmother's brother, Uncle Jim. He was a dredger. I mean, there's a lot of dredgers in the family. My Uncle Ralph was a dredger. And it was, yeah. They were...

BUCKLEY: Were they all from down Wingate there?

HARDING: [00:09:23] Oh, yeah. Wingate and Bishops Head and all that. Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Tell us where that is.

HARDING: [00:09:28] Well, that's in the lower tip of Dorchester County. You go to Cambridge and it's 30 miles south of the Dorchester Marshes. And Wingate actually sits on the Honga River, really close to the mouth. And by water, it's very close to Hooper's Island. But by land, it's a long way. And...

BUCKLEY: There's another big watermen's community there, Hooper's Island.

HARDING: [00:09:56] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Boatbuilding, as well.

HARDING: [00:09:58] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: What was that --

HARDING: [00:10:00] A little bit of boatbuilding, but...

BUCKLEY: There's draketail.

HARDING: [00:10:04] Oh, dovetails. Well, that's a whole
nother story. See, there's an ongoing controversy
about that. And people refer to what my grandfather
built as draketails. But they're really not
draketails. They're dovetails. And there are
draketails. And a lot of those were built further
south in Virginia. And if you look at a round-stern
boat, if the long point of the stern is facing up, away
from the water, that's a draketail. And it's meant to
help lift you if you got a big following sea, which you
know, when you're down below even further around
Tangier, the water's a lot different than up that way.
The dovetail, the long point goes down to the water.
And it's not so great in a following sea. But the
whole purpose of that was to increase haul speed. So
when they were built, if you had like a 100 or a 110
horsepower in a boat then, that was a lot. And with a
boat, it would get to a point where you can only put so
much power in it and it'll reach a certain speed, and
it won't go any faster unless you make it longer. And
that was the way that they were using those long planks
and trying to extend the stern that extra two-and-a-

half or three feet further back. And [Johnson

Fortenbow?] asked me one time, have you ever --

BUCKLEY: Hold on. Hold on. Do you guys have cell phones?

HARDING: [00:11:40] I do.

BUCKLEY: Can you turn it off? It just makes a little
ticking in here.

MALE: I'm sorry.

BUCKLEY: That's all right. I should have mentioned it when
we started.

MALE: I never even thought.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Because you can't hear it. But I get this
little tick tick tick --

MALE: It'll just take me a second, Michael.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I should have mentioned it, but that's all
right. [Dripping sound] Now maybe that sounds okay.
To hear that does sound like a dripping water.

(laughter)

HARDING: But Johnson Fortenbow had asked me if I ever heard
of the dovetails referred to as a torpedo stern. And
actually I have. And apparently back in the days when
they still had some wooden, early PT boats, they were
looking at trying to make those go faster. And I think

my grandfather had seen some kind of article where a submarine architect had taken existing boats and they added that stern to them to put that length on them.

And that's kind of how they kind of came up with that.

BUCKLEY: Made them go faster.

HARDING: [00:12:51] Made them go faster. They made them longer. Se --

BUCKLEY: It's reminiscent of some of the submarines, too.

HARDING: [00:12:56] Yeah, they --

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible] --

HARDING: [00:12:58] But these boats I think had already been built and they already had their box stern. And he came up with a way that you could just add that on there.

BUCKLEY: It sounds like something a surfer would do with a surfboard --

HARDING: [00:13:08] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: -- or a skeg or something. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:13:11] Well, they were -- people down there, they were always trying something a little different, you know. I mean, there's a lot of tradition and all, but they were also innovators and trying to be forward

thinkers because you know, you had to survive, you know, in the...

BUCKLEY: You had to compete, as well.

HARDING: [00:13:29] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: To sell the boats and all that.

HARDING: [00:13:32] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: So you know, how did you kind of become a woodworker after just growing up in this environment, when you were just a little kid. It's fascinating to me that you ended up being a fine woodworker.

HARDING: [00:13:52] Well, you know, I think everybody wants to grow up to be like what you know, their elders that you look up to. You want to be like them, you know. Being in the boatyard when I was a little kid, I just figured I'd be building boats. I'd be working on the water and this is what would be happening. Of course, after my grandfather's death, things were a little different. But I also spent a lot of time with my Uncle Ralph. And he was my grandfather's foreman in the yard. So he was a craftsman. Even though I was still really young, you might not learn all of the techniques, but you start to learn like the attitude

that they have towards it, and the way that they're thinking process, you know. It's all a part of -- oh, I'm sorry. It's all a part of a way to just get to the end, you know. I mean, even today sometimes, I'm working on jobs and you're checking on your guys, and sometimes you're not sure how it's going to turn out. You just make it go right. And it's just that process of like steadily taking little things that are out or need to be fixed and making it go the way you want it to go.

BUCKLEY: And how do you tell when it comes to boats? You know, because the boat's on the [hard?], right? And you go in there and you may be looking for a look or a line or --

HARDING: [00:15:13] Yeah, well, those guys -- in Papa's yard, and Papa, he did everything out of his head. I mean, he had a lot of knowledge. And he would try different things. I have pictures of like a very early skiff he's got where when you look at the sides from the stern going up, all of a sudden they start to just turn in just a little bit. And then in later years, they become really graceful curves. And they call that

tumble home. And it's a term that's been used on a lot of yachts, you know, and stuff like that.

BUCKLEY: Since him or?

HARDING: [00:15:55] Oh, yeah. And before him also, you know. Where he got all of his knowledge, I'm not really all that up on, but way, way back in our family, they crossed paths with these folks that were named the Deans. And they were Deans with an E at that time. And I think they were from like northern England, like lower Scotland area. But those people were boat builders. And somehow, you know, through marriage or whatever, they all got connected in some way. But Papa, you know, he just worked out of his head and all these men had you know, good eyes, and good skills. And he encouraged people to like, well, no. That's not good enough. You've got to do this.

BUCKLEY: An example?

HARDING: [00:16:50] Well, one thing I can tell you is a real old-timer waterman one time was talking to me. He goes, "You know what's so great about a Bronzie Parks boat, is they all float right on the chine, right at their chine line." And the chine is where the side of

the boat meets the bottom. And most of his boats were hard chine. If you look at a boat and that area is curved, say like on the *Rebecca Ruark* or something, they call that a soft chine. It's a displacement hull. But the hard chine, you know, there's like a sharp angle there where the bottom meets the side.

And so if you really start looking at boats, a lot of times the chine is like two or three inches in the water. Or part of it's out of the water. And then it curves up. And so I really got thinking about it for a long time. And I just really just couldn't figure it out. And I asked my Uncle Ralph about it. And I was like, "How do you do that? How do you get the boat to float right on its chine?" Because he did, you know, a lot of that work there also. He said, "Well, first of all you know, you have to have done a lot of it and be pretty slick." He said, "But really when you think about it, it's really pretty simple." You go out in the field and you dig a post hole, and you stick the stem post of the boat in the ground. And you try to get the angle just right. You tamp the dirt around it.

And then you take two 40-foot boards and you fasten to that stem post. And then so far back, you put a stretcher in there. And then you put a tourniquet on the end and you start twisting it until it starts to bend and starts to look right to you.

He said, "Now, when you bend a board, it's either going to hump up or hump down. It never stays straight." So you'd get it so the curve from the stem to the stern and all looks right. And then you get that set. And then you level a line all the way around it and you plane it level. And when you think about it, the water's level. So now, all of a sudden you've got the level line. And then once you start adding the keelson, and they would use sticks, and they would shave a little bit here, and cut on the keel to get the angles because the angles change. But he said the more deadrise you put in the boat, which is the amount of V in the bottom, the easier it is for it to displace the water. Flat bottom doesn't displace very well, but the V -- so you've got a V side-to-side and fore to aft so to speak. And then you splash them in the water and

that's where they float, because they float on the chine.

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:19:47] It's kind of neat when you think about it. And it sounds simple, but it's like, it's hard. I can remember even being little and watching my Uncle Ralph after they had the keel. And they'd be there with an axe and an adze, and this big square chunk of wood's going from stem to stern. And he'd lay a stick across from there to the side. And he'd look at it and start [makes chiseling noises]. And he would keep doing it until that stick laid on there just the way he wanted. And then it was ready to...

BUCKLEY: Chip it away.

HARDING: [00:20:18] Yeah. And then it was ready to plank up. You know, so, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So what was this like for you as a little kid? I mean, were you just like a big eye and you were really into it? Or was it just kind of happening all around you or --

HARDING: [00:20:33] Well, it was happening all around me. It was kind of just what I knew, you know. But, yeah.

Being around the boatyard was... It was like really interesting, you know, because there's all men in there doing stuff. You know, and they're just like -- you're watching. The machines are turning and men are doing stuff. And they're spitting and you know, laughing and joking. And you know, I mean, they all did that -- it just looked like fun, you know. It looked like a great time. And it was always busy there. There were some times where you'd want to think you'd do something. I can remember there was a time where the men were planing the sides. They still had some you know, electric disk sanders by the time I was little in there. But they would still take like long joiner planes. And after they had all the planks on the side, just take the planes and run down the sides, and like take imperfections out, and roll it a certain way that they'd want to.

And one day it was Uncle Ralph and Koosie. And they were like planing a side. And they would do that and they would be like, "I've got one that's six feet long." "Oh, yeah. Well, mine's seven-and-a-half feet

long." And they got into this thing about who could make the longest shaving with their plane.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:21:57] You know?

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:21:59] Oh, yeah. And you know, those were the things they did to make the things -- so it got to the point I think where my Uncle Ralph had one that was like you know, 10-and-a-half feet or something like that, the shaving. And all these men are gathering around and it's becoming a big thing between Ralph and Koosie, about who was going to do this. And the next thing you know, you hear somebody go, "Oh, here comes Bronzie. Here comes Bronzie." You know. Because they're all supposed to be working, you know. And Papa's like, "What's going on here?" And finally the guys, like, "Well, look at these shavings these guys are making." And he's like looking. And he's like, "Mm-hmm." And I'm standing there and I'm trying to figure out what's going on. And he looked at [O'Neal Dean?] and he said, "O'Neal Dean, let me see your joiner planer." It's like about a 24-inch plane, hand

plane. And he walked there. He grabbed that plane and he looked. And he'd click it, went [makes swooshing sound]. And ran it down the side of the boat. And I think his shaving was like 16 feet, three inches or something like that. And he just handed the plane back to O'Neal and went on. (laughs) Yeah, it was great. But it's --

BUCKLEY: But he was in -- it was just a part of him.

HARDING: [00:23:13] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: It was [far?] in his head.

HARDING: [00:23:15] Yeah. And then I can remember

sometimes I'd go there and be little and say, "Oh, I want to work on planing the sides." And they would like take a plane and like turn the blade around backwards or something so I couldn't mess it up. And he'd sit there and... But I can remember also reaching down and grabbing some shavings, and put it -- like in to throw the plane so it looked like I was actually doing something, you know. I was kind of [laughing] cheating a little bit there. But they'd, you know, laugh at you. But you know, they were trying to bring me along, too.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Can you describe the boatyard, how it was laid out?

HARDING: [00:23:53] Mm-hmm. He had one long building that I'm going to say was about... Maybe a hundred feet long by 30 feet wide. And wasn't very tall. It wasn't a very tall building. And all along the wall there, they had these windows that you could lift up and stick a stick in and open it up so a breeze could all blow through. And it had two big sliding doors on the front so you could pull the boat in and out. Two big sliding doors on the back. Then he had built a part on the right-hand side if you're in front of it, facing it. And that had like a little office where he had a desk and a chair. And then there was a storage room that had shelves from the floor to the ceiling. And some of the shelves were like bends. So they might have had like nails or some kind of fastener or zincs or oakum in some spot, but it was all filled up with supplies and stuff like that.

BUCKLEY: What's zincs?

HARDING: [00:25:10] Zincs? Zincs are like what you put on a piece of metal in the water. And it's like a

sacrificial lamb. So when you have electrolysis, that's the one that erodes first. It attracts -- I don't -- I'm trying to think how to explain it. But a zinc you put like on a crab pot, put on like a rudder. And it's like a round -- it looks almost like lead, but it's not. You fasten on there. It's something you take off and replace because you get dissimilar metals, and you get them in salt water, and they have a little bit of stray DC current. And all of a sudden you've got electrolysis going on. And then the metal starts to eat away, just like in a battery.

BUCKLEY: Does that cause the rust in the...?

HARDING: [00:26:04] Yeah. Well, it'll eat the metal right up, you know. So they put those on there. That's what zincs are.

BUCKLEY: And what's oakum?

HARDING: [00:26:13] Oakum? Oakum is like a chinking that you would chink in a seam or something. And they usually use that under water. And it would remind you of like hemp rope that was like -- well, it's real fibery. It's like hairy. And it's got like a lot of oil in it. So it's also like cotton caulk almost,

except cotton caulk you usually use above the water line. And the oakum you usually use below the water line.

BUCKLEY: And you tap in between the --

HARDING: [00:26:46] Mm-hmm. You use a chinking iron, you know. It looks like -- which looks almost like a chisel, but it's sort of curved. And as you hit it in the seam, you like keep tucking it over. And sometimes they'd twist it. There was an old guy that worked for Papa named [Lev?]. And he did a lot of chinking. And Lev, you know, it was just amazing to watch him do it. And sometimes he would take like cotton caulk and pull it out. And he could like twist it almost like you'd see women do like when they're getting wool for weaving. And he would make some stuff that was really, really small for tapping in like little spaces. But he always did it a certain way, and it always overlapped and chinked in. And when he got done chinking, there was never anything that was out of the seam, you know. It was always in the seam.

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:27:37] You know, I spent a fair amount of time around Lev because when he was in the boats, they were either out in the yard or you know, they're getting close to you know, time to throw them overboard or something. So it was kind of safe, you know. When they were doing things where maybe they were running a bunch of machinery or it was real busy and you know, the little kid was in the way, they'd say, "You know, you ought to go see what Lev's doing." You know, and I'd go over to Lev and kind of hang out with him, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So with the caulk, I'll ask a thing about that. Does it expand or what's the deal? How does it work? Why do they put it in there? Just to...

HARDING: [00:28:18] Well, it helps seal up if you've got a big gap there, but it doesn't really expand. You know, the boards are what would expand or whatever. But usually when you tap it in, it's almost so tight. I was one time working on a boat at Tolchester where we replaced the bottom. We were putting a really nice white cedar bottom on this guy's Chesapeake -- it was like a sport fishing boat. And this one guy said, "Oh,

well, you know, those boards are going to swell," and blah blah blah, "And you need to leave at least the thickness of a handsaw blade open in between all the boards." Well, I'm going to tell you. In Wingate, they jam them all in there so tight, you know, that you know, you try to get it a slight -- you know, you got to count on it swelling to keep the water out, but you know, the gaps are like -- were like a no-no.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So that's part of the beauty of building a boat. You build them so it's all smooth and --

HARDING: [00:29:20] Smooth and nice. Yeah. Yeah. And fair. You don't want to see a boat that's got like kinks in its side or anything. You want everything to just roll a certain way.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:29:31] Yeah. It's different if you've seen some [cabinetry?] built on Papa's boats. But if you saw the originals, they always had square sash for the windshield. And then they had --

BUCKLEY: What do you mean by square sash? Oh, the square panes or --

HARDING: [00:29:48] Yeah. The square windows that went in the -- that were like the windshield. They were like wooden sash. They were always square or rectangle. But the cabin always tilted in just a little bit, like about a quarter bubble out of plumb. And I don't know why it is, but if you make the cabin sides plumb, and you put that sash in there, and then you get out on the water, it looks like it's -- splays out at the top. It just doesn't look right. You know, you tip that in just that quarter of a bubble and it just... It's just what they did, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That was one of the trademarks of his boats.

HARDING: [00:30:27] It's a trademark of his boat. And where the side of the cabin, where the window was, where it met the windshield, there was always like right at the bottom, like a little [sima?] curve. That was out front. And that was so if you saw the boat from a long ways away, you could tell it was one of his boats, because they all had that. It's like just a little touch that he did on that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Are there other things like that that were signatures of his boat, almost like him signing his boat?

HARDING: [00:30:58] I think so, because a lot of the workboats, if you looked at their stern, they basically -- like a box stern, they just went, just splayed out a little bit at the top, but they were usually straight. It's easy to you know, bring the boards to the straight. But if you looked at Papa's from the chine to where the toerail was, the stern's got quite a curve in it, like bulges out in the middle and comes back in. And that's what they would call tumble home. And the other thing that it does is when you bring the sheer line, which is where the washboards on the boat are, from the bow down, because you've tumbled that in at the very back of the boat, it makes it come back up a little bit, that sheer line. So it's like a little tuck up that happens there, you know.

BUCKLEY: So tell me about how long it took to build these boats. He had quite an assembly going there.

HARDING: [00:31:58] Yeah. Well, I think that if it were like a simple workboat, generally speaking they

probably cranked those out in a little over a month. You know, now if when you're looking at the pictures, there are obviously some boats that you would consider like a yacht. And they would take considerably longer, you know.

BUCKLEY: Like a motor yacht?

HARDING: [00:32:27] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Like a Chesapeake Bay sport fishing boat, or some of them, there were a couple of them that would come over from -- reminded you a little bit of an Elco. They were like really long with some you know, big cabins on them. Typically his work boats had just like small little -- like a little cuddy cabin in the front, and then a place where you could stand up and steer the boat, and maybe have a stove inside of it or something. There wasn't like... You know, but I guess Dr. [Pfeiffer's?] boat had like bunks and all and that. He built a --

BUCKLEY: Who's that?

HARDING: [00:33:04] Dr. Pfeiffer?

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:33:07] Well, you know, I don't know who he is, but I know his boat really well. And that boat that my

grandfather built would really remind you more of like a Chris Craft yacht, you know. And he just had Papa build the boat. And it was kind of a big deal. He built a skipjack with a very long cabin on it that had bunks on it for Irénée du Pont, the *Barbara Batchelder*. And she stays down at Rock Hall. It was its marina now.

BUCKLEY: Still?

HARDING: [00:33:42] Mm-hmm. She's still there.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. How many of his boats are still around?

Let's talk about that.

HARDING: [00:33:49] Phew. I've got to think here a minute.

BUCKLEY: What about the skipjacks? Do we get any --

HARDING: [00:33:58] Well, with the skipjacks, the *Rosie*

Parks is in the Maritime Museum in St. Michaels. The

Martha Lewis is in the Maritime Museum at Havre de

Grace. But the word is that she's on hard times.

They're having trouble raising money to keep her up a

little bit. The *Lady Katie*, a young guy -- I say young

guy. He's a little younger than I am. Scott Todd has

bought her and has really done a lot of work. He's

basically rebuilt her. And he dredges with her and you

know, races with her and all that. He's a great guy.

And the *Martha* -- not the *Martha Lewis*. The *Wilma Lee* is in Ocracoke, North Carolina, of all places.

BUCKLEY: Ocracoke?

HARDING: [00:34:48] Yeah. Ocracoke. And they bought it down there for some museum and they take people out on trips or something like that with it, but yeah. She's still around. I'm going there this summer, so I'm going to go take a look at her, see how she looks.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's a fun place down there. It's an island I think, a little --

HARDING: [00:35:05] Mm-hmm. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: -- outer banks.

HARDING: [00:35:07] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:35:09] Yeah. So I'm excited about that.

BUCKLEY: So were those the later boats that he built, the three sisters? Was that the last boats or --

HARDING: [00:35:18] They were -- no. They weren't his last boats. They were like in... They were being built in 1954, around there. So he still had four years of boatbuilding after those. The *Wilma Lee* was a fair

amount earlier than that. And she had belonged to -- I'm pretty sure she belonged to Orville Parks. And when he got the *Rosie Parks*, my Uncle Ralph bought the *Wilma Lee*. Or wait a second. Maybe somebody else had the *Wilma Lee* before Uncle Ralph got her from Orville. I don't think he got her directly from Orville. He used to have a boat that was called the *G.A. Andersen*. And people would say, "Oh, you have a bugeye." And he's like, "Well, no. I don't have a bugeye." And they're like, "Well, it has two masts." He goes, "Yes. It's a two-masted bateau. It's not a bugeye," because it had a flat bottom.

BUCKLEY: And that's what they used to call the boats? A bateau?

HARDING: [00:36:23] A bat -- well, he called that a bateau because it had a flat bottom. It didn't have a V bottom. Didn't have any deadrise. But he sailed that a lot as a young man and dredged it. And then he really liked the *Wilma Lee*. He could, you know, so he got her and you know, kept her just about, well, until he couldn't dredge anymore. And I think... Robbie

Wilson on Tilghman Island bought that boat from my Uncle Ralph.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. It's in the book. I've been reading that skipjack [inaudible] --

HARDING: [00:37:00] Yeah, yeah. I'm pretty sure Robbie had bought that boat.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And so he did the workboats, and he did some yachts, and he did skipjacks.

HARDING: [00:37:10] Mm-hmm. And I think all of his boats were all pretty nice, but I'm saying that general rule of thumb, everybody just kind of referred to his workboats as being his best work.

BUCKLEY: Now including the skipjacks?

HARDING: [00:37:26] Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah. Yeah. They were really kind of ahead of their time, you know. But I guess they were lucky that they survived all this time, you know. You figure over a half a century. That's a long time for a skipjack. They were kind of a disposable -- I mean, you try to keep it up you know, because -- but they were kind of -- once they were gone, they just went and got another boat, you know.

They were supposed to be an inexpensive way to harvest oysters, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. You could build one in your front yard. I guess some guys did.

HARDING: [00:37:57] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Or some guys would get like old schooners and stuff, or try to fix them up and try to get them so they could sail and dredge, and all of that. But you know, if there were a lot of oysters, there'd still be a lot more skipjacks out there, you know. People could use them and still catch oysters. But you know, they're gone pretty much.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. There's a lot of those boats. It's pretty amazing that they're still around there. Yeah. So how would you talk about his personality, Bronza Parks' personality?

HARDING: [00:38:37] (laughs) Well, Papa was, you know, he was always fun to be around. You always loved being with him. And --

BUCKLEY: He had a good sense of humor?

HARDING: [00:38:48] Oh, I think so. Yeah. Yeah. But he was definitely like an in-charge guy. It was kind of like you didn't question what he said to you. You

know. And it wasn't like he was mean or demanding. It's just the way it was, you know. He walked in the room and it was kind of oh, here's Bronzie now. So kind of the feeling I always had as a kid. I can remember talking to O'Neal Dean many years later and he was telling me about my grandfather came to him as a -- well, he came to my grandfather as a really young man looking for a job. And he didn't have any family. He goes, "You know, and Bronzie had been sort of like an orphan, so he kind of like took to me a little bit. And he asked me what I could do and I told him just about nothing, what I knew how to do." And Papa goes, "Well, you're just the kind of guy I'm looking for because I can you know, get you to do it the way I want to have it done."

And of course, O'Neal Dean just a superb craftsman as he got older. But he said he could remember the day Papa came to him and said, "O'Neal, you know what? We need a boys' scout troop here in Wingate. It's not right that we don't have a boys' scout troop. We got all these young boys. We need to have something going

on. And I've been checking up on it and we need like a certain amount of men to be part of our board of directors. So you're going to be one of the board of directors." And he said, "You know, he didn't ask me." Right? "And he just said, 'You're going to be it.'" And you're just sort of like, "Okay. I'll do that." But that's sort of like the way it was.

I went there to O'Neal's shop when I was working at Tolchester to buy a bunch of white cedar from him. And I had picked up my mother in Cambridge. I was like, "Come on and ride down here with me while I go get this lumber." My Uncle Ralph showed up and we're tallying it all up. And my Mom's like looking around O'Neal's shop and she goes, "You know, O'Neal, Daddy had like windows down low, just like you have in your shop." He said, "Yes, Mary. I've -- " And she goes, "And he had an office kind of off the side of his, just almost like yours." He goes, "Well, yes, Mary. I've thanked your father many times." And then she looked around. She goes, "You know, right by his office door, he had these triangle shelves just like you've got. And he had

nails on them, too." And O'Neal turned around and he looked. He said, "Mary, I've thanked your father many times." You know, so it was kind of interesting to see how that -- and of course, O'Neal was an innovator, too, you know. He would always try different and new things, and always try -- it was something that was kind of instilled with him.

But he was fun to be around. You know, people, they'd throw horseshoes and a lot of that sort of stuff. And he always had time for the kids. I've got pictures of us with him on the floor, like walking like a horse, and myself and my sister on his back. And we're sitting in his lap in the rocking chair. And [Brendan's?] got on his glasses and I've got on his hat. And you know, we'd go fishing and have fun, you know.

BUCKLEY: Did he wear a baseball hat?

HARDING: [00:42:26] No. But he wore a cap like that, except for when he was like really doing business. Then he had like his sort of like, I guess you'd call it like a Sunday type of hat that he would wear.

BUCKLEY: How would you describe the other one that he wore when he was working?

HARDING: [00:42:40] I'm trying to think. It was like a brimmed hat, you know. And it was -- I wouldn't say felt, but that's sort of like that type of material. And the first time I ever went to Baltimore, he took me there with him. And besides going to the [MacLean's?] to get hardware, we went to [Hutzler's?]. And he was going to buy a suit. And he had a suit made for me that was just like his. And he bought a hat and he had picked out his hat because they had another little that was, fit me just like his. That was kind of like the way that progression sort of started, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Do you still have the suit?

HARDING: [00:43:21] No. (laughter) Un-unh. No. But I can tell you that when I had my son and he was about three years old, we went down to my grandmother's house and she left and went upstairs, and climbed up in the attic. And she came down and she's, went to my wife, Sally, she goes, "I think you'd like to have these." And they were like all of my Sunday like clip-on bow ties, and my Sunday school pants and all -- I mean,

she'd saved all that stuff. And she saved them so you know, [Ashley?] would have them.

BUCKLEY: Ahh.

HARDING: [00:43:52] You know, so you know, they saved those sort of things, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Did you guys get dressed up on Sunday to go to --

HARDING: [00:44:00] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Always had to wear like a little suit and tie, and a pair of shoes that hurt my feet. Had like real thick feet. My shoes always hurt, you know. And I can remember being in Sunday school when I'd look at like Frankie and Carson and you know, their parents couldn't afford to buy a suit or something. So they're there in like a flannel shirt and a clean pair of blue jeans, and I was like, "Boy, they're lucky," you know. But every Sunday the kids all went to the church.

BUCKLEY: That was in Wingate?

HARDING: [00:44:32] Usually the adults that -- yeah. In Wingate. It was a little one-room church. And inside the Sunday schools were like a different pew for different aged kids. And then the people who were like

the adults who were like the age of the adults that were parents of the kids, their like adult Sunday school class was in the very back of the church. And that was kind of so that everybody could watch what all the kids were doing, you know. Make sure you were doing the right thing.

BUCKLEY: The guardian angel setup.

HARDING: [00:45:10] Sort of, but it was kind of like you didn't behave -- and the real old people sat in the right front pew. So you know, like Uncle Jim was there and some of the -- so you couldn't do anything, act up too much in church because everybody would know about it before you kind of got home, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. It takes a village to parent kind of -- on track.

HARDING: [00:45:34] Sort of. Sort of. But you know, it was... (laughs) The church was you know, a big part of what went on. You know, there'd be a part of the service where they'd stop and people would say, "Well, you know, you're probably all wondering about Aunt Lena, but you know, she's doing a lot better now. She's not really out and about, but you know, she can

get up and she can move around. And hopefully in another week or two she'll be able to come back to church." And somebody would say something about -- it was you know, where a lot of the communication went on. And --

BUCKLEY: Different people standing out?

HARDING: [00:46:11] Oh, yeah. It was like... What's the... Like the community crier, you know. Everybody would get up and say what was going on or if they thought there was information that somebody needed to know, you know. So-and-so fell down and broke his arm. And he was right in the middle of doing this. So if anybody can come and help him finish this up, you know, we'll go over there and do that, or that sort of thing.

BUCKLEY: We look at our own kind of folk.

HARDING: [00:46:41] Certainly. Certainly. There was a spot where I would go tonging with my Uncle Cyril.

BUCKLEY: What's tonging?

HARDING: [00:46:48] Tonging is a method of harvesting oysters where there's like two long shafts. And there's like these fingered baskets on the bottom of them, but they're real elongated. So you reach down

and you work the tongs like scissors almost. And then you get them filled up, and you pull them up, and you dump them on a culling board. And you cull out the oysters and you pick them up that way.

BUCKLEY: Tonging. You'd pick the big ones?

HARDING: [00:47:14] Yeah. You got to make sure you don't have ones that are too small. And we were going out one day and I was like, "You know, it seems a little rough. Why don't we go over there where those guys are over there in that little cove?" He goes, "No, no, no, no. You don't tong in there." And I was like, "Well, they're tonging in there." He was like, "No, no, no. We don't tong in there." And then he'd start looking. And it's like all the old men who were like 70, you know. And it's a spot that they all kept planted up with oysters. And you know, it was like you could go in there with like you know, 14-foot tongs, you know, instead of like 24-foot tongs. And you'd go in there and it's like they were like -- they could still work, you know, but they can't get the -- you know, they were in the deep water.

So that area was kind of reserved for them. And you weren't supposed to plant our own bottom or anything like that, but it was all planted up. And I think that it was also a thing. Let's say if you were a young guy and you were tonging. Let's say you fell down and broke your arm and you're out of your cast. They might come and say, "Hey, Mike. You know, we know you're just getting back on your feet. Why don't you go up in the cove with so and so and so and so for a week or so and kind of get yourself caught up so you could get back in the swing of things?" But I'm saying God help the person who went in there and thought they cleaned it up that wasn't supposed to be in there. You know, I mean, they just... It was just the way it was.

BUCKLEY: So people knew where they belonged and where they didn't belong kind of.

HARDING: [00:48:53] Well, yeah, because you know, there were two packing houses there. George [Pelley?] had one. Spark had the other. Somebody'd come in with a whole load of oysters or something that -- and they're saying, "Well, he wasn't out on the rock. Or he wasn't working there." Not too much goes on without somebody

knowing about it. Somebody might try to sneak around and do something, but as far as the movement of the oysters and all, it was you know, people know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:49:25] You know.

BUCKLEY: So was there some pretty popular rock around there? Around Wingate and down there in lower Dorchester? Or folks go travel to get to the good --

HARDING: [00:49:35] No. For tonging, there was two big rocks that were in the Honga River. There was lots of spots, but there were two big rocks. And usually when you got out there, you know, it was the young guys you know, who had like arms on them that are like eight inches in diameter, you know. And they're just cranking as hard as they can go. And my Uncle Cyril, he would always work on the edge. He would like drop chain off the side of the boat. Well, that was tied to some rope. And he'd circle around a couple of times and he'd just be going real soft and listening. You'd hear tinkle, tinkle, tinkle. Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle. And he'd like look and get some landmarks. And he'd go around in a circle. And he'd go tinkle, tinkle,

tinkle. And you could hear it. And then he'd drop like a little buoy. And when he caught his oysters out there, they had room to grow. So they were nice, big round oysters, you know, like you'd like to see in a restaurant or something. On top of the rock, there's a lot of oysters there, but they're all like long and skinny, and their noses turn everywhere. It's a [chinkadig?] oyster, you know. If you see a really pretty, nice round oyster, and somebody tells you it's a chinkadig oyster, it's not, because they plant all those things. And they all grow on those rows. And they taste great.

BUCKLEY: Sticking out --

HARDING: [00:50:56] Yeah. And they're like all twisted and all that, you know. So my Uncle Cyril, he would always get you know, a little extra money a bushel for his because, you know. Of course, when he was selling them at the crab house or the shucking house, Sparky would have that, [Spark Woodland?]. He was Uncle Ralph's and Cyril's cousin. So you know, they all worked things together, you know, like okay, we -- and they would do the same for somebody else. If you had the nice round

oysters, you know, you might get nine dollars a bushel where the guy had like all the stuff from off the rock you know, they're getting like \$7.50 a bushel for them.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So they'd serve them in restaurants when they were all round and beautiful like that.

HARDING: [00:51:43] Yeah. Well, it's like a prize piece of lumber. A really nice board's worth more than one that's all knotty and twisted and a piece of junk, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. The clean, yeah.

HARDING: [00:51:52] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Tell me about the woods around there. And was there a lot of wood taken locally? Was it all taken locally or did you guys travel to get good wood to --

HARDING: [00:52:01] I think a lot of it was local. Now, something like the white cedar, that usually came from a little further south. And they brought that in. But the yellow pine was certainly you know, lowland, Dorchester County, long-needle pine.

BUCKLEY: Is that we call loblolly or?

HARDING: [00:52:20] Mm-hmm. They call those loblollies.

And my Uncle Ralph said that one time up near Cambridge on the Talbot County side of the Choptank River, there'd been a big storm and it knocked down all these trees over at [Battle Holly?]. And they went and looked at them and they said, oh, they were gorgeous. And they were nice and big, and long and straight. And they cut them up, made gorgeous planks. But my Uncle Ralph said the only problem with them was is they were upland pines. And for some reason, for them growing like where the ground was high, they didn't have the same extractives in them and the same pine and pitch as the ones that were growing down in the marshes.

BUCKLEY: What do you mean by pine and pitch?

HARDING: [00:53:09] Pine and pitch is like sap. The sap is the pitch in the pine. And it's like this oil. And for some reason, the ones that were down in the lower part of Dorchester County in the marshes were much more resistant to like rot and stuff than these uplands. They were like -- I mean, plane them as nice. I mean, there's no sticky stuff on them. They really looked really nice, but you know.

BUCKLEY: What did they use for the masts?

HARDING: [00:53:42] Same thing. Those pine. I've got a picture of the old Army truck that my grandfather's got. And they've got the tree that was the mast strapped to the side of it. Like in the middle of it. It's balancing there and they're moving it across the yard to get ready to shape it up. But I think he got a lot of his pine too from Arthur Spicer.

BUCKLEY: Oh, Mr. Spicer. Your Mom mentioned him in our interview.

HARDING: [00:54:08] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Tell me what Mr. Spicer's all about.

HARDING: [00:54:11] Yeah. Well, he had a big lumber operation. And it was just before you get to where the road splits, and one side goes to Hooper's Island and the other side goes to Wingate, just before you get to Gootee's, where Gootee's Marine is now. But, man, they sawed a lot of lumber. He and my grandfather were good friends. But Papa would also get like mahogany from [MacLean?] Brothers in Baltimore. He certainly got a lot of the white cedar from way down -- I guess then you could still get some on the eastern shore of

Virginia, but mostly North Carolina. It came up from there. And they used to always say when they were saying, oh, so and so's going to pay for a white cedar bottom. All the guys would go, "Hey, buddy. Hey, buddy." Because they all liked working with it. And it's such a you know, it's a nice material to work with.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Because it's soft, resilient.

HARDING: [00:55:15] Soft and it's light. And it's corky, and you know, it's easy to get it where it is. It's sort of like a juniper type of tree I think.

BUCKLEY: Hmm. What do you use the mahogany for?

HARDING: [00:55:33] Sterns. The sterns of the boat.

Sometimes they might use it for like a little bit of trim in the cabin. But mostly on the stern of a boat. They would make that out of mahogany.

BUCKLEY: Why would they pick the mahogany?

HARDING: [00:55:46] I think just for looks. Just for looks to make it you know, dress it up, make it look good.

BUCKLEY: Mahogany's a hard wood?

HARDING: [00:55:53] Mm-hmm. It's a hardwood. You know what makes it a hardwood?

BUCKLEY: No. How does that go?

HARDING: [00:56:00] Well, you know, a hardwood can be soft and a softwood could be hard. And what really distinguishes them is hardwoods are deciduous.

BUCKLEY: What does that mean?

HARDING: [00:56:11] It means they lose their leaves in the fall. And softwoods are evergreens. You got your pine, and your fir, and all that sort of thing. That's where the distinction kind of comes in. But, yeah. Mahogany can be pretty -- I mean, actually physically pretty hard, too.

BUCKLEY: Oh. Wow. You learn something new every day.

HARDING: [00:56:33] Yeah. Well, that's...

BUCKLEY: It's kind of counterintuitive almost, isn't it?

HARDING: [00:56:37] No. But it's --

BUCKLEY: In my mind anyway.

HARDING: [00:56:40] Yeah. But it's just the way they're classified, you know. And it's like if you go to purchase them, like softwoods, you can say, "I want to buy some one-by-ten, 12 feet long, and I need 20 pieces of it." You can go to the lumberyard and you can get that all day long in a softwood. When you go to order

a hardwood, it's all done in board feet, but it's -- might be like -- usually they're all the same thickness. But they can be like four inches wide, six inches wide, 12 inches wide. It's just the way that they're marketed, you know.

BUCKLEY: So when he had to go for wood or whatever to Baltimore or down Virginia, did he go by boat? Or did he go by truck or something like that?

HARDING: [00:57:34] Well, when we went -- when I remember going to Baltimore, we went in his car. And he always drove -- when I knew him, he always had a black Lincoln Continental.

BUCKLEY: Nice.

HARDING: [00:57:46] Oh, yeah. Big car. You know, he had other cars early on when they were first getting that. And he had an old like Army surplus, big four-wheel drive truck that he kept around the boathouse for pulling and hauling and stuff. But I think that a lot of the stuff he got at Baltimore, he would go there and pick it out and they would deliver it.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:58:15] And we went to MacLean's one time and they were showing him some mahoganies. "I don't know about that. You don't have any other mahogany around here besides this stuff, because I you know, I just can't use that." The guy was like, "Well, no, not really." And finally another salesman came over and he said, "Well, Mr. Parks, I think you need to come walk over to this other shed with me." You know, we went in there and there were planks that were like 20 inches wide and just gorgeous. But I think the guy was trying to get rid of some of that stuff. And then when Papa wasn't going to buy it, it was kind of, ah, well.

BUCKLEY: That happened once with a musical instrument. It was Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead, you know.

HARDING: [00:58:59] Oh, yeah?

BUCKLEY: He sent me down to get a framed drum, you know. And I brought him back the framed drum borrowed from this shop. And he said, "Tell that guy -- take it back. Tell him that's not a real instrument, you know. Tell him get me the real fricking instrument, you know." Got back in there and he gave me a -- he said, "Oh, okay. Here you go." Oh, that's better.

HARDING: [00:59:18] Well, you got to know what you want and what you're looking for, you know, because people can tell you anything. Especially if they're trying to sell you something, you know. But, yeah. Going to Baltimore was really something. I remember the first time I saw an escalator. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: What was that like?

HARDING: [00:59:36] It was nuts, you know. I just couldn't believe that there were these steps that you know, went up and came down, and all of that. And it's just seeing things that are -- I mean, when you're in Dorchester County, everything kind of looks the same. It's flat. You can stand on a five-gallon bucket and you can see ten miles. It's not very big. I was telling someone that they rented a school bus one time, the church did. And the kids from the Sunday school, they brought us up to Tolchester Amusement Park. I was real little then. But --

BUCKLEY: Up here.

HARDING: [01:00:13] Yeah. Up here. And they you know, they had the rollercoaster, and little boats in the pond, and the little train. Yeah. The guys would come

out and like rob you when the train was going through
and all that.

BUCKLEY: Would they really?

HARDING: [01:00:24] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: I didn't know that.

HARDING: [01:00:26] Yeah. But when we were coming up here,
I figured we were in the mountains. You know, when I
got up around Churchill and Centerville and all that.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:00:37] It's unbelievable. I was in the
mountains, you know, because I had never seen
anything... You know, everything I'd seen was always
flat.

BUCKLEY: Yeah, yeah.

HARDING: [01:00:45] You know.

BUCKLEY: Stay here long enough, you still get that feeling.

HARDING: [01:00:49] Yeah, yeah. You do.

BUCKLEY: When you leave. Yeah.

HARDING: [01:00:51] Seemed like they went on forever you
know, some of these hills.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. All right. Well, we can stop now.

HARDING: [01:00:57] Okay.

BUCKLEY: We have a nice hour there. I appreciate it.

HARDING: [01:00:59] Thank you.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I think we did good.

HARDING: [01:01:02] Good. Yeah. Thanks for really help
leading me through it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

KAREN: You're a great storyteller.

BUCKLEY: One hour and one minute.

KAREN: Like you know, he's really...

END OF PART ONE

HARDING: -- that had these tables. I guess it was
stainless metal, but it had shiny metal on the tables.
And there was a divider in the middle, sort of like a
backsplash. And every so often, there was a spigot
that came up there, you know, especially for when they
were doing oysters. They could like keep their knives
clean and that sort of thing. And if you were there
when the women were still there, they were you know,
shoulder-to-shoulder almost. And, boy, when they were
picking crabs, it was unbelievable how fast they could
pick them. And really pretty clean, too.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. African-American women or were they all --

HARDING: [00:00:44] Some. Some. But a lot of them were you know, white women. They were the wives and that. But, yeah. There were some African-Americans there. And there was a couple of African-American guys who ran the steamer. It was like a giant pressure cooker. So they would take all these bushels of crabs and they'd be in a big metal cage with like holes in it and wheels. And they would roll it in this big cylinder thing. And then they'd shut the door. And it would remind you of like a submarine hatch, except it was horizontal, not -- I mean, vertical, not horizontal. And they would turn all these screw-like latches and get it real tight. And then they'd turn it on and it would start making steam. And you know, they would cook all these crabs in like a really short amount of time.

There was another room that was like the icebox room, you know. And they made ice in there and you know, kept things cool. Once those crabs came out of the steamer, then they would put them in that room and they

would get cooled down and keep for the women the next day. And then Spark had like a little office off to the side. The steamer was actually... It was under roof, but it was like in a place that had like a knee wall that was about four feet high. And then there was screen all around it. That was hot around that you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:02:12] But there were two black guys who ran that. And I think Sparky had a couple of other guys that were African-American that like drove some trucks for him. And when dredging came in, you didn't see too many African-Americans with tongers. But the dredgers, almost all of their crew were African-American.

BUCKLEY: Those were skipjacks or?

HARDING: [00:02:40] Yeah. The skipjacks, when they were dredging oysters. And it was kind of funny. I mentioned that to somebody you know, in the past year or so. And they were like, "Oh, yeah." You know, it was kind of like the rednecks taking advantage of somebody, you know. But the reality was everybody worked on shares. And --

BUCKLEY: How'd that work?

HARDING: [00:03:02] Well, the way that works is the boat gets two shares. The captain gets a share. And everybody else gets a share.

BUCKLEY: Everybody else splits the -- or everybody gets a share.

HARDING: [00:03:13] A share. So it's not like, oh, you're going to come out here and work for you know, two dollars an hour. Whatever everybody was catching, there was a way that they split it up. And reality was when -- at those days, when oystering was in, everybody was smiling because they were all making money, you know. And then some time in the summer, you know, some of the guys worked in my grandfather's boatyard doing odd jobs. Like Lev, you know, who I was telling you about, who was the chinker.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:03:47] The caulker. You know, he worked in Papa's yard, but -- I'm trying to think. I think he worked on Uncle Orville's boat. He might have actually been the cook on that boat. But...

BUCKLEY: Is that the *Wilma Lee*?

HARDING: [00:04:01] No. That was the *Rosie Parks*. I'm pretty sure he was on that boat. Not positive, but I'm pretty sure. But you know, I mostly knew him from being around the boatyard, you know. And...

BUCKLEY: And how long did everybody go out? They had cooks and stuff so they could stay out for a while? How'd that work?

HARDING: [00:04:22] Well, a lot of times they'd be gone for like a week at a time, five days at a time. But you know, it's not like they were anchored out. They might have been like... Typically they'd go and start at the top of the bay and work their way down. It would all depend on what the oyster crop looked like and all, but the top of the bay would freeze up sooner than the bottom of the bay. So you'd always go up that way to work. But like my Uncle Ralph, he worked a lot out of the mouth of the Choptank River. So they, you know, a lot of those people came home every night.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:05:10] But you know, if they were in Annapolis or something, they would probably stay on the boat or some of these men went and traveled. But even if they

were coming home at night, they would still have to cook on the boat because you have to have lunch.

BUCKLEY: Right.

HARDING: [00:05:25] You know, and it was always like they were always making soup or something warm because you know, it's really hard and it's cold. It's really cold. I can remember when I first got together off on the skipjack, you know, and of course my Mom and my Grandmom, none of them wanted me to you know -- it was like it was too dangerous.

BUCKLEY: How old were you?

HARDING: [00:05:46] Oh, I'm going to say six or seven. But if you go down in the main cabin of the skipjack, which is little, there's like two little bunks that are cut into the side. And then there's like a little whole area where you can get back to where the rudder box is and some of that gear. So they decided that's where I was going to sleep. And they were like, "Yeah. You're going to get as far aft as you can get." And they were like, "Yeah." This is terrible. They'd say, "You're going to be sleeping in the afterbirth." I didn't know what... (laughs) But that's where they would put me,

you know. And I was like, you know, it's aft. It's aft in the boat.

But they put down like a little thin mattress that was maybe an inch-and-a-half thick. You know, like cotton, like some padding. But the rudder post is in there, which is a box that goes from the bottom on up through the top to the wheel. And that's supposed to -- so the rudder post can go through there. And it's kind of like a shaft alley, you know, and it supposed to keep the water out. But that always like leaked a little bit. And a lot of that where the very back of the boat comes up out of the water, sometimes those boards weren't you know, all the way real tight. So if the water was splashing up against there, you know, it would come up through there. I want to tell you what. That's a cold place to try to get a sleep. (laughs) A really cold place. And scrunchy, too. But when you're a little kid, you know, you can get in there. So that's where they put me.

BUCKLEY: Sometimes I see the pictures and all frozen up on their beards and --

HARDING: [00:07:33] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: I just wonder how they do it. There's a
[inaudible], book by [Larry Simms?]. You know Larry
Simms?

HARDING: [00:07:41] Yeah. I do know Larry.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. About him when he was kid, about them
making him keep his feet out from under the covers so
he'd get used to... I can't really --

HARDING: [00:07:50] Well, they used to always tell us when
we were little, you'd be walking around the house first
thing in the morning and my grandmother would say, "Did
you throw cold water on your face yet this morning?" I
was like, "Well, no." "Well, go throw some cold water
on your face." And that's what they used to say. If
you throw cold water on your face every morning you
won't get cold. And I guess it's a thing because if
you're going to go out on the water, the odds are if
it's, you know, in the far of the winter time, you're
going to get [laughing] cold water on your face. It
just makes you get used to it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Did you ever get in any rough water or rough situations out there weather-wise when you were out on...?

HARDING: [00:08:32] The one time I can really remember is I was with my Uncle Ralph and that's when he had that two-masted bateau, the *G.A. Andersen*. And they were going to take it -- he and his Dad were taking their boats to Cambridge. And you know, for me as a young kid, that was a pretty good hike. And so I was with them. And they were using Bichell's bi-boat. And they were pulling the *Andersen*. First they had her tied up in tandem, side-to-side, like a couple of tires in between them. And then we got out in the bay kind of off of Hooper's Island and, man, it got really, really rough. And the boats were banging together. So then they decided they were going to undo the *Andersen* and then they were going to trail it behind and pull it so the boats wouldn't bang into each other.

And then it was -- you could kind of tell that they -- Uncle Ralph and Bichell were a little worried. But it was kind of funny. Around there, you know, even when

things were really, really bad, people never really acted like that you know, around the kids. Like oh, god. You know, the worst is going to happen. You know, they just -- so Uncle Ralphie started cooking some eggs. And I remember we were bouncing all around out there. But they got talking about they weren't making any headway. They were going and going and going, but they weren't going anywhere. It was all they could do to just stay in one spot.

So I can remember he ended up grabbing the rope off the stern of the boat of the bi-boat and he was holding it with his hands. And he wrapped his legs up around it. And he was going to cut his boat loose. And he was going to let the wind scuttle it on in to shore. And then Bichell was going to come back around and pick him up. And I can remember you know, the boat's moving and Uncle Ralph getting dumped in the water. And you know, it's not till later in life you think about kind of how dangerous that really was, but you know, they were like you know, we got to do something.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:11:01] I think that's the worst I can remember. Another time I really wanted to go crabbing bad with my Uncle Cyril. And they were all sitting in the boats and they were playing cards for like matchstick, broken matchsticks or something like that. I was like, "I can't believe we're not going to [inaudible]." Look out there, the creek. It's too rough. And it didn't look very rough to me. I was like, "Well, it doesn't look that rough to me." He goes, "Well, look how it's all crinkled up out there." I'm like, "Well, that's nothing." You know. And I kept bugging him about it, you know. I can't believe you're not going. So finally he goes, "Okay. I've had enough. Come on. Let's get in the boat and let's go." And I'm going to tell you what. By the time we got out of that river, it was so rough, you know. And we're going. And finally he's looking at me and he goes, "Have you had enough yet?" I was like, "Yeah. I think we better turn around and go back." But you know, I didn't know. So he was teaching me, you know, it might not look like it's very rough here, but when you get out there it's going to be really, really bad.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. You use up an awful lot of energy and fuel probably, too, when you're just paddling in place, you know.

HARDING: [00:12:13] Well, yeah. And you know, when you -- like those men, when they would leave in the morning, you know, the object is, is to have a day that's a plus. You know. Basically when you go out, you're either going to have a plus or a minus or a break even type of thing, you know. So you've got to really decide you know, what's going to happen today. Is it really going to be worth me going out there you know, if I'm going to bang up my boat or get in trouble or whatever? You know, sometimes it's just not worth it, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:12:49] You just, you know, you got to learn about that, too.

BUCKLEY: Yeah, yeah. I heard some guys doing the kayak trips and sometimes you get in there and you're just not going anywhere, like you were saying.

HARDING: [00:13:01] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's... Yeah.

When you're going against the forces, it can be you know, can be tough, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Cool. So tell me a little bit more about Bronza. We haven't talked about him much today. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:13:23] Well, let me think. He was just really something, you know. He just was as somebody of such stature. You know, it was like wherever he went, it was like you could see like the heads turned. Like here comes Bronzie, you know. You know, when you're around the fire house and stuff, you know, he was the head of that and saw to it that they got the ambulances and --

BUCKLEY: Tell me the whole story about the fire house. We talked about that before but we didn't record then.

HARDING: [00:14:07] Oh, okay. Well, he had this Army surplus, big four-wheel drive truck that he used to pull boats down to the water. But they also had put this like ditch pump and then bolted it to the front of the bumper, a big ditch pump. And I guess you could hook like a three-inch diameter hose to it. And that was so if there was a fire they could try to fight it,

you know. And they'd throw one part of the hose in the ditch and turn on the pump and just go at it. But the problem was, was if there was real low tide, there wasn't very much water in the ditch. You know, it was -- you know, you were kind of...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Running out.

HARDING: [00:14:53] Yeah. You ran out of water, you know.

And then the property right next to his boathouse he gave and got some men together. And you know, they bought some block and they just started building this little fire house. The fire house was also the church hall because the church didn't have like a hall for dinner and all that. They had a kitchen in the fire house. So they would you know, always have like the oyster and ham dinner, or crab cake dinner. And that's how they would always raise some money.

And they also -- I think it was when he was trying to get the ambulance. He went around the community and people bought a share of the ambulance. And there was this like little paper that they had written up. And it might say like, well, Michael Buckley just bought a

three-dollar share in the ambulance. And if something should happen and he needs that money because if, you know, he gets hurt or for any reason, he can come back and claim that three dollars at any time. And it was -- I don't know why it was like that, but it was set up that... And I think it also said something like if something should happen and you should die, your wife can come and claim this three dollars.

BUCKLEY: Hmm.

HARDING: [00:16:18] But it kind of shows you what the value of money was then, you know, because it was...

BUCKLEY: Small amount --

HARDING: [00:16:26] A small amount went a long way sometimes.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:16:30] But --

BUCKLEY: But that's that whole sense of community. Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:16:33] Yeah. Yeah. And of course, I would ride around with him when he was running for county commissioner. And on the top of his car he had these boards across the top of it. And he had one of these

like PA speakers that looked like a bullhorn, you know. And he had like a little, like what looked like -- it wasn't really a microphone. It was like the mic to a - - like the radios they would have in trucks, you know, where you push the key and you can talk in it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:17:08] And it would come out on the speaker.

And he would let me push the thing and say, "Vote for B.M. Parks. Vote for B.M. Parks." And then on the front seat in between us, they had some way -- they rigged up this record player. And there were some wires that went to the speaker. So when you weren't talking on the speaker, you could put this record on. And, yeah. And it would play music, you know, as you were riding around. And everybody could hear it. And --

BUCKLEY: Get their attention.

HARDING: [00:17:42] Yeah. And his favorite song was *Just a Closer Walk With Thee*.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:17:47] And that was one of the songs on one side of the record. And it was a -- I'm pretty sure it

was an instrumental, didn't have any singing. The other side had singing on it, and it was *In the Garden*. You know, they were both hymns. You know, once one was done, you know, my job was to flip the record over and put the needle back on and all that.

BUCKLEY: So were they big records or small ones?

HARDING: [00:18:18] No. It was like a little 45 record.

(laughs) You know. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah, yeah. Right on the front seat there.

HARDING: [00:18:26] Yeah. Right on the front seat. That's how it worked. (laughs) And like I can remember one time we went -- I was with him and we went to -- he stopped at this African-American church. And it was one of these places where you kind of had to like walk on the two boards that were next to each other to get over the ditch. You know, you get over by the church. And they were having like a church luncheon dinner. And they had this like -- it really wasn't a tent, but like a shade cover that was hung up in between these trees and stuff. And you could tell it was an old skipjack sail or something like that that was you know, you couldn't use on the boat anymore. Maybe it had

some holes in it or something. But that was hanging up there. And we got out and everybody's singing. And we're getting up there. This big old woman said to me, she goes, "Well, little beau, are you going to have pig's feet or chicken?" And I just kind of looked up at my grandfather, and she goes, "I know what Captain Bronzie's going to have. He's going to have both." I can remember it really well.

And then a fellow came over and Papa was pulling out his wallet. He goes, "Well, Captain Bronzie, we just want to treat you to dinner. You know, you don't need to put any money in." Papa's like, "Well, you're trying to raise some money for your church, aren't you?" And they were like, "Well, yes," but he goes, "You know we got some new steps here on our church. And there was a pile of lumber that showed up here that we you know, somebody just left here for us." So he goes, "And I know it came from your boatyard."

BUCKLEY: Because he left it.

HARDING: [00:20:07] Yeah. He just had somebody take it up there and leave it. And I can remember Papa was

telling him, "Well, you know, I couldn't use boards like that in my boat. They got knots in them."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:20:22] You know? They're no good for a boat.

You know, but they were -- but, yeah. He had done that when somebody wasn't looking. He knew that they needed them and he just had somebody take like some of the boards that were culls and took them up there and left them.

BUCKLEY: So were people religious, really go to church --

HARDING: [00:20:41] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: That's what everybody did.

HARDING: [00:20:43] Yeah. Yeah. I would say everybody was

pretty religious, even if you didn't go to church.

Yeah, and I would say the bulk of everybody were Methodists.

BUCKLEY: What did that mean?

HARDING: [00:20:52] I don't know. I just know that that's what they were.

BUCKLEY: Mm-hmm.

HARDING: [00:20:57] And so you know, like for me, I had to go to church every Sunday. And then Sunday school, you

always heard -- you know, you went through all these Bible stories like *Daniel and Lion*, and those sort of things. And *Noah*. And they would always sing the songs, *You Drifted Too Far from the Shore*, and you know, there were a lot of nautical things. You know, fishers of men. *I'll Make You Fishers of Men*. You know, they were all tied together. And I know the first time I took my wife down into Wingate, she decided she was going to go to church. And I said, "I'm not going with you. You can go ahead and go to church." Like she went. And of course, everybody you know, everybody's trying to figure out who she is and everything. By the time she got back to my Grandma's house, everybody knew and had figured out what was going on. But Sally was talking about how on the mantle there was like a little model of a skipjack and oyster shells, you know, along underneath it and all that. So it all kind of ties together.

BUCKLEY: No shortage of those stories.

SALLY: Your grandfather didn't go to church.

HARDING: [00:22:08] Yeah. My grandfather, he didn't go to church. I can remember he would go in their dining

room and he would read his Bible every Saturday night, late. He would go there and read that. I can remember he would sit there with his hand on his forehead and just look down and read it. But he didn't go to church. But when [Mack Wheatley?] came by once a month, you know, everybody pulled out their wallet because he was collecting money to make sure that the minister got paid and you know, besides having the collection. You know, they would try to make the collection work, but whenever they were short, it was Mack's job and he went around the community and saw to it that he collected enough money to make up for whatever slack there was, you know.

BUCKLEY: Did you know the preacher? And did everybody know him or...?

HARDING: [00:22:57] Yeah. Everybody knew everybody, you know. But for me, it was more so because usually after Sunday school, all the kids would leave. And then there'd be a church service after that. And that's really where the preacher got involved. But I know in Sunday school, each pew was like, sort of like a different age group. And sitting in the very front...

Uncle Jim, Lewis sat up there. He was my mother's uncle, but everybody called him Uncle Jim. And he sat up there. So you always had to make sure you didn't do anything wrong in church that he could see because everybody would find out about it. And with the kids, the older the kids got, the further back from the front they were. And in the very back there was like a little alcove. And that's where like all of the young parents of the kids that were in the Sunday school, that's where they had their Sunday school class. And I think that was devised so they could see everything that was going on in church.

SALLY: Had to dress up.

HARDING: [00:24:07] Yeah. And we always had to dress up, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:24:10] Put on your suit and your shoes that hurt. And [laughing] you know?

BUCKLEY: Some things never change.

HARDING: [00:24:16] No. Un-unh. But you know, that's, yeah. That's what we did.

SALLY: They'd have a [inaudible]. They talked about --

HARDING: [00:24:21] Yeah. They would stop and --

SALLY: New recipes.

HARDING: [00:24:25] They would always stop and talk about, well, you know [Olive?] hasn't been doing well, but you know, someone saw her the other day and she looks like she's doing a whole lot better. And it was like a -- it's like the newspaper sort of or the, you know, it's how everybody kept up with what was really going on in the community, too. If something important or some important message had to get out, that's where that kind of happened, unless it was something immediate that had to be taken care of you know.

BUCKLEY: What kind of music? Did you have an organ or...?

HARDING: [00:25:00] Piano. We had a piano. And there was -- I'm trying to think what that girl's name was. I think her name was Connie if I remember right. But she was like maybe like 18 or 19. And she played. It was very simple. She wasn't like an accomplished pianist, but she could get through, you know. Enough to kind of keep [laughing] people [on pitch?] or whatever you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Keep it real, you know.

HARDING: [00:25:27] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: And everybody'd sing.

HARDING: [00:25:30] Yeah. Everybody would sing [let's your time?] and we would always have, like at Christmas and Easter, and I guess it was like probably Father's Day and Mother's Day, all the kids would have to do what they called recitations. So you would either have like some Bible passage that you had to memorize, or some kind of poem, or something like that. I can remember one year at Christmas, I did one that was called -- it was a poem called *Don't Ever Write Xmas*.

BUCKLEY: Right. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:26:08] You know, and it was like all about don't take Christ out of Christmas.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:26:13] You know, and then everybody would come up and do their little thing. The real little kids would come up and just say like two lines, and you know. And so that was always a big deal to have to you know, do your recitation.

BUCKLEY: A lot of other people there?

HARDING: [00:26:28] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:26:30] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: That's funny, because I write Xmas sometimes and I get stopped by people.

HARDING: [00:26:35] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: And I didn't understand why, but not it made sense.

HARDING: [00:26:39] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Were all the guys a part of the volunteer fire department or I'm just wondering.

HARDING: [00:26:45] Yeah. There were... Well, when the siren went off, pretty much everybody would come. Those who didn't show up you know, everybody'd be asking you know, the next day, "Oh, I didn't, you know. Were you all right? Were you sick last night or what was going on because you know, the fire siren went. I noticed you went there." I mean, people kept tabs on who was doing what, you know. And I'm sure there were some people you could certainly count on more than others, like any other community, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:27:24] You know, but still, it was you know, they kind of made up their own rules and you know, you're supposed to abide by it.

BUCKLEY: Did the town or the church have a thing against liquor and taking a drink? Or like when you'd have celebrations and stuff, did people have a beer or a shot or --

HARDING: [00:27:49] Yeah. You know, plenty of people drank. But when they drank, you usually didn't see them drinking. You know. I know at my grandfather's boathouse, if you went into the supply room where I was telling you they had the shelves all the way to the ceiling, as you got a little older, one of the big things to do was to be able to climb up to the shelves and get all the way up there so you could touch the ceiling. And in the top bends there you'd find [laughing] the little brown bottles.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:28:19] You know, that were stashed away so somebody didn't see it. And it was sort of like gambling. When you'd go to George Pelley's store on a Friday night and there'd be like 10 or 12 different

domino games going on. And when you'd walk by and look, they would have like little pieces of broken wooden matchsticks laying on the counter or the board on the basket or whatever. And you'd say, well, yeah. They're all playing. But actually, it's like that was their system for keeping count of who owed what. And you know, they didn't have money out, so you know, they really weren't gambling. But at the end of the night, I think everybody had to settle up with each other. It's hard to tell how much money was lost on a domino game there, especially during oystering, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:29:12] But it was all, you know, the way it was, you know, perception. You know, you just didn't do it, didn't flaunt it in front of somebody, you know.

BUCKLEY: Did you learn how to play dominoes?

HARDING: [00:29:22] I used to play dominoes. I don't play much anymore. And there are like so many different games to it, you know. When we were little, they would get out dominoes and use those to try to help teach us to count. You know, and match up things, you know.

SALLY: Dominoes was big there, wasn't it Preston?

HARDING: [00:29:40] Oh, yeah. Well, it's a seaman's game.

It's a seaman's game.

BUCKLEY: Hmm. Interesting, because they're stable, the pieces, you know.

HARDING: [00:29:47] Yeah. And they all sit down there.

And they won't blow away. I'm sure if you got in rough enough water it would blow all, you know, get all messed up. But that's you know, I think traditionally it was you know, seamen who really played a lot of dominoes.

SALLY: Methodists didn't drink in their church hall, Pres.

HARDING: [00:30:05] No. If we had Communion, you drank grape juice.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:30:09] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Still some places do that.

HARDING: [00:30:12] Yeah. And I can remember when they were having a church dinner one time that it was in the fire house. And I was standing there with Papa. And everybody's having a, you know, just a big old time, you know. And everybody's talking. And Mack Wheatley

-- and his house was right next to the fire house -- came over and he said, "Bronzie -- " I can't remember the man's name. But he was a man who was like a politician who was going to run for office. He goes, "I think so and so's getting ready to get up on his soapbox and you know, give a little speech." And he goes, "Well, you know what my -- you go get Jim and we'll go and we'll talk to him."

So I walked over and both -- all three of those men, Jim Lewis, Mack Wheatley and my Grandma, big barrel-chested men, you know. And Papa's -- walked over. He goes, "Well, you know, you might not have really realized this, but this is not a fire house dinner. This is a church dinner. And I think it's real important for everybody to hear what you've got to say, but it's not going to be tonight because this is the same as being in church." You know. And he's like, "I'm sorry, Bronzie, you know. But I'd love to come back." He goes, "And we'd love to have you back. Just not going to happen tonight." And I looked and behind Papa was Uncle Jim and Mack, and they're standing there

with their arms folded across their chests just standing there, you know. (laughs) It was a pretty powerful statement that they were making, you know. It's all right, but you know, it's not going to happen tonight.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. So you think they were built that way from working on boats?

HARDING: [00:32:04] Oh, yeah. Yeah. You know, working tongs and on dredge boats and all that. It's big, heavy work. You know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's right. That dredge is really pretty heavy when it gets full.

HARDING: [00:32:17] Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And moving [inaudible] in those --

HARDING: [00:32:19] Yeah. All that stuff. Yeah. It was big, heavy, hard work.

BUCKLEY: Were people pretty healthy overall?

HARDING: [00:32:27] I would think so, you know. I mean, I think some families -- I know in my grandmother's family, you know, there was you know, some heart disease and stuff like that. But I think that was like

a hereditary thing. It wasn't from being like unhealthy. I mean, it was just --

BUCKLEY: And smoking.

HARDING: [00:32:49] Hmm. Some people smoked. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. They --

HARDING: [00:32:53] That was before it was you know, not really thought of as being a bad thing, you know. It was --

BUCKLEY: I had --

HARDING: [00:32:59] You know, there were days when that was like a fashionable thing to do, you know. And you everybo -- well, you know, a lot of people did it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. What about watching TV? You had TVs and --

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HARDING: [00:33:09] We had a TV at my grandmother's house. And we had a record player, you know. But sometimes -- I don't think we watched all that much TV though. Sometimes at night you'd sit there and watch like *The Ed Sullivan Show* or on Saturday we'd watch *The Howdy Doody Show*. You know. But usually we'd be off doing something, you know, going playing in the boatyard, playing in the woods, or going off with somebody, you

know. If somebody said, "Oh, we're going into town," you know, well, hell. Let's jump in the car. Let's go to town. See what's going on.

BUCKLEY: What was the town like?

HARDING: [00:33:50] Cambridge? Well, Cambridge at that time, if you were downtown in Cambridge on a Saturday, it was really a bustling place, you know. It's pretty desolated now, but you know, there weren't any shopping malls or anything like that. You'd go and you'd get groceries. And Papa would maybe stop some place and get a -- like at Western Auto or something and get something that he needed, spark plugs or something for a boat and bring them back. But, yeah. People were really going around -- usually if you went to town, that meant you would maybe go some place like a restaurant or something like that, you know.

BUCKLEY: Eat out?

HARDING: [00:34:28] Yeah. Eat out. Yeah. That was a big thing.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:34:32] You know. And also it's...

BUCKLEY: So everybody'd come to town and park and be on the street and all that? I've seen pictures of Chestertown back in the day and they had cars parking you know, straight in. The big long cars.

HARDING: [00:34:47] Oh, sure. Sure. And you know, when I was real young, most of Dorchester County was a dry county. And every place where you could cross the Choptank River and you went on the Talbot County side, there was either like a beer joint or a liquor store.

BUCKLEY: Right on the border area.

HARDING: [00:35:09] Yeah. Right there. Right as soon as you got on the other side. And if you went across the Choptank River Bridge and you went towards Talbot County from Cambridge, there was a little joint on the right there. It had a big sign across the peak of the roof that was like a neon sign. In big letters it said, First Chance Liquors. And if you were coming from the other way, it said Last Chance Liquors.

(laughs) It was right there at Battle Holly, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:35:40] But then you know, later you know, bars came around and stuff like that. So people would you

know, come to town and party and do things everybody does.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Tell me about you know, when you guys would finish a boat, was there a launch day or was there any kind of ceremony?

HARDING: [00:36:01] Well, a launch was a big deal. And --

SALLY: Everybody --

HARDING: [00:36:06] And if you see some pictures, there's people all around. People come to watch it. And my grandfather had this rig. And he'd gotten these two really large-diameter metal tractor tires. And he had an axle made for them. And they were spread. And they had chinks on them, sort of like on the railway, where you could move the chinks and chink the boat in between the wheels.

BUCKLEY: So it wouldn't tip one way.

HARDING: [00:36:37] So it wouldn't tip. And it would hold it. And then underneath the keel there, he would have -- it looked like a little sled that fit up underneath there. And there was a wheel on that with a really long tiller arm. So the boat's like on three wheels.

BUCKLEY: So like on a trailer almost.

HARDING: [00:37:01] Yeah. And you could take that tiller and you could tip it. And they'd get that big old Army truck and hook to the front of those wheels. And they would tow it down the road. He'd have to get a permit to close the road. And I have a picture some place of where they were coming to where -- with the skipjack and they were coming under like either a telephone wire or an electrical wire. And the guy, one of the workers is standing on the boat and he just grabbed the wire and pushing it up so that it would clear it, you know. Can you imagine doing that today?

But then, down at the dock, all kinds of people'd be around looking. And sometimes, like with the skipjacks, they would skid them off sideways with logs. Just let the boat just kind of like skid down the logs and into the water. But I've got some pictures where they've got these wheels and they've got the boat with the bow right over the edge of the dock, of the bulkhead there. And then they just jack it up and tip it. And it'd just bow off, you know, bow off. And then they've got a couple boats out there waiting for

it. And they'd latch onto it. So that was it. I've got a picture of my Uncle Ralph and O'Neal Dean, and Tom Dean. And they're sitting underneath a boat in the shade playing music. And they got the boat down to the dock. And they were waiting for the tide to come up behind them. So they were just sitting there playing music. But, yeah. People would be all dressed up and --

SALLY: Bring chairs.

HARDING: [00:38:40] Yeah. Sit around.

BUCKLEY: They would play music on instruments?

HARDING: [00:38:46] Yeah. O'Neal Dean played on guitar.

And Tom Dean played mandolin. My Uncle Ralph played fiddle.

BUCKLEY: Well, what kind of music did they play?

HARDING: [00:38:56] Like country music, and gospel music, and you know, they would play -- I guess at that time... Oh, I remember they'd always play *Wildwood Flower* by the Carter family.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:39:11] And I'm trying to think. They used to do this song. I don't know the name of it, but it

something about the streets that were paved with gold. It was one of the like songs. And *Bury Me Beneath the Willow Tree*. Yeah. They'd sing all those songs, you know. And Uncle Ralph's favorite tune was *Golden Slippers*. He really loved *Golden Slippers*. They'd play that song all the time.

BUCKLEY: Tell me again who played what.

HARDING: [00:39:43] O'Neil Dean played guitar. Tom Dean played mandolin. And my Uncle Ralph played fiddle.

BUCKLEY: And they'd practice a lot or they play --

HARDING: [00:39:52] No. Well, O'Neal took it pretty seriously. Uncle Ralph, he wasn't an accomplished musician by any stretch of the imagination, but he loved it. He had bought like a small little organ that he put in the parlor of my grandmother's house, just so the kids would have something to play. And then sometimes he'd be there and he would just sit there for hours. And you'd hear him --

BUCKLEY: A pump organ kind of thing?

HARDING: [00:40:18] Yeah. It was electric, you know. But, you know, he would sit there and you could hear he was trying to learn how to play chords and stuff. But you

know, any time music was going on, you know, you'd see his head perk up and he'd look around. I mean, he loved music. He really liked it.

SALLY: And you played with Ralph.

HARDING: [00:40:40] Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:40:41] Yeah. Uncle Ralph and I played together.

BUCKLEY: How'd you learn? How'd you find music? How'd music find you?

HARDING: [00:40:49] Music found me. At that time I was like a teenager. I guess I was 12 and I was living in Havre de Grace because my mother had gotten transferred with the phone company. And that's when the Beatles came out and all that. And you know, everybody wanted to be in a band. And so I decided I was going to start playing guitar. I had a really nice guitar teacher in [Harry Racer?], a really good guy. And I learned a lot from him. And then he left to substitute in a band for a friend of his who was having some kind of operation or something. And he was going to be away for like two or three months. And it turned out he was going to be

the guitar player in Mel Tormé's band. Yeah. Mr. Gallagher was a pretty accomplished player. But he got killed by a drunk driver while he was on the road. So I lost him. And then you just tried to pick things up. For a while I took some lessons at the Preparatory of Peabody. So I learned you know, some theory and all that, but even though I played some classical guitar, that was really not my thing, you know, was just --

SALLY: What about taking the bus for...

HARDING: [00:42:11] What's that?

SALLY: [Inaudible] the day.

HARDING: [00:42:12] What's that?

SALLY: Taking the bus.

HARDING: [00:42:14] Oh, yeah. I'd have to take the bus from Havre de Grace to Baltimore. And I'd get off on Howard Street. It was on Thursday night. So I would be like you know, 13 or 14. And I'd have to walk from Howard Street down Monument Street to Mount Vernon Square. When I'd leave it'd be dark. And I'd walk back to the bus station. You know, and it's kind of funny because I don't know if you've been to Baltimore lately, but I mean, I think you still probably had to

be a little careful then. But you could still walk around. (laughs) You know.

BUCKLEY: Back then. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:42:54] Back then. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:42:57] But it's a little --

BUCKLEY: Yeah. It's a little dark there.

HARDING: [00:42:59] Yeah. It's a little sketchy, you know.

Especially after dark, you know.

BUCKLEY: And not too many people around. Maybe there was more when you were doing it.

HARDING: [00:43:05] Yeah. There were a lot of people around, you know. And downtown was really bustling into Howard Street and all that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:43:12] Didn't look like a, you know, now it kind of looks like a [battle scene?] almost, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:43:20] But, yeah, going to Baltimore even as a kid, that was really a big deal you know, to go there and...

BUCKLEY: What about the way it looks now? I mean it looked back then. Does it look like it's just old version of what it used to look like and did it look new --

HARDING: [00:43:35] No. It looked pretty new when I was young and going there with my grandfather. And it seemed like you know, when you were in Glen Burnie, you knew you were close to Baltimore. But it was like separate, you know. There was like space between Glen Burnie and Baltimore. And there was space between Glen Burnie and Severna Park, you know. They were like separate little things. And I can remember coming home one time and we were on Kent Island. My grandfather said, "You know, you will live to see the day that Glen Burnie stretches all the way to Kent Island."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:44:14] You know, and I would have thought that you know, there's no way.

BUCKLEY: He meant like the strip malls and all that?

HARDING: [00:44:21] Yeah. Not so much strip malls, but I guess he'd seen development so much in his life that he knew that by the time I became of a certain age that you know, it was all going to fill in, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:44:35] And all. And...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's right. There probably was a lot less between there.

HARDING: [00:44:41] Yeah. We went one time there with -- I remember I was really excited because besides going to Baltimore, Lev was going to go with us. And so we get to Baltimore. And I'm not quite exactly sure what Lev was doing, but we dropped him off some place. I don't know if he was visiting some family or what. I'm not real clear on that. But my grandfather and I, we'd gone to MacLean's. And he'd gotten some hardware ordered for his boats. And we went to some other places downtown. And then we went and picked Lev up. It was like a big, long day.

We were heading back to Cambridge and Lev was sitting back there in the back seat. And I remember my grandfather saying, "Well, Lev, you know, I'm thinking when we get to Cambridge, I think we all need to stop and get something to eat." And Lev said, "Well, you know, Bronzie, I think I'll be okay." "Nope. Not

going to hear about it. It's my treat. We're going to go get something to eat." "Well, I guess if you say so, Bronzie, but you know, I'm okay." He goes, "No." He goes, "Little Pres, he's hungry. I know he's going to be hungry. And he'll want to play the jukebox, too." And you know, he was going on with all this mess.

And so we finally get to this restaurant in Cambridge. And so this is pre-1958. So I'm maybe like six, something like that. Five. And we go in this restaurant. I'm all excited. And we walk into this restaurant. And it's just like silence. There's no fork hitting the plate. Nobody's saying anything. And I'm going, you know? I'm a little kid, you know, going well, you know, something's... I just couldn't figure it out. So we just all [inaudible], and we went and sat down at this table. And the man came over, the owner of the place came over and he said, "Well, Bronzie, I can serve you and your boy, but I can't serve your man." And my grandfather stood up. And there's times when he stood up and he looked at you,

and you knew that he was telling you something, you know. It's just a whole different demeanor about him when he got really, really serious. And you know, they weren't touching, but he was pretty close to it. And he said, "Well, I will tell you this. You will never serve me or my family another meal as long as you live." And he says, "Okay. Come on. We're out of here." And it wasn't until many, many years later that I really came to understand the magnitude of what he actually did, and what Lev did. You know, it was kind of like, looking back, it's pretty obvious Lev didn't want to really do that.

BUCKLEY: He didn't want to be there.

HARDING: [00:47:41] Yeah. He wasn't going to -- but you know, Papa said, "No, no. We're going to go in there and we're going to go have dinner." And he's like, "Well, yeah. I'm here with Bronzie and I'm going to go." You know, and that's a pretty powerful thing when you look back on it and see it, and think about some of those things, you know.

SALLY: And Lev had coffee in your house.

HARDING: [00:48:03] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Usually when I'd go to the boatyard, I'd be going in -- my grandmother would always say, "Wait a second. Here's a biscuit for you to take to Lev." And it would have like -- when she fried potatoes, they were never in squares. They were in like slices, thin slices. So I'd have a piece of fried potato and either a piece of sausage or a piece of bacon, she'd take and wrap it up. And I'd take it up to the boat. I'd holler for Lev and he'd pick me up and get me inside the boat. And I'd say, "Here's your biscuit." And he'd sit down and it was like when he ate it, it was like you could tell he was like tasting every little morsel of it. You know what I mean? It was like... It's hard to explain, but it was -- he was real serious about eating his biscuit, you know. He was really just savoring it, you know.

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:48:57] Mm-hmm. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Well, [inaudible]. We can stop now.

HARDING: [00:49:05] Okay.

BUCKLEY: That's a good place to stop. Cool. They're good stories.

[Break in audio]

HARDING: [00:49:17] So by the time they'd gotten what you would call a legitimate fire truck, they would still use the old truck as like a backup or you know, it would go. So you could get like two or three hoses going all at once on a fire. And they had bought some kind of new style of pump. They'd had a pump on there before, but it was a new pump. And they had it down at the dock. And some men were working on trying to figure out how to make this pump work and what you had to do. And someone would be saying like, "Well, you have to prime it." And they were saying, "No." And they were you know, they just trying to figure out. And Mr. Irénée du Pont was coming down to see my grandfather about having a boat built. And he stopped at the dock because he was trying to figure out the directions to where he needed to go. And he saw all these men and he walked over. And he said, "You know, I'd written a paper in school about this particular type of pump."

BUCKLEY: Hmm.

HARDING: [00:50:17] So he knew how it worked, you know.

And he says, "If you don't mind, I think I can do something to..." And everybody was just amazed that he just walked there and knew exactly what to do with this pump. And Mr. du Pont said, he goes, "The other thing that was pretty amazing is by the time I got to your grandfather's boat shop, he already knew that somebody from [off?] had come down and knew how to get the pump going." (laughs) So I had come down. Oh, Bronzie. There's some guy looking for you. And he got the pump going and ra da da da. You know.

BUCKLEY: Word travels fast --

HARDING: [00:50:57] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: -- in small towns, right?

HARDING: [00:50:58] Yes. Yes, it does.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:51:00] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Very cool.

[Break in audio; duplicated audio not transcribed]

HARDING: [00:51:04] -- that had these tables and I guess it was stainless metal, but I had shiny metal...

BUCKLEY: Word travels fast --

HARDING: [01:42:01] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: -- in small towns, right?

HARDING: [01:42:02] Yes. Yes, it does.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [01:42:05] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Very cool.

END OF PART TWO

BUCKLEY: Just go ahead and start. I don't know what your story is. So why don't we start going over that stuff? So just start by talking about -- tell me the story again about the marshes, about your impressions as a young person in the marsh. I'm going there Friday, by the way.

HARDING: [00:00:23] Oh, great. Well, you'll -- it's another world down there when you get down there. You'll see.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And you know what else? I'm interview Richard Schofield that day. He told me --

HARDING: [00:00:33] Oh, nice. Nice. Yeah. He's a great guy.

BUCKLEY: He said you guys were brothers.

HARDING: [00:00:37] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:00:38] Well, it's funny because a fellow that was a really good friend of mine -- I was just going over some old family history that my cousin, [Gail?], sent me. And a good buddy of mine, [Rick Hurley?], his mother was a Bloodsworth. And some of her people came from Bloodsworth Island. And I knew that some of my people were from Bloodsworth Island. And it turns out that my fifth great-grandfather was a Bloodsworth. My third great-grandmother was a Bloodsworth. So I was just trying to call Rick because I was like, "You know what? You never can tell. We might be related."

(laughs) You know, somewheres way back there, we're all -- I guess we're all kind of related, you know.

BUCKLEY: So you say [some of that where Bloodsworth is?] and it's real down that region now.

HARDING: [00:01:27] Yeah. It's right off the --

BUCKLEY: They say Bloodsworth.

HARDING: [00:01:29] Bloodsworth Island. It's right off the tip of Dorchester County out in the bay. So --

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And it's a shooting range or something.

HARDING: [00:01:38] It is now. Yes. Uh-huh. But people, you know, people used to live on there before the Navy started using that. And right next to Bloodsworth Island is Holland Island. And Pone Island. Or it's spelled P-O-N, but we always say Pune Island. And --

BUCKLEY: Pune?

HARDING: [00:01:57] Pune. Yeah. And my family's lived on all those islands. Bloodsworth, Pone, and Holland's Island.

BUCKLEY: So say what they're like now and what they used to be like --

HARDING: [00:02:08] Well, Pone has been gone for a long time from erosion.

BUCKLEY: Completely?

HARDING: [00:02:14] Yeah. It's a shoal. We call it a shoal now. It's not even an island.

BUCKLEY: Is that like a spit or something? No --

HARDING: [00:02:19] No. It's like just a shallow spot in the water. It's a shoal. And I guess that's short for shallow.

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:02:28] Is shoal.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Shoal enough.

HARDING: [00:02:31] Yeah. Holland Island, if it's real, real low tide, you maybe can see some of that. But you know, they're basically gone.

BUCKLEY: Did they used to have a lot of people?

HARDING: [00:02:45] I think Holland Island, when my family was living on it, had like 380 people living on it.

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:02:56] Yeah. It's a pretty good size. And it's all gone.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. What happened to the houses from the island?

HARDING: [00:03:01] I think some of them, they actually moved on barges and stuff. You know, people -- (laughs) You know, they took them apart and rebuilt them. Some of them just you know, got vanished into the bay, you know. Just ate it up, like the graveyards and all on there, you know.

BUCKLEY: There was one that was standing not too long ago.

HARDING: [00:03:22] Yes. And that was my -- let me think how this goes. That was my... Either third or fourth

great-grandfather's cousin's house. That was [Grant?] Parks' house I believe.

BUCKLEY: The last.

HARDING: [00:03:41] It was the last house. But nobody had been living there for a long time, you know. And --

BUCKLEY: There was some guy out there trying to save it.

HARDING: [00:03:48] Yeah. But you know, when the bay starts eating at something, it's hard to hold back the force of nature there, you know. Get the wind and the water going and you know, really you'll see when you go down there on Friday, and you're going, like driving through the marsh and all that. It's all real fragile, you know. And I know we went to help my daughter clean up, and her husband when they were working at Port Isabel just off of Tangier Island, right after Ernesto. And you know, it was kind of a bad storm, but it wasn't like Hurricane Hazel or Donna or anything like that. But you know, at Port Isabel, we came in at just the right angle and from just the right direction. And I was really amazed because I would say at least a quarter of that little island was gone, like overnight.

BUCKLEY: Port Isabel?

HARDING: [00:04:49] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:04:50] Yeah, it really --

BUCKLEY: CBF has --

HARDING: [00:04:51] Yeah. CBF has that property now. And it just gobbled up that whole eastern side of it.

BUCKLEY: I'll bet you. You know, I went there. That was one of my first interviews in 2000. And there was a stand of trees on one end of the island, but they were already starting to come down. I'll bet you they're all gone.

HARDING: [00:05:10] Oh, yeah. Yeah. They're all -- it was unbelieve -- I just couldn't really believe it, you know, how much it had done. And really, I guess at one time, that island had actually been attached to Tangier. You know, and storms and a couple hurricanes and it kind of cut through. They refer to it as the point. It was the point. You know, if hear them say, they said pint.

BUCKLEY: Yeah?

HARDING: [00:05:38] Yeah. Oh, Abigail. She's that little girl who's living over to the pint. (laughs) The pint.

BUCKLEY: All right, now. They talk about now how at low tide you can walk from Isabel to [the main?] island now, Tangier. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:05:54] Yeah. But I think they've been working on trying to get you know, some stone brought in there and trying to you know, hold it back a little bit.

BUCKLEY: Maybe they could get Trump invest some of that wall money --

HARDING: [00:06:07] Yeah. Why not? Why not?

BUCKLEY: You hear about, they had [inaudible] on the phone with Trump and was expressing how concerned he was for the islanders.

HARDING: [00:06:15] Oh, nice.

BUCKLEY: So, great.

HARDING: [00:06:17] That's great. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: [Crosstalk] to do something.

HARDING: [00:06:20] Let's do something. Time is of the essence.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. What about erosion down on the point or like Bishops Head and around that area there? Is that a place where some erosion happens or has that remained the same?

HARDING: [00:06:36] To my recollection, it kind of remains the same. It's pretty interesting when you look at where the Nanticoke River comes down and hits there around the edge of Dorchester County. And then there's Bloodsworth Island. There was Highland's Island and a couple of other little islands in there. And then you've got Smith Island. You can almost see how it was like a long stretch of land and it's just been diced up and sliced into pieces, you know. If you really use your imagination and think back, like 1,500 years or something like that, you know, it's --

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:07:15] It was... But, yeah. One thing that makes it not as impressionable around Wingate is you're on the mainland there. And even on Bishops Head. And so it's like just nibbling at the edges of it, you know. And it's just so massive. There's just so much of it there, you know, right now. And I'm sure a lot of really old people would say, "Oh, yeah. Well, I can remember when Point No Point went way out here, you know." But to me it doesn't seem like it's changed all that much where it's really on the shore.

BUCKLEY: The Point No Point. That's a great name. How did that get its name? Do you know?

HARDING: [00:08:00] You know, I don't know. But if you come out of the Transquaking River right at the top of Fishing Bay, that's on the southern tip of the mouth of the Blackwater River, where the Blackwater runs into Fishing Bay. And that's what they call it, Point No Point. Why it's called that, you know, I don't know.

BUCKLEY: Maybe it's a point when it's low tide and --

HARDING: [00:08:23] (laughs) Not a point when it's high tide.

BUCKLEY: It may be something like that. I was just going through that book that Horton did about [inaudible], checking that out.

HARDING: [00:08:35] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's got some of that kayaking through those guts, you know. And it's beautiful down there.

HARDING: [00:08:41] Oh, it's gorgeous. It's gorgeous. Now, I took one person one time. I was like, "Oh, you'll really love this. We'll go down the Transquaking River and we'll go down to Fishing Bay, and we'll take a little skiff and we'll scoot up into

the Blackwater a little bit, you know." And when I was taking them, they were like, "Well, can't we go in... Well, there's nothing here but marsh." (laughs) You know. You know, and I'm not quite sure what they were expecting, but to me, I guess you know, when it's what you're used to or where your roots are, you view it a little differently than somebody you know -- after the first 15 or 20 minutes, they felt like they had seen it all, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Did you guys as kids get into muskrats and all that kind of stuff?

HARDING: [00:09:30] Not too much. Not too much.

BUCKLEY: Did you ever try it? Was it a rite of passage to just try it?

HARDING: [00:09:36] Yeah. You would try it. And every now and then, my grandmother would cook a couple of rats, you know. But they... After you've smelled them cooking for a long time, you know, to me it's not very appetizing. Some people just really, really love it. But I'm saying, you know, if you can eat an oyster or crab cake or something, why'd you want eat a muskrat?

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:09:59] But it was always nice running through the marsh in the fall, you know. And you could see like just hundreds and hundreds of huts out there, little mounds out in the marsh all through Blackwater and all that. So it was kind of neat seeing that.

BUCKLEY: That's what they live in or?

HARDING: [00:10:13] Yeah. They would cut it down and you'd see it looks just like little mounds of reeds piled up. And I guess their entrances are under water. They usually have one or two ways in and out. [Bumps mic] Oh, sorry. And they go underwater and they go through a little hole. And then it's almost like a little cave then because it's up above ground. But if you looked at it, it would look like it's maybe four feet in diameter, and maybe mounded up above high water by like about two feet. Two or three feet maybe.

BUCKLEY: Depending on the class and how much --

HARDING: [00:10:48] It would look like a little beaver hut, except instead of being trees, it's just like marsh reeds and that sort of thing, and scaled way down.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. So you guys didn't do the muskrat thing --

HARDING: [00:11:00] Yeah. We didn't trip. My people weren't trappers like that.

BUCKLEY: Was that how it worked? There were some that were and some that weren't?

HARDING: [00:11:06] Mm-hmm. And a lot of people did it. I know they used to have in Cambridge the outdoor show. And the real big deal was the muskrat skinning contest.

BUCKLEY: Did you guys go to that?

HARDING: [00:11:21] Oh, yeah. That was a real hoot, man. That was --

BUCKLEY: What was it like?

HARDING: [00:11:25] Well, there would be like a lot of booths. Everybody from all over creation would be there, you know. And it was in Cambridge. And it was -- when I remembered it, it was in the old roller rink, which was a pretty big auditorium-type kind of building.

BUCKLEY: In Cambridge?

HARDING: [00:11:42] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Oh. So it wasn't down there.

HARDING: [00:11:44] No. It wasn't down there. It was in Cambridge. But I mean, people would come up from like

Louisiana to compete because that's where the world championship skinning contest was. So you know, the big deal was, was not to let somebody from Louisiana [laughing] win, you know.

BUCKLEY: Win the muskrat bathing suit. Didn't they have --

HARDING: [00:12:03] I don't know. (laughs) I don't remember that. But they would like -- and then there'd be like young guys and they would have crosscut saw competitions.

BUCKLEY: What's that?

HARDING: [00:12:14] Well, they would have like these sawhorses that were like yolks where you could lay a saw -- or I mean a log in horizontally. And they would pick out logs that were pretty close to the same diameter. Usually they were like yellow pine. And there was like two-man crosscut saws. And these young guys would be up there. And I think you had to cut off like six pieces. And when you cut off, part of your team were the two guys who would feed the log to you. They'd pick it up and move it forward a little bit. And, boy, they would really, really go at it, you know. And that was kind of always kind of neat to see.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:12:52] And they'd have goose-calling contests.

And they would have goose-calling contests with calls and without calls, where you just use your mouth, you know.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:13:03] And that one was always real humorous,

[laughs] you know. Especially if you got somebody who had a little too much to drink, up there trying to do goose calls and all. But, yeah. The muskrat-skinning contest. I think everybody would skin like either -- I think it was like six rats. And they would have a judge to come and look. There used to be a trick where they would like cut little nicks on the inside of their legs so you could get the pelt off. But they would also, besides the speed, your pelt had to you know, have a certain appearance when it was done.

BUCKLEY: Like a clean --

HARDING: [00:13:40] Yeah. Yeah. It was like a clean pelt.

But you know, those guys would skin like six rats in like a minute and 30 seconds, you know. It was just unbelievable. Just they were...

BUCKLEY: Just a couple of cuts and you know, pulling your sweatshirt off.

HARDING: [00:13:55] Yeah. But they'd have a guy come and inspect all the muskrats before they started to make sure somebody hadn't already made a couple of little cuts on it or something like that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:14:05] But, yeah. A lot of people you know, did the trapping. It's just my people never did. They were all watermen. They were all...

BUCKLEY: What about hunting?

HARDING: [00:14:16] They would hunt some waterfowl. Not deer. They really didn't hunt for deer there. But, yeah. Geese and ducks and stuff, you know. And they would hunt for that. But not a lot. Usually they'd go out and you know, it might like at Thanksgiving or something, you need something for the table. They'd go out and shoot a couple of geese or something, you know.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:14:43] Of course, if it was hard times, and they had to do something like that as a kid, you never knew about it being you know -- it was like, "Oh, yeah.

We're going hunting." It wasn't like I got to go kill something so we can eat, you know. It was never -- even though life there could be kind of tough and a little hard, it was always like there was never any problem.

BUCKLEY: Especially back then in that period when the oysters were so plentiful.

HARDING: [00:15:10] Yeah. The oysters were still plentiful. But I can remember when, as a real young child when Hurricane Hazel came through, and I was at my grandmother's house. Electricity was out. I can remember my grandfather walking through the downstairs with a kerosene lamp lit, you know. It was just after dark. Water was in the house.

BUCKLEY: Whoa.

HARDING: [00:15:32] You know, not too -- I mean, you know, it was bad, you know.

BUCKLEY: Coming up. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:15:35] Yeah. It was like maybe up to a little past our ankles or so inside the house on the first floor.

BUCKLEY: Did that happen in a rain storm usually, that water will come --

HARDING: [00:15:44] No. It was just because of the hurricane and just so much rain. But it was more of the wind blowing the tide in you know. And it was just unbelievable. But you know, we were little kids and we knew you know, there was water in the house, but everybody was acting like nothing was really wrong. It wasn't like our lives in danger, even though they were, you know. I mean, that's just the way people took it, you know. And then you know, we thought of it as always -- it's crazy, but it's almost like we thought it was fun as kids, you know. Some boats came up from the dock and were landed up against my grandmother's house. And the next couple of days later, when the tide went out, we were able to climb up on them and play on them.

BUCKLEY: They were like in the front yard kind of thing?

HARDING: [00:16:32] Yeah. Right up against the porch. The one that really floated up there was a dovetail that my grandfather had built for Theodore Woodland. And the Maritime Museum just got that boat.

BUCKLEY: Who's that?

HARDING: [00:16:47] The *Dorothy Lee*.

BUCKLEY: Who's Theodore Woodland?

HARDING: [00:16:50] Theodore Woodland was Spark Woodland's father. And Spark Woodland was my Uncle Ralph and Uncle Cyril's cousin. That's the best way I can tell it to you.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:17:05] But they were cousins. But, yeah. The *Dorothy Lee*, she floated right up against the house.

BUCKLEY: That was a work boat?

HARDING: [00:17:14] Mm-hmm. It was a dovetail. You know the one with the long-rounded stern on her.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:17:21] And it was an interesting time. Now, when Hurricane Donna came through, the eye actually kind of passed over where we were there. And we got to go out in the yard and play. And the water was, for us as little kids, it was maybe not quite to our knees. And we took my grandmother's bread basins and we were trapping crabs with them in the front yard.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:17:52] You know? And I can remember I stepped on a board. I was barefoot. And I stepped on a board with a nail in it. A big rusty nail. And it didn't go all the way through my foot, but it went through the bottom of my foot to the bone.

BUCKLEY: Oh, man.

HARDING: [00:18:09] And I was like, ah, screaming and crying. And my sister and my cousin, Candy, were trying to help me get into the house. And blood was pouring out of my foot. And of course, they were saying, "Oh, is that a shark fin I just saw going by in the water?" (laughs) I mean, you know, I was hurt, but they were joking with me, you know. It's crazy. And then I can remember my grandmother, because she couldn't get to town, you know, and we really didn't have a first-aid kit or anything. And she took a dishcloth and seems to me like she cut up some onions and some [sod?], and put some stuff together, and put it on the bottom of my foot, and tied that rag on there. And she said that would draw like any poison or infection out of it.

BUCKLEY: You call it a compress or something.

HARDING: [00:19:03] Something. She did something. She
always did something. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: Voodoo, old [inaudible].

HARDING: [00:19:08] Yeah. Old-time.

BUCKLEY: Stuff they'd bottle up and make a name for it and
they had it back then, this stuff, you know.

HARDING: [00:19:15] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: And the right combination. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:19:19] She just seemed like she always knew
what to do when something like that happened, you know.

BUCKLEY: Well, what was her name?

HARDING: [00:19:24] Katie.

BUCKLEY: And that was the *Lady Katie*?

HARDING: [00:19:26] Mm-hmm. Yeah. She was a Lewis. She
was Katie Lewis and she married Papa. And she became
Katie Parks.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And she knew the stuff.

HARDING: [00:19:35] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Your Mom talked about the magic of the woods down
there in [Spicer's Woods?] and all that.

HARDING: [00:19:41] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Tell the story about how she knows all the names
of the trees and the plants and all that kind of --

HARDING: [00:19:46] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And that was
something that they -- everybody tried to pass down. I
think each generation, it kind of gets a little
diluted. But even us as kids. As long as it wasn't
deer season, like when your other cousins would come
there, you know, going out in the woods was a big thing
to go do, and play, or find something to do in the
woods because it's kind of like you could get away from
the adults. And you could just kind of do things, you
know. Talk about things or it's your time to be on
your own.

BUCKLEY: Right.

HARDING: [00:20:19] You know. I don't know. Just the way
--

BUCKLEY: Did you guys build the forts in the --

HARDING: [00:20:24] Oh, sure. We built forts. We would
cut down -- take limbs and kind of like push them up
against trees. And then go and take a -- go into the
washhouse and get one of the handsaws that was in
there. And we'd grab bundles and we'd cut down

foxtail. That looks like -- foxtail is -- it's not phragmites, but it kind of looks like phragmites. It's a tall marsh reed.

BUCKLEY: Feathery kind of?

HARDING: [00:20:49] Yeah. It's got like a feather on the top. And we would take that and we would like weave it in there to make sods. Oh, we built some elaborate forts back there, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:20:59] We didn't have anything else to do when you were down there. So you could [inaudible], you know.

BUCKLEY: So what about building the houses? Did people build their own houses down there or are they built with a mind toward big storms coming, like the --

HARDING: [00:21:12] No. I don't think they were built for big storms. You'll see when you go down there, a lot of the houses, especially around Wingate, look pretty fragile. My Grandma -- my grandfather's house was pretty substantial, you know. It seemed to withstand the test of time. But when I was young, I can remember when they were building the porch and what we called

the front end of the house on there. And really Papa had a crew of guys who came to do it, but they were all the guys who worked in the boatyard. So you know, he'd get a bunch of stuff laid out and then you know, everybody would start just banging away, and cutting, and nailing.

BUCKLEY: And what were they building?

HARDING: [00:22:03] What we called the front half of my grandmother's house.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh.

HARDING: [00:22:07] It used to be just the kitchen, and a little back room, and an upstairs bedroom. And then there had been like another front part that had been built on that. But then they built another part that added like a couple more rooms to it on the front. That was the most modern part of the house. But it seems like that's the place where we spent the least [laughing] amount of time.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Was it a two-story or --

HARDING: [00:22:37] Yeah. It was two-story.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. And they didn't build it up off the ground so the water wouldn't get in --

HARDING: [00:22:46] Her house, I'm going to say the first floor was maybe two feet, you know, above the ground. So it wasn't built like right down on it, but it wasn't built way up high or anything like that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Kind of like a crawl space kind of area.

HARDING: [00:23:06] Yeah. But you [laughing] didn't want to crawl down in there. It was wet and nasty and snakes and all that kind of stuff.

BUCKLEY: Oh, really?

HARDING: [00:23:15] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: What was your relationship as a kid with snakes?

HARDING: [00:23:19] I didn't like them.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:23:20] I didn't like them.

BUCKLEY: What kind of snakes?

HARDING: [00:23:23] Well, there were black snakes, but every now and then, if you'd be walking around, like when I'd be hanging around with Frankie and Carson, and we'd be deviling around, and looking in the -- we would call them the ditches. But you know, they were like little creeks. But they were drainage ditches. But they were tidal. You know, there were a couple of

times where we -- people say there's no poisonous snakes on the eastern shore, but I'm pretty sure we've seen some cottonmouths down there. Certain times where I guess the conditions are just right. And you figure Virginia and North Carolina really aren't that far away, you know. Or might have been on somebody's boat when they came up here or something and got, you know, hopped off or...

BUCKLEY: Ahh.

HARDING: [00:24:03] You know what I mean?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Invasive.

HARDING: [00:24:06] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Visitors from --

HARDING: [00:24:08] You didn't see a lot of them, but every now and then you'd see them. And it was like those like white diamonds going down the back were kind of like the big tell-tale sign. And it just looked kind of evil-looking.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And the black ones, the black snakes, they didn't bother people.

HARDING: [00:24:25] No. No, not really.

BUCKLEY: You could pick them up and swing them around.

HARDING: [00:24:27] No. I wouldn't pick up any snakes, but some people would, you know, when... You know. It's kind of like an eel, you know. You really didn't want to fool with an eel too much, you know. But my uncle's good friend, Donald Edwards down in Rock Hall, he and my uncle really were in the early part of the eel business where they would ship eels to like northern Europe. I think they made a lot of money doing that. And it was something that they kept really kind of under their vest for a long time. But as years went by, Sally and I, after we were married, we went down to see Donald, my uncle, at Donald's house. And he was pulling out these big, long, smoked eels. They were all like about you know, two-and-a-half feet long. And he goes, "I want you to try one of these eels." And I'm like, "Man, I'm not going to eat any eel. Are you out of your mind? I'm not going to eat that thing." He goes, "Well, listen. I've made a lot of money with these and you've got to at least -- here." And he pulled a little piece off about the size of a quarter. He says, "Let me just put one piece on a cracker and you guys try it."

And he had smoked with them with white oak, you know, and we ate that. And Sally goes, "Mmm. Kind of tastes like trout." And before the night was over, we were holding them, going [gulp], eating them like corn on the [laughing] cob, you know. Because they really do taste really quite good.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:25:53] You know, so sometimes you got a predisposition for something, but it...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Do they have those down south or you just get them around Rock Hall?

HARDING: [00:26:03] Oh, yeah. They had them -- all up and down the bay was loaded with eels.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. And they'd catch them in pots. How did that go?

HARDING: [00:26:10] It's like a cylinder-shaped looking little pot that's maybe about, I don't know, six inches in diameter. And I guess up here a lot of times they would use horseshoe crab, cut up horseshoe crab for bait. And it's very similar to a crab pot. It's got like a little funnel. And it's almost like a cloth

funnel that they go into to get to the bait. And then when they get in there, they can't find their -- they can't work their way back out type of thing, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:26:43] And guys go around and fish it. I know some of those young boys down on Tangier, they used eel pots to catch sugar toads.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:26:55] Now, a sugar toad is like a puffer fish. And when you eat them, they taste like white perch, only better.

BUCKLEY: It's like a toad -- it's not an oyster toad --

HARDING: [00:27:07] No, it's not. No. Those are ugly.

These are like the ones that like puff up. They call them puffers. And when they filet them, when they catch a bunch of them, they filet them and they almost look like little butterfly shrimp. They're about that size. And then you fry them and it's like one bite on one side and one bite on the other. And I had never eaten them until I visited Abigail down on Tangier. And, man, they were really good.

BUCKLEY: Yeah?

HARDING: [00:27:38] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: And they still have them around?

HARDING: [00:27:40] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: I guess they're just down there, down the --

HARDING: [00:27:43] Yeah. That's in the lower part of the bay. Everything's a little different you know, because you got drum down there and --

BUCKLEY: What's a drum?

HARDING: [00:27:51] It's like a redfish type of fish. And they have more seatrout down that way.

BUCKLEY: So closer to the mouth?

HARDING: [00:28:01] Yeah. So you're getting that ocean flesh thing going on. Once you get down below Tangier, it's kind of like... It's almost like a different body of water to me.

BUCKLEY: It's shallow down -- you don't see a lot of sailboats down there or anything, right?

HARDING: [00:28:18] Un-unh. And people don't want to -- you know, a lot of times, if people are sailing for pleasure, they don't want to go there any place because there's no place to dock and go to like, hardly a restaurant. Or if you pull up and you're not too far

offsh -- you find a spot not too far offshore to anchor, you're going to get eaten up by mosquitoes and...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That, too. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:28:37] You know, sea nettles are all in the water and you know.

BUCKLEY: And the warm. They like the warm.

HARDING: [00:28:42] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Did you guys swim a lot down there?

HARDING: [00:28:46] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Early in the season and late in the season. In the middle of the season it was you know, sometimes -- I don't know. Sometimes you could look and you could kind of look around and you'd say, "Oh, it doesn't look too bad." And you'd go in and then every now and then you might get like a stinger wrapped around your leg. And we'd always take mud and put on it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That all?

HARDING: [00:29:08] Yeah. That's all. I guess it was cool, but that's what you know, our parents always said. If they were with us and you got stung, you're

little and crying. You know, I got stung. Here, put some mud on it. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: It rubs it out of [inaudible] --

HARDING: [00:29:21] Yeah. Or something. And then you just -- just what you do, you know. That's what they told me to do, so I'll do it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Down in Carolina, [inaudible] my girlfriend [inaudible]. The first time I walked down to the water and something bit me right in the toe. And she, "Oh, yeah. That's a crab. They bite." It was a like [makes crunching noise.]

HARDING: [00:29:40] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Jesus. Crabs up here, I have never seen one or heard of one biting somebody.

HARDING: [00:29:46] Yeah. But if you stepped right on one, it probably would. You know, and it's possible you know, if they're thick, you know. It's an easy thing to do, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I won't get off the point, but what about seahorses? Have you ever seen one of those down there? I heard they actually have seahorses.

HARDING: [00:30:07] Oh, yeah. And especially when you get down in the water down below Smith Island and all that. It's not uncommon to see seahorses. And up in Wingate, they would have, what do you call them? Gar. But they're --

BUCKLEY: Gar's fish?

HARDING: [00:30:24] Yeah. A garfish. And they look like they've got a real long snout. They're a type of pipefish, too. I think a seahorse is considered a pipefish. But the gar, it doesn't look like the seahorse. He's like long and skinny. And when I say long, you know, maybe like eight inches long if you see a big one. And then they got like a really long nose or a -- if you saw it, it almost would look like a miniature swordfish until you look at it real close. But it's not like a beak or anything on it. It's like it's mouth is like way out there. It's like a long pipe.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:31:00] But you know, I know Abigail and them, when they would use like little [inaudible] with the

kids down at Port Isabel. It wasn't uncommon for them to find seahorses down there at all. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Somebody just mentioned in a restaurant yesterday about a puffer fish being down there. I think I mentioned I might go down there.

HARDING: [00:31:20] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: They said, "Oh, that's real different down there."

HARDING: [00:31:23] Yeah. Well, you ought to try one if they've got it on the menu. It'll probably say puffer fish, puffed toad, or sugar toad. Sometimes they call them sugar bellies, but mostly I think they call them sugar toads.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. You have actual frogs and toads and all that down there in that [weather?]?

HARDING: [00:31:43] A little bit. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So tell me some of the stories that we did last time about driving with your Mom in the marsh, through the marsh.

HARDING: [00:31:58] Well, it was always exciting to be going to my grandmother's house, you know. You always looked forward to that. But that one time we were going and it was like on a Friday, and it was after

dark. And we got to Blackwater. They were burning the marsh. And I don't know all the logistics about it, but apparently if you want the marsh to stay marsh, every now and then you got to burn it off. There's something to that and I don't really know why. But I know that they do it.

And when you get down there where it's marsh as far as you can see, and it's like dark. And then you see flames like all the way to the horizon. And then every now and then, like the marsh will make like methane. And it'll be like underneath the mud. And sometimes it'll burp up. And that'll burp up. And next thing you know, you see like a big fireball go up in the air and it's swirling around and all quarreling with itself. And I was telling somebody that I could really remember when we were riding through that time and I was young. I was saying to myself, "This is what they were talking about in Sunday school." (laughs) This is where you don't want to go.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: And I was like, "Well, this is why they call this down below." (laughs) Because that's what we'd always say when we were going you know, down there, was like, "Oh, we're heading down below," you know. And it's...

BUCKLEY: Down below civilization.

HARDING: [00:33:32] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: How many people were living around Wingate do you think back in those days? I guess since there was business, it was probably a lot.

HARDING: [00:33:42] Yeah. I'd say maybe a few hundred, a couple hundred maybe.

BUCKLEY: And did you tell me if there was a town or not, like a crossroads with shops and all that kind of thing in Wingate? Was there anything like that --

HARDING: [00:33:56] No. No shops or anything like that. There was one little general store, like a one-room store, George Pelley's. And if you were really in a jam, you could maybe get like a small little piece of roast beef from the freezer or something like that. But it was mostly canned food, and soda pop, and things were easy to keep for a long time, you know. And I'm going to say George Pelley's store was probably... If

you took this living room and maybe tripled it in size, that's how -- it wasn't really all that big, you know. But you could you know, get salt and stuff there.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Was there a bench or anything there?

HARDING: [00:34:48] Oh, yeah. And there was like a little wooden counter in there and benches, because men would hang out there. And in the evening sometimes they'd hang out. That's where they'd all go and play dominoes. And you know, some of them would be -- a couple of people'd be playing at the counter. Some people would have like a basket turned over with you know, a board sitting on it. And that was like their little table. And they would... When you'd watch the men playing, they had all these little pieces of broken wooden matchsticks. And it was kind of like the way they were keeping score. But it was really like a form of -- I think a form of currency that you could actually be there and gamble, but nobody would really know that you were -- it's kind of like as long as the money wasn't on the table, it was all right to do. We'll just settle up later.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:35:47] It's kind of like drinking, you know.

It's one thing to have like a little bottle of whiskey tucked in the shelf of the nail bend sometimes. So if you got a good friend and you're inside the office and you want to have a little nip, well, that's one thing. But you don't stand down at the dock in front of everybody and drink it, you know.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:36:07] I mean, you know, it's -- yeah, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Right. Tell me the story about the crab trap, the one that you had to repair and that you [inaudible] and all that.

HARDING: [00:36:19] Yeah. Frankie and Carson, they were Windsors. They were brothers. Frankie and Carson Windsor. And this is when I was a little bit older. We were maybe like 10 or 11, something like that. And we would go out and we'd pull up the big pole crab net in a skiff up in the creek. And we'd dip crabs. And we'd sell them to Spark. And usually, you know, if we got like three-quarters of a basket or a basket of crabs -- and it didn't take us that long to do it.

BUCKLEY: Is that like a bushel basket?

HARDING: [00:36:51] Yeah. A bushel basket. We would sell those to Spark. And then we'd run over to George Pelley's store and we'd buy like sodas and those lemon pies with like the phyllo dough around them.

BUCKLEY: Ooh.

HARDING: [00:37:03] Or maybe we'd buy like some saltine crackers and a can of potted meat. (laughs) We loved that stuff. But we would do that just for our snacks and stuff and all of that. And then one day, somebody out by the dock, off to the side of the dock, over in the marsh were some old, discarded crab pots that you know, were banged up, a little rusted out, had holes in them. And I talked to my Uncle Cyril. I went in my grandmother's wash shed and we took some clippers, and we cut some chicken wire off of his little crab pot making roll. And we took that and we kind of covered over the holes, and this, that, or the other. And then we went and caught a few fish. And we had put out a line of these pots. And we were like, "Well, this is going to be good. We're really going to make some money now easy."

BUCKLEY: You caught the fish to put in there?

HARDING: [00:38:03] Yeah. And it wasn't hard, you know.

You just go by the ditch where it went through the drainpipe. And we put like a little net down there and caught a bunch. And we had set them just outside the creek. And just above where the channel was, we're like, oh, yeah. We're going to do really good. When we come home, you know, the next afternoon, we're going to really have it. And we came in from being with -- like they were with their Dad and I was with my uncle. And we came in and the law boat was at the dock. Natural Resource Police.

BUCKLEY: Ah.

HARDING: [00:38:42] Their boat was there. And we got off the boat and all these men were kind of like around us going, "Yup. Law wants to know who those crab pots belong to." Because the crab pots weren't supposed to be in the river, you know. You had to be out in the bay to have a crab pot.

BUCKLEY: Because why?

HARDING: [00:38:58] Well, it was a method of preserving species. Now, you could catch crabs in the river using a trotline. You know, but crab had a little bit more

of a chance to get away there. But you weren't supposed to use pots there. And those men really put the fear of God in us. They really had a good time with us.

BUCKLEY: And you guys thought you were cornered.

HARDING: [00:39:21] Oh, yeah. We thought we were going to get in real trouble. And then somebody'd say, "Yeah. It's just a matter of time before they figure out who they belong to. They haven't figured it out yet, but they're going to figure it out." You know, stuff like that just to really get you worried. So we got in the skiff and we got up by the crab pots. And Carson had a knife. And we'd get up by one of those pots and the ti -- oh. And then we'd act like we were arguing and like, say, like I would push Frankie and Frankie'd fall overboard with the knife. And he'd cut the line that held the buoy, you know.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:40:06] So we thought we were really doing something. And every time we got next to -- I think it was only like five of them, five or six pots we had out. But every time there was a reason for us to fall

overboard, we had it all figured out, you know. We'd cut the line. Well, then, the tide went out. And where we had put them, when the tide went out, like four inches of them were out of the water. (laughter) So then we went back and we would push each other overboard. And we'd try to get on top of them. And we had the boat. We tried to like smash them down and all. I don't think the Resource people even gave it any thought, you know. But those men, they had a time with us, you know. But...

BUCKLEY: So you didn't get thrown in jail and --

HARDING: [00:40:51] No. Un-unh. None of that. None of that. But they were teaching us, you know. You better not be out on the water, you know. You'll get in trouble.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So when you put together the theater piece, are you going to use the recordings or are you going to --

HARDING: [00:41:09] No. I'm just going to talk. Just talk. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: So it's just like a resource to collect the stories.

HARDING: [00:41:15] Yeah. And I think that the museum was going to keep that just on file. Yeah. And that was all Kate [Levy's?] idea to do that. And I think it's probably a pretty good idea because you know, once you get a few generations away, it's almost gone, you know, unless you have some kind of record of it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Do you see any of those guys ever anymore from the boatyard? Are they all gone?

HARDING: [00:41:47] Most of them are all gone. I think Snooks Windsor is still around, you know, because I know that when Dr. George was writing his book, a couple of times he interviewed Snooks. And that was, yeah, pretty recent. And the last time I went to Wingate, I saw Snooks down at the dock.

BUCKLEY: He still lives down there.

HARDING: [00:42:11] Yeah. He still lives down there. And there's a few other people, but you know, everybody's kind of moved on or passed away. I mean, after Uncle Ralph and O'Neal Dean were gone, that was, you know, you're starting to get to the end of the line there, you know.

BUCKLEY: Were there guys that worked for your grandfather, were they his age or were they younger guys?

HARDING: [00:42:37] I think most of them were younger.

Some of them might have been his age, but most of them were younger. So they would have been guys who were born like in the '20s or '30s or something like that maybe.

BUCKLEY: Oh, okay. Yeah. So they'd be a 100, maybe 95 --

HARDING: [00:42:55] Yeah. So, yeah. They're all around the end of the road there.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So what about the house? Is it still there?

HARDING: [00:43:05] It's still there. After my grandmother passed away, it was sold. And my grandfather was killed. All that property in the boatyard was going up for auction to pay off like debt and stuff like that. And my Aunt Lucille and my Aunt Irene's husband's bought the property. Aunt Lucille's husband was in the Air Force. And Aunt Irene's husband -- I'm trying to think. I think he worked for DuPont or something like that. But he was something like a chemical engineer or something like that. So they had some resources. And

they bought the property so that my grandmother could stay there at the house. And Mr. du Pont, I do believe, talked to Uncle Ralph. And he said, "If you want to buy the *Lady Katie*, I'll pay for it." But Uncle Ralph really didn't bite on that. But he did buy like some of the tools that were in the boat shop, the boathouse. The big bandsaw and the joiner, and a couple of things like that. So he was able to get his hands on that. But --

BUCKLEY: Was he a boat builder, too?

HARDING: [00:44:31] Yeah. He was one of my grandfather's foremen. But really after Papa's death, the boatyard really became like Uncle Ralph's spot to supplement work that he would do sometimes in the summer on people's boats at the railway. Like repair work and upkeep.

BUCKLEY: Where was the railway at?

HARDING: [00:44:58] The railway was very close to O'Neal Dean's house. So it was before you got into Wingate town, and it was on the right there just as you were coming up. But it backed up to the Honga River. And it basically looked like some wide railway tracks going

down into the water in this little creek. And they had these metal wheels on a big high beam. And there was an engine. And you could have it pull forward or clutch it and it would go backwards. And there were two sets of wheels and two beams. And as the boat would come up in the water, that would go underneath of it. And they had these wedged chocks that would slide on those beams. And he'd chock the boat in on it. And then he'd start the motor and it would pull the boat up so he could get it out of the water to work on the bottom, or paint the bottom, or...

BUCKLEY: And they'd do the work right there or --

HARDING: [00:46:01] Yeah. They would do it right there.

Yeah. And then dump her right back in and off they'd go. So you know, really a lot of the activity at the boathouse really after his death pretty much stopped, you know. I mean, Uncle Ralph would do things like -- at one time he had to build a mast for the *Barbara Batchelder*, Mr. du Pont's boat. You know, and he did that in the boathouse, but it became more storage and that sort of thing. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Who owned the railway?

HARDING: [00:46:36] A man named Stine. They called it Stine's Railway. But I guess Uncle Ralph kind of operated it for him.

BUCKLEY: So he'd just pay a certain amount to use it or something like that?

HARDING: [00:46:48] I think. I'm not quite sure what their arrangement was, but they had something there where you know, I guess it was, you know, you paid so much to get pulled out and so much to get pulled in, and so much to be sitting there for a day, you know. And then Uncle Ralph would charge for his labor, whatever he was doing on the boat or whatever, you know.

BUCKLEY: Would you call it a marina that was around that railway? Or was it just kind of open space or?

HARDING: [00:47:15] I wouldn't call it a marina. There were some boats that stayed docked there. And you'll see it when you ride down there. It'll be on your right and it'll -- it looks like two little wide ditches that are like you know, maybe 14 or 16 feet wide that go in there. And there was always maybe five or six boats that stayed there.

BUCKLEY: So is the railway still working, do you know?

HARDING: [00:47:49] I don't believe so.

BUCKLEY: I'll check it out.

HARDING: [00:47:52] I don't believe so. I think there's
still parts of it there, but --

BUCKLEY: It's rusty and old and --

HARDING: [00:47:58] Yeah. And, yeah.

BUCKLEY: Plus they have different ways to get --

HARDING: [00:48:01] Yeah. People have got travel lifts
now. And I guess people would take their boat to where
they've got somebody who can do the work, you know.

BUCKLEY: Where'd all the skipjacks park down there during
the big years?

HARDING: [00:48:18] Well, a lot of them would dock at the
dock when they were rigging up and getting ready to go
to dredging. Now, the *Martha Lewis*, Uncle Jim's boat,
he would keep her just anchored out back behind his
house out in the Honga River. She just stayed anchored
up. And actually there was an old wooden barge out
there that somebody had arranged to have brought there
at a real high tide, and it just sits on the bottom
there. And looks like a ghost ship kind of. And it
was set there to be sort of like a wind and sea break.

And it still had some cleats on it, so he would anchor the bow, and off the stern he would tie up on that cleat way up high on that barge. And it seems like after everybody was rigged up, it was like the boats weren't there all the time, you know, because they would either be docked at Cambridge, or Annapolis, or something. But I can remember my grandmother, when the boats would be coming in, you'd be like, "Oh, is that Papa now? Is that Papa?" And she goes, "No. That's Mike." And I was like, "How do you know it's Mike?" She goes, "I can tell by looking at the mast," you know. And she could just tell --

BUCKLEY: Just a certain level of the slant of the mast?

HARDING: [00:49:42] Yeah. Or just some characteristic about it that you know, she had seen for so long because I guess she was so used to when they're, you know, looking for somebody to come home. And they've been worried about them being out on the water and all. You start to notice all these little things, you know.

BUCKLEY: Do you keep in touch with the kids that you knew back there? Anybody in the area --

HARDING: [00:50:04] Not too much. Not too much. It's --

BUCKLEY: Just wondering what happened to them, you know.

Do you ever hear stories about any of them throughout their young years or their teen years, or any of that?

HARDING: [00:50:15] Not a whole lot. Not a whole lot. My cousins. You know, Candy, and Patti, and Trudy. I see them. I don't see Carson or Frankie. I was actually - - I went down to see Birddog and I was talking to a buddy of his. And I was saying something about Wingate. And I was like, "Yeah. I used to hang out there with Frankie and Carson Windsor." And he goes, "Carson Windsor?" He goes, "I work with him every day." I was like, "Oh, really? Well, tell him Pres said hi." But I haven't seen him. But he said Carson's still a piece of work. His brother was always very even-keeled. And Carson was like hotter than a firecracker. (laughs) We would just...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Did you guys ever get in any trouble?

HARDING: [00:51:01] No. Not us.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:51:03] My mother will say she never had an inch of trouble out of me. No. Not too much. Little devilments and stuff like that, but not really.

BUCKLEY: No stealing cars and all that --

HARDING: [00:51:14] Oh, no. None of that stuff. None of that stuff. Un-unh.

BUCKLEY: I'm just kidding.

HARDING: [00:51:19] No. No. Then I can remember my grandfather one time had bought me like a toy tool chest, but it actually had like a metal saw in it and all. And he had just gotten a new Lincoln. And I was out playing. And I don't whatever possessed me to do it, but I had the little saw and I was acting like I was sawing his tire.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:51:42] Yeah. I was like you know, three or four, you know. And the next thing I knew, my mother grabbed me by the arm and yanked me up off the ground. And I was like, oh, man. I'm going to get like... And the screen door, I heard it slam open. And I looked up and there was Papa standing in the doorway. And he goes, "Mary, put that boy down." She's like, "Daddy." He goes, "I bought him that saw. I should have known better than to know he would saw that tire. Just leave him alone. I'll take care of that." (laughs)

And he came and got me, took me, and gave me like a little tree limb or something to saw on, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. He just seemed like kind of like a real thoughtful person, you know. Just to be able to you know, just kind of be in the moment and say, wait a minute, you know.

HARDING: [00:52:30] I think so. You know, he was raised by his two aunts. Let me think what their names was. One of them was -- Mom would call her Aunt Callie. Her name was [Callinda?]. And I'm trying to think what the other one's name was. But you know, they were all orphaned by their mother at a very young age. Rosie died when she was 26.

BUCKLEY: Oh. How did that --

HARDING: [00:52:55] I'm not really sure. Some kind of illness. It was just you know, you just never heard of it, you know, why it was. And their Dad did remarry, you know. And I guess had a few daughters and something like that. But you know, those guys, you know, they weren't strangers to some heavy, hard times. So when things were like you could smile about it, they just did that, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Kind of like the story about the story about being in the boat in the storm, and just keeping an even keel, and you know, understanding that's a [inaudible] place to make good decisions or whatever.

HARDING: [00:53:39] Yeah. Because you got to keep your wits about you, you know. But he was even like that. I was just looking at this thing that I'd kept from his office. And it was talking about -- it's like a little brochure for running for county commissioner.

BUCKLEY: I got that story. That's about the record player.

HARDING: [00:54:05] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: So is this the same time he was running?

HARDING: [00:54:08] Yeah. See, he was killed before the election came. But he was a lifelong Democrat. And when he decided he was going to run, they wouldn't put him on the ticket.

BUCKLEY: Because?

HARDING: [00:54:23] I don't know. But then he said, "Well, the hell with that. I'll run as a Republican." And they wouldn't put him on the ticket. So when you read the last line here about a man with a program in mind, what of his attributes is a man who is running on the

people's ticket and the first man ever to make a direct appeal to the Dorchester citizens for support.

BUCKLEY: So he didn't even know what party he had --

HARDING: [00:54:56] No. I mean, I've... Now, everybody's --

BUCKLEY: Read the whole thing.

HARDING: [00:55:01] Well...

BUCKLEY: It's a handbill.

HARDING: [00:55:04] Yeah. It says, "Vote for Bronza M.

Parks, a self-made businessman, a loyal Democrat all his life, a community worker for the past 25 years, a friend to the watermen, the working man, the firemen, the businessman and the farmer." This is really good. "A man with a program in mind. A man who believes in wider roads so two cars can pass without endangering the lives of others, and smooth enough to guarantee more than 6,000 miles on one set of tires." (laughs) That's a good one, isn't it?

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: "A man who believes in a good drainage program along Dorchester County roads, and an effective mosquito control. A man who has sent five daughters to

college, and is in favor of good schools with many courses to better educate the boys and girls of Dorchester County. A man who believes in a good health program, but with all this, still believes in keeping a good, honest watch on the taxpayers' money. A man who likes people and who will not hide from them, and who is not afraid to say yes or no." And let's see. "A man in whom 700 people demonstrated their confidence by coming out on a rainy night to help in a campaign kick-off."

BUCKLEY: That's pretty good in a town of 200.

HARDING: [00:56:52] Yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, you know, a lot of people -- as best I can remember, of course, you got to remember that you know, when he died I was seven-and-a-half years old. But it seems like to me whenever I was with him, wherever we went, it was like everybody knew who he was. It's just you know, kind of the way it was.

BUCKLEY: He'd have made a good politician, I know. Good people person.

HARDING: [00:57:17] I think so. I think so. I think he would have you know, tried to do the right thing, you

know. And I think he probably would have actually worked for people instead of just for himself, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So do you want to tell me about how he died?

HARDING: [00:57:36] Sure. I'll tell you as best I know from my perspective. Some things I know from like a personal account, but most of it's from what I've heard as a child. And he was building a boat for this man over by D.C. named Willis C. Rowe. And it was a small, like quarter-size or a third-size skipjack. But it was a pleasure craft. And I can remember seeing the boat. And it was inside the shed of the boathouse. It wasn't out in the field. But it had like a mahogany transom on it and white oak rails, but you know, it looked like a little tiny skipjack. I thought it was a really neat looking boat.

And apparently, there was a big dispute over the cost of some extras. You know, the white oak rails and some of this. And I know that my grandfather had seen a lawyer about you know, a breach of you know, Willis',

with the contract. But then he went back and saw the lawyer in Cambridge. And he said, "You know, before you proceed with anything just yet, I think we've found a way that we're going to work this out, [inaudible] might not need you." And what they had decided and agreed upon was they were going to get somebody to arbitrate it. And that person was going to be Jim Richardson. And he was a really pretty famous boat builder. And he did a lot of historical work. He built the replica of *The Dove* that's in St. Mary's and did a lot of work restoring stuff for the Smithsonian Institute and all that. And he lived just outside of Cambridge. And he was a good friend of my grandfather's. He had a big handlebar moustache. I don't know if you watched much TV when you were little, but you remember the show, *Have Gun, Will Travel?* Paladin?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Paladin.

HARDING: [00:59:42] And he had that moustache. Well that's -- I kind of thought Jim Richardson was like Paladin because he had that big moustache. But Jim, they agreed that -- and Rowe had said to Papa, "Well, you

don't know if he'll come." And he said, "You drive to his place and you tell him that I said that I told you to come there, and that we needed him to come, and he'll come." And so he did. He came. And they got together and they talked. And basically, Jim Richardson said, "You know, it's a good thing that Bronzie was doing this work for you, not me, because if I was doing it, it'd be even more money than that. It's worth every cent that he's charging you."

And people have said that he acted like that was okay with him. He was talking to Jim, like, okay. I'll go by that. So the next thing you know, he went into the boathouse to apparently talk to Papa. And they were going to work it out and settle it up. And then Jim heard three shots. And the man came back out and he just sat down and he said, "I just shot Bronzie." And everybody... There were -- it didn't take long for the who -- you know, the community to show up. And a lot of people were trying to figure out what to do. And people were talking about, well, there's plenty of rope here. We can take care of this right now. And I'm

pretty sure from listening to Uncle Ralph and some of them that it was Mack Wheatley who really kind of talked to everybody about you know, we don't really want to be doing -- we don't want to -- let's quit talking about the rope, you know. You know, we really don't want to be doing this. The law will be here soon. And so that was kind of like the crux of it on that day.

For years, I never remembered where I was or what I was doing when this all happened. And it's only been in you know, recent years that I can actually remember what was going on. And my grandmother had sent me to the chicken house to get eggs. I always loved going to feed the chickens. They were in like a wire fence. And you fed the little corn out and they'd come and peck around your feet and all that. But, man, I'm going to tell you what. When you went into that hen house to get the eggs out of like their little roosting, and it was small. And they'd jump up. And their wings are flapping. And you're little and it was scary. I didn't like it. But she told me to you know,

she gave me the little basket. And I was in there getting the eggs.

And right next door to my grandparents', right where the lane bends, was this house. And old man [Ris Pelley and Miss Bertha] lived there. And somehow or other, we're related way, way back. But Mr. and Mrs. Ris, they didn't have running water. And outside my grandmother's wash house there was a well. And there was a faucet out there. And there was a hand pump, but you could also turn on the faucet. And Mr. Ris would come by twice a day with two enamel buckets and fill them up with water. You know, the pipe hanging out of his mouth, and he would -- same time every day. In the morning and then like later in the afternoon he'd come and get two buckets.

And you might say, "Hey, Mr. Ris." And he'd kind of like, would kind of acknowledge you, but he never said a whole lot. And I can remember coming out of the hen house and Mr. Ris was standing there. He said, "Pres, come with me." And I didn't ask him why because when

an adult told you to do something you just did it, you know. And I just went with him. And I can remember sitting in their like section of the house that was like the old kitchen. And Mr. Ris sat there and smoked his pipe. And nobody really said anything about what had happened. It was kind of funny because you didn't really know why you were there, but you know, safe enough. I mean, I knew Mr. Ris and Miss Bertha. There was some reason I should have been there. Then later, I think it was my Uncle Cyril who came and got me from there and took me into town. And the way I actually found out that Papa had passed away was my sister, Brenda, told me like two days after. She was like three years older than I was. So she had kind of figured it out. So she told me about that.

BUCKLEY: Do you remember what she said?

HARDING: [01:04:47] I said something about I'm going to see Mama and Papa. She said, "Well, you won't see Papa [inaudible]." She goes, "No, Pres. Papa's dead."

BUCKLEY: Hmm.

HARDING: [01:04:56] And I was sitting there. I can remember shaking my head. She goes, "Oh, yeah. He

is." But my Mom didn't tell me and my Dad didn't tell me. It was my sister who told me. But she was the one who always had to you know, look after me. So that's, yeah. That's how it worked out.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Did they ever try to explain it to you, say what happened, or?

HARDING: [01:05:21] No, because there really... I know when the trial finally came along, there was you know, kind of things started coming back up again. And so I was like five years older. The guy had -- I guess they were trying to -- they were saying he was insane. So he had to go through all these things to see if he could even stand trial and all of that. So as the trial came up, you know, every now and then you get little bits and pieces of conversation. If you were around Mama's house, you know, maybe my Uncle Ralph was talking to Uncle Cyril about what happened in court or something. Or when they were questioning him or things. But usually they didn't talk about it a lot around the kids.

I do know a lot of people ask about what happened to the boat. And it sat in the boathouse for a pretty good while. And then somehow or other, the family told the state they had to get it out of there, you know. And there was some property that the state owned right down by the dock. And they arranged, and they pulled the boat out, and they took it down there, and blocked it up. And it was you know, right there off to the side of the dock.

And I'm going to say I was probably 11, maybe 12. And I can remember I'd been crabbing with my Uncle Cyril. And he had just finished landing all his crabs, and sold all them at his cousin, Spark's packing house. And we were in Spark's office. And then Uncle Ralph showed up. And Uncle Ralph was going on. "You know, I'm just telling you right now, it's a shame that Katie has to come here and pick crabs and have to walk past that boat every day. It's just not right." And I can remember Spark going, "Ralph, don't you touch that boat. They're just waiting for somebody like you to do

something and the state'll come down on you like you'll never know."

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible].

HARDING: [01:07:45] Yeah. And Spark was really on my uncle about not doing anything. And then Uncle Ralph, and Cyril, and Spark, and I think O'Neal Dean and some of them, they all went in town to go bowling. And it was like a Friday night or a Saturday night or something. And of course, I wasn't there, but kind of you get bits and pieces of it. And I think while they were bowling, they really made a spectacle of themselves. And it might have actually involved the law having to come. You know, they might have been shoving and joking around and all this. But everybody knew that they were there. And I think they might have even been detained for a little while. And then the next day, that boat was cut up in like little pieces that were like you know, three or four inches long by -- I mean, just like little -- not like cut in half or anything. I mean, it was just cut up in like into rubble.

And the really funny thing about it is when you were down by the dock, everybody just like walked by. Nobody was saying, "Oh, look what happened to the boat. I wonder what happened to the boat." Everybody just walked by like it was never there. Now, I know in the book that Dr. George wrote, you know, he made a comment that he was asking about the boat. And he said, "Now, Snooks says he knows who did it." Well, the reality is everybody knows who did it. They just don't say anything about it. And that's just the way it is.

BUCKLEY: And as it should be.

HARDING: [01:09:42] Yeah. That's the way it -- as we say, it's never spoken of. But it was just a pretty intense thing.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

SALLY: Were all three shots in the head, Pres?

HARDING: [01:09:59] I think, no. I think one was in the chest. One shot was in the chest, two shots in the head.

BUCKLEY: What happened to the guy? Did he ever end up doing time?

HARDING: [01:10:10] Yeah. I think he actually got like either 14 or like 18 years. So it's one of these things you kind of like live with, you know. You're like a young kid and you're used to being around men who like, if something's wrong, you did something to make it right, you know. And you got to live with... You know, I just can't make anything right about this.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

SALLY: And he got out when Mama was still alive, I remember.

HARDING: [01:10:45] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. When he was released, my grandmother was still alive.

SALLY: (overlapping dialogue) worry about Mama.

HARDING: [01:10:51] My cousin, Barry, and I went -- he was visiting. I'm going to say I was maybe 11 and Barry's like I think maybe two or three years younger than I am. So he was like eight or something. And we had skipped across the ditch on the other side of the lane to go in the -- we weren't really supposed to be in those woods, but they'd always talked about how you could find Blackbeard's chest if you followed the dip in the woods that was the old ox-cart path, you know.

And you got to go down past Buck Ridge. And that was a pretty long ways. But we decided we were going to walk all the way to Buck Ridge. And we were talking about things, you know, and the way things were, and about Papa and Rowe and all that. At one point I was thinking, yeah. It's a shame Mack stopped everybody from hanging that guy because he's going to get out. And then we actually picked out a tree that we figured by the time Rowe got out, it would be tall enough to hang him in.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:12:12] And that's what we were saying. This is the tree. We've picked it out. And...

BUCKLEY: It's going to grow up.

HARDING: [01:12:19] It's going to grow up. And when he gets out, we're going to get him and we're going to bring him down here. We're going to hang him. Now, that sounds pretty morbid, but these are -- yeah.

BUCKLEY: Just angry --

HARDING: [01:12:30] We were, angry, and little kids. You don't know anything else, but, yeah. That's --

SALLY: It sounds funny.

HARDING: [01:12:36] It almost sounds funny. It's not really, but that's what we did. We had made this pact. And then we'd even figured it out, like oh, yeah. Let's see. If it's 18 years, then you'll be this age and I'll be this age. And we'll have a car, da da da. You know, we got it...

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:12:54] But you know, you try to deal with it in different ways, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So did you stop going down at that point?

HARDING: [01:13:03] No. No. I went down there a lot. A lot of times I would spend the whole summer there with my grandmother. And my cousin, Candy, and my cousin, Patti, and Uncle Ralph lived there at the house. My cousin, Trudy, was just down the road a little piece. And Brenda would come down there, would be there. And so, yeah. All the kids were down there, like especially during the summer. But Candy and Patti were there until they graduated from high school really. And I don't know. Mama just seemed like she just always did, what she always did. She'd do the laundry and hang it up on the line, make biscuits. And then

when everything was done, she'd always just sit and --
I can remember her just sitting in the rocking chair
and at the end of the -- you know, just as it's
starting to get dark, just sitting there rocking.

SALLY: And she was so sweet. You always wanted to go to
Mama's.

HARDING: [01:14:02] Yeah. You always wanted to be there.
It was --

SALLY: We took our kids, too.

HARDING: [01:14:05] It was a safe spot, you know. It was
like a constant, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. A rallying place for the whole family.

HARDING: [01:14:17] Yeah. So then, you know, after many
years later, after my grandmother passed away, my Uncle
Ralph still lived down that way. So you'd still go
down there every now and then. But now he's gone, you
know, and it's kind of... Sally and I go and like ride
through there maybe once a year, twice a year,
something. But now it's just like different, you know.
It's almost, not quite a stranger, but you know, it's
just different than the way it was. Nothing stays the
same.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's right. Yeah. A lot's changed with the whole business and you know, the boating and people switch over. People still work the water down there?

HARDING: [01:15:07] A few, but nothing like it was when I was you know, young down there.

SALLY: It was all centered around [inaudible], didn't it, Pres?

HARDING: [01:15:15] Yeah. It was unbelievable, you know, how many boats, little work boats went out. And I can remember when I was little they all seemed so big. And as you grew up and you looked at them, you were going like, god, I can't believe we were out there in that, you know. I mean, they're still a nice boat, but you know. They were nowheres near as big as you thought they were, you know.

BUCKLEY: Once you're a little quirk popping around on the -

-

HARDING: [01:15:38] Yeah. Yeah. And they were like long and narrow, you know. But, yeah. At the dock there, and before they had like the pilings for like slips, a lot of the times the guys would come and tie up along

the bulkhead. And then the boats would be tied up next to each other, three and four deep, you know.

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible]?

HARDING: [01:16:01] Mm-hmm. All the way around that dock, you know. Just about everybody worked on the water.

BUCKLEY: And they say that you could walk across the boats, you know, from one side to the other.

HARDING: [01:16:11] Yeah. Yeah. And then it seemed like if you go off with, like my Uncle Cyril, everybody showed up at a regular time. The guy who was on the outside was one of the first ones out, you know. But it was pretty amazing. Like if my Uncle [Dunc?] was ready to go out and the boat on the outside of him, if they weren't there yet, it was pretty amazing how easily they could just untie and just... You know, it was --

BUCKLEY: Shift them around.

HARDING: [01:16:43] Yeah. Shift them around and everything. I mean, they were just so used to doing it, you know. But, yeah. Now there's not very many boats at all. I don't think the crab house that Spark had is quite as bustling as it was, but I think his

grandson still operates that. But I don't think it's anywheres near the way it was when Spark was alive and all that was going on.

BUCKLEY: So how would you describe it back then, like kind of a day at the...

HARDING: [01:17:20] Well, all the women would sh -- once all the men got out and were out in their boats, and the women would show up. And if it was summer time, they'd pick all the crabs that had been steamed from the day before. And you know, certainly some of the other crabs would be -- you know, someone would ship out, holding baskets for people to pick. But I'll tell you what. My grandmother could really pick a crab. It was unbelievable how fast and clean she could pick it. When I was teenager living here in Chestertown, old man Todd had a furniture store on Cross Street. And for a while, he had this little snack bar/restaurant. It's actually where Sam's is now. It had been Gus's. And then it became Todd's Restaurant.

And I was working in the bindery at the Kent News in the evenings after school. And I would go down and

sometimes I'd get something to eat there at Todd's, you know. And I went there one time and I had some extra money. So I got a crab cake platter. And I was eating that and old man Todd walked by and he looked at me. And he goes, "How's the crab cake?" I was like, "Well, it's pretty good, you know." He said, "That crab meat came from Honga River down there in Wingate." I was like, "Oh, yeah?" And he said, "Yup. Your grandma might even have picked those crabs." And about that time, I'd bit into the crab cake and it had a piece of shell in it. And I kind of spit it down on the plate. I said, "I'll you one thing. My grandmother didn't pick that crab." (laughs)

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:19:01] But when I was little, if it was summertime, she would have a little stainless steel bowl that was maybe three inches in diameter and maybe three-and-a-half inches tall. And when I was there, she would have it for me and it was always filled up with lumped chunks.

BUCKLEY: The good stuff.

HARDING: [01:19:26] Oh, yeah, man. And I would go there and I'd pick it up. And finally one time, my Uncle Ralph said, "You know, you're doing that all wrong." I was like, "What are you talking about?" He goes, "Let me show you how you're supposed to eat that." So he went and he got some crackers, some saltine crackers. And he got like a coffee cup and put vinegar in it about an inch-and-a-half deep. And then he took the pepper shaker and shook it all over the top of the vinegar, and it kind of floated on the top there. He said, "Now, you put one of those on your fork and you dip in there so it's all the way submerged. And then you hold it up. And you don't eat it until all the vinegar has dripped off of it."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:20:09] But like the little pepper pieces were all stuck on there. He goes, "And then you take it and you put it on this cracker. And then you eat." I'll have to admit, it was pretty good. (laughs) He had that pretty well [inaudible] then.

BUCKLEY: Was the vinegar to bring out the taste of the crab?

HARDING: [01:20:26] I don't know, but it just tasted good.

You know, I was sitting there eat crab with my Uncle Ralph. He told me that was the way to do it, so that's what I did. (laughs) You know?

BUCKLEY: Did you tell me that he sung in there? And the women, did they sing?

HARDING: [01:20:39] You know, I really don't recall them singing very much. Gossip. Gossip talked. That's what I think, is chitter chatter. Because I know a couple of times when we came in early when the women were still picking, if you walked in there, my grandmother would be sitting there talking to somebody and she'd be cleaning the crab. And she's not even looking at what she's doing, you know. I mean, she could just -- it's just nuts. And when you look at it, it would just be like these cavities with shell left over, you know.

BUCKLEY: She got every bit.

HARDING: [01:21:14] Mm-hmm. Yeah. She got every little bit out of it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And were they all that good, all the women?

HARDING: [01:21:22] Yes. Uh-huh. And they were equally as good at shucking oysters also. You know. So in the winter, that's what they'd be doing, shucking oysters. But typically, most of the time, unless it was like a really bumper catch and they had to pack up a lot of stuff, they would all be back home by the time we came in from the water.

BUCKLEY: What time was that?

HARDING: [01:21:49] Two o'clock, two-thirty sometimes, you know. But I can remember after my grandfather's death, you know, even if she never said anything. You know, my grandmother was pretty distraught. And she just sat around the house. And Spark came to her after a while and said, "Miss Katie, I'm in really a jam and I was hoping you could maybe help me out." She said, "Well, if I can." He goes, "Well, you know, seems like I got plenty of people, but it seems like we just never get enough crab meat picked. And I just didn't know if you thought you might be able to come down and pick some crabs, and help me out. I could really use the help." And she was like, "Well, you know what? I think I can do that, you know." And so she just started going.

But I'm sure it was Ralph and Cyril and Spark who just got together and said we got to help do something, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Did you guys eat? Was that in your diet? I mean, did you eat a lot of seafood, primarily seafood?

HARDING: [01:22:58] Oh, yeah. Ate a lot of seafood. My grandmother, when she would make a crab cake, they weren't like what you get in a restaurant around here. They would be mixed with potatoes, and onions, and they would be -- let me see. They'd be like about two inches round and flat. And they'd be golden and crispy on each side. And when she put them on the table, it was like a big platter of them piled up. And she made her hake fishcakes like that also. They were small and flat, and were like real crispy.

BUCKLEY: What'd you call them?

HARDING: [01:23:41] She would get hake fishcakes.

BUCKLEY: Hake?

HARDING: [01:23:44] Hake. Yeah. H-A-K-E. And I think it's a fish that's like from the North Atlantic. And they would catch it around Scandinavia. And when you

would get it, it was always something that was real inexpensive. And it would be like when you first put it out, like the wooden box, it would be like real hard and like covered with salt. And then you'd have to soak it and then drain the water off, and soak it, and drain the water off. And then when it finally softened up, you'd break it up. And I think you have to have like -- what do you think, Sally? Two parts potato?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

HARDING: [01:24:22] To one part hake. And then some onions.

SALLY: Just [inaudible].

HARDING: And they would remind you of a codfish cake, only they were saltier and better tasting I thought, you know.

BUCKLEY: Sounds delish.

HARDING: [01:24:36] Oh, yes. It's good. It's good.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. [Inaudible].

HARDING: [01:24:40] But, yeah. We would eat that. And really eat a lot of crabs.

BUCKLEY: Hard crabs or just --

SALLY: Well, then we --

HARDING: [01:24:47] We had crab. When we ate crabs, it was almost always -- they were already picked almost, you know. It was always like a crab cake or something like that.

SALLY: Did you eat your chickens?

HARDING: [01:24:57] Every now and then, my grandmother would kill a chicken and pick it.

SALLY: You'd have the pig, too.

HARDING: [01:25:02] Oh, when my mother was young they had pigs. They would have hogs and they would you know, slaughter them and butcher them up, and all that, but -
-

SALLY: [Inaudible] --

HARDING: [01:25:13] Un-unh. Not when I was little. Every now and then we'd have a goose or a duck that somebody shot. But we, you know, it was --

SALLY: Muskrat.

HARDING: [01:25:22] No. (laughter) We were talking about that. No muskrats. Every now and then they'd cook one or something, but it might have been if she -- I think if my grandmother ever cooked one, and I know she did, it was probably because somebody was coming to visit

that liked it. And she was cooking it for them because that wasn't part of our daily diet.

SALLY: You didn't like the smell, did you?

HARDING: [01:25:42] But, no. I hated the smell. But a lot of seatrout and the hardheads. We ate a lot of those.

SALLY: Your grandmother was a great cook. Everything was good. She always had those cakes in the dining room, always cakes.

HARDING: [01:25:59] Well, she'd make these biscuits. And they're not like a beaten biscuit, but they're kind of shaped like that. And they were like dough. And then she'd roll them up and every time she'd put them in the biscuit pans, there was always the same number of little rolled balls. And she'd put her finger in the top of each one and it would make like a dimple. And when those biscuits came out, they were golden brown on top and the outside shell was stiff. And you could grab the biscuit in the middle and you could pull it. And that top cap would pull off and almost be hollow. And then it was like all soft on the inside. They were always exactly the same every time she cooked them.

And the pans that she cooked them in, these little like -- they looked like tin pans.

SALLY: Cake pans, Pres.

HARDING: [01:26:51] Yeah. They were like a cake pan. And they were all black. They had jagged edges all along them. And some of my aunts would say, "Oh, Mama. I bought these new pans for you for your, you know, new biscuit pans for you." And if you looked underneath her sink, there was probably like four pair of those pans. And she always still used those black jagged ones.

SALLY: Burnt --

HARDING: [01:27:17] But she would mix up her own dough, you know, and it would sit in this enamel, big --

SALLY: With flour, Crisco, and water.

HARDING: [01:27:24] Yeah. And then she would set it in her like little pantry and put a cloth over it, you know. They were just really, really good.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. But you didn't do the beating part with the --

HARDING: [01:27:37] No. And they weren't like real hard and stiff and all that you know. So when you had those

biscuits at breakfast time, one of the biggest things they would have would be cheese and coffee. So you'd take a coffee cup and you cut up sharp cheddar cheese in it, in little tiny chunks. And you'd pour real hot coffee over it. And it melts the cheese. So when you grab that biscuit and you pull it off, and then you got this like little hollow cap. You dip out some of that cheese and put it in that. And you eat that. And then you could reach in and pull the soft dough out of the bottom part. And you could use that to like sop up the yolk from your eggs that she cooked. And then the other part, you put the other piece of cheese in.

(laughs)

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:28:21] Or you'd pull them in half so the soft part stayed in top, and you would put like... My grandmother never fried a potato that was cubed. They were always thin slices. So she would have a big platter of you know, bacon and like sausage patties, and fried potatoes. So you could bust that open and put a potato on there, a piece of bacon, and a piece of

sausage. And sometimes you'd dip out some of that cheese and put it on top of it. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: And the cheese parts with the coffee, actually use the coffee flavor with the --

HARDING: [01:28:58] Yeah. Now, some people loved to drink their coffee afterwards. And there was like a cheese scum that floats on the top of it. I was never big on that, but a lot of people do it. But I tell you, if you're on Smith Island and Tangier Island, if you say something about having cheese and coffee at breakfast, nobody kind of wrinkles their face up or anything because they all know what that's about, you know. It's all part of that culture.

BUCKLEY: Do you guys eat the mustard in the crabs?

HARDING: [01:29:29] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: That's what gives it a little extra zing.

HARDING: [01:29:33] A little extra zing. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [01:29:35] Yeah. And my grandmother, every -- maybe once a year she would make crab soup. And when she would make crab soup, she would pick the crab while it was still alive. And she'd pull the shell off and

you know, cut all the feelers off and pull the claws off, and take out the lungs and all the inner guts. And so you had just that, like [inaudible]. And sometimes you could still feel the nubs moving. But that's what she would put in the pot and cook it. And then as it cooked, like the crab meat would kind of come out of the shell. And before she served it, she'd reach in and pull out the shells and throw those away.

BUCKLEY: And by that time, the crab was not smiling anymore.

HARDING: [01:30:16] No. He's done.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

SALLY: But that's where the flavor was though.

HARDING: [01:30:20] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [01:30:21] Yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Oh, man. That's good stuff. You're making me hungry.

HARDING: [01:30:27] Uh-huh. You'll be thinking about it when you're down in Dorchester --

SALLY: But that's the family -- they didn't talk about your grandfather's death because the family was just in

this shock. They all talk about it still today. It was so painful.

HARDING: [01:30:42] Well, you know, John Swain, who was involved with the *Sultana*, he had gone down to see O'Neal Dean. And O'Neal Dean and my grandfather were pretty close, even though O'Neal was a lot younger than him. And John had gone down there to buy a bunch of white cedar from O'Neal. And John was talking to me about it. He goes, "I asked O'Neal about the day your grandfather died. And I asked him if he could tell me about it." And he said O'Neal just stopped and sat down. He said, "And he started talking to me about it." And he goes, "But you know what was really kind of eerie about it?" And I was like, "Oh, did he talk about it like it was yesterday?" He said, "Well, that's exactly right." You know, because even though it's been all that time, you know, that's the way it seems, you know. It was a real pivot point in history there I think.

And the first time we went to Tangier, when we got off a little skiff that my son-in-law was driving, we were

at Milton Parks' little marina there. And Mr. Milton came out because he was -- figure out who we all were. He already figured out Abigail and [Dave?], but he came to see who Sally and I were. And Sally got talking to him. And I was like, "Well, yeah. You know, we might even be related, Mr. Milton, because my mother was a Parks." He goes, "Oh, really." I was like, "Yeah. I'm Bronzie's grandson." And he just looked at me. He said, "Well, he came across some foul play, didn't he?" And I was like, "Well, yeah. He did."

And he knew all about it. Not all the particulars, but you know, he knew about the event. And it was really -- when you talk to the guys that work on the water there around Tangier, if you talked like, "Oh, well, I'm from Wingate and I'm right up there on the Honga River and Fishing Bay and all," you might as well have been telling them you were in Connecticut or something. You know, because once you cr -- you know, that line, that state line. I mean, right around close -- and everybody goes over the line a little bit, but that was like... They'd be like, "Fishing Bay? What are you

talking about, Fishing Bay?" You know, certainly some of the guys knew where that all was, but it was like they didn't really travel up that way. But they all knew about what went on, you know.

BUCKLEY: So it was an anomaly, right? I mean, it wasn't the wild west back then, people shooting each other and --

HARDING: [01:33:25] No. Un-unh. No. And somebody was telling me they just went to a thing where a lady was talking about the history of Holland Island. And it was one of these things where she was talking about you know, the culture there. And she was like, "You know, and it's even been rumored that there were pirates there."

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [01:33:44] And I'm kind of like, you know what? Give me a break, you know. It's kind of like, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Everybody wants to be pirates and --

HARDING: [01:33:56] Yeah. Yeah. Now, you know, certainly --

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible].

HARDING: [01:33:59] Certainly there were some ill events and all of that, but you know, you would hear people tell stories about dredgers who would like line their crew up on pay day. And they'd come about and you know, knock everybody overboard.

BUCKLEY: [Bang the boom?].

HARDING: [01:34:15] Yeah. Well, you know, that might have happened around Baltimore or something, but not down our way. That's just not the way it worked, you know. There was enough for everybody to get a little bit, you know.

BUCKLEY: But it makes a good story though, right?

HARDING: [01:34:30] Oh, yeah. And, hey, look. I'm sure in some places it could have happened. You know what I mean?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. [Inaudible] Fells Point where the bars are, you know.

HARDING: [01:34:40] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I can see that. And you know, sometimes on the water things can be contentious, you know. You're out there and the reality is, unless Resource Police are right there and you can see them, you're pretty much beyond the realm

of the law, you know. So you all need to have some sort of standard that you're going to abide by or things could get contested pretty quick. Yeah. You know what I mean?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Like I read in the book, the skipjack book about the [inaudible] islanders and how you know, once in a while somebody would run into somebody else, you know. Kind of trying to get position on --

HARDING: [01:35:22] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, it's amazing how close the people would get and everything. And it's kind of like a game of nerves, you know. Who's got the nerve.

SALLY: That's one thing Uncle Ralph was talking about that impressed me, I remember was, talking about the bottom of the waters where they went. Like it was just a roadmap of Chestertown to me.

HARDING: [01:35:48] Oh, yeah.

SALLY: And it was really something.

HARDING: [01:35:52] Yeah. That is one thing. They would talk about the bottom...

BUCKLEY: And you can't see the bottom.

HARDING: [01:35:57] You can't see the bottom, but they knew, oh, if you're ever here, that's hard bottom and this is soft bottom here. And there's the lumps there. And there's, you know. They just, you know. Oh, it looks pretty good over there, but you won't get in there because it's you know, there's just not enough water there to support anything. And you'd be over such and such and --

SALLY: But all the names they had for all their spots.

HARDING: [01:36:17] Oh, yeah. And, yeah. They would talk -- all up and down the bay, especially the men who dredged, they talked like the bottom -- like you and I would say, "Oh, you go down Route 213 and when you get to 301, you make a right until you run into Route 50. And then you follow that and once you get to Kent Narrow, you should do -- you know, it's pretty amazing how... But you know, that's what they knew, you know. They were there all the time. And you know, they could tell how their dredges felt when it hit the bottom, you know. If they were on lumps or flat or...

BUCKLEY: Kind of like the bay pilots.

HARDING: [01:36:55] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: You get somebody local that knows the bottom.

HARDING: [01:36:59] Oh, yeah. Yeah. They knew their way around. They knew what was going on on the water.

BUCKLEY: Wow. All right. We can stop. We're at 1:37.
[Inaudible].

SALLY: Well, you had the repeat in there, right?

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

END OF PART THREE

BUCKLEY: So I was trying to figure out how we talk about more stuff that -- and figure out in your head what we haven't talked about yet.

HARDING: [00:00:09] Well, I know a couple things I can talk about that really relate to things about my grandfather.

BUCKLEY: Okay. Great. Hold on with the bags there because he's going to say something important.

HARDING: [00:00:19] Yeah. Because you're making noise.

BUCKLEY: That's all right.

HARDING: [00:00:24] You know, looking back on it now after years of knowing him and being around him, is he really had some real mathematical ability. And I can remember

being little with him and somebody'd be talking about whether they would use this one particular tree for a mast. And they'd say, "Well, how tall do you think that is? We need it to be such and such a length." And Papa would like walk to the very end of the shadow of the tree and stand there. And then he would tell me or somebody else to go and stand where his shadow ended.

BUCKLEY: Don't talk to her.

HARDING: [00:01:09] And then -- okay. And then once he had that marked, he would walk from where he was standing to where the other person was and pace it off. And then he could tell you, well, it's so many feet to the first limb. And you know, he was doing like all triangulization and stuff like that in his head.

BUCKLEY: With shadows?

HARDING: [00:01:29] Yeah. Because you know, he knew that he would walk down the length of the shadow and stop at the end where he wanted to stop. So he knew how long that was. When he stood there, he would cast a shadow and he knew how tall he was. And if you stood at the end of his shadow, he would walk that line and pace it

off. And he could figure by that, you know, his triangulization and ratios, I would say, you know. And he could just do that.

BUCKLEY: Does that run in the family?

HARDING: [00:02:00] I've got pretty good math skills. And probably don't always get the answer the way the teacher was expecting you to show your work, you know, but you could always kind of get there, you know.

SALLY: I'm just going to say that Pres took a brush-up math course one time.

HARDING: [00:02:23] Shh. Don't. That's not right.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

SALLY: And you could use computers. And he didn't use a -- I mean a calculator. And he got an A in trig without the calculator.

BUCKLEY: I figured. Those things, you know --

HARDING: [00:02:37] But I did have the book that had like the logarithms, you know, that says cosine and all that, you know. I mean, you still had something to go by. It wasn't all in my head.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. But I mean, that's your whole life now, right? Is figuring things out and measuring things.

HARDING: [00:02:50] Mm-hmm. You know, if you're a carpenter or a builder or anything like that, and especially when I had worked for [Dickson?] as a pattern maker, sometimes she would be building a pattern and there'd be a characteristic that you had, you know, to hit really right on the mark so that the casting came out right. But if you didn't know how to do trig, you couldn't measure it. So you know, those were things -- you know, when you use them all the time, you know, you get used to them. When you don't use it, you just --

BUCKLEY: Was there always a balance at the boatyard between the guys, you know, being able to do calculations and stuff and you know, more intuitive type --

HARDING: [00:03:32] There was a lot of intuitive stuff that went on because they would also -- you would see men and they would be like working on the boats or like working a sheer line of a boat. And then they'd get a ladder and they'd climb up on top of the boathouse and look at it. And then they'd go all the way to the other side of the field and climb up on another boat and look at it. And then they would say, "Well, you

know, she looks fair from this direction, but if you get over this way, it doesn't look fair." So they would do like little corrections. There was a process of always you know, taking the kinks out of everything. And it's actually, I think they actually did some stuff that was what you would call like a visual correction. Like on the side of a cabin, if you made the two sides of the cabin perfectly plumb, and then you looked at them from a distance, they gave the illusion that they were splayed out at the top. Then it just looks dumb. But if you tilted your level so they tip in about a quarter of a bubble on a two-foot level, you're like that little bit out of plumb, I don't know why but it just looks right, you know. And --

BUCKLEY: So there was an aesthetic and maybe they didn't use that particular word, but --

HARDING: [00:04:57] Yeah. They didn't use that. They just were like, well, they would talk about a boat that like looked dumb.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:05:03] You know, it just didn't look right, especially -- and you know, when you -- Papa considered

himself -- he used to say, his sign used to say B.M. Parks Boat Builder. And then as the years went by, it became B.M. Parks, Designer and Builder of Boats. And I think that's kind of significant because what happens is -- so most of the things that you see or experience in your life are from a distance away. And that's where design is the most important thing because you're looking at it from a distance. And the closer you get to the object, or the building, or the boat, or whatever, the closer and closer you get, the less the design is the factor that you see. And that's where the craftsmanship starts to take over. You get close enough to really see, you know, the detail. But when you're looking at the detail, you're not far enough away from it to see like the whole big picture. Does that make sense?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. It was. So what do you see when you see one of his boats now? Are you looking at it with that kind of critical eye and with that kind of searcher's eye for the sensual and that kind of thing?

HARDING: [00:06:18] Um...

BUCKLEY: What do you see when you look at his boats
nowadays?

HARDING: [00:06:21] Well, most of them all look pretty good, the ones that I've seen, you know. And usually what I try to figure out is to try to figure out if it's like a real early boat of his or a later boat of his. And a lot of times you can tell that by looking at the stern, how the roll of the tumble home is on the sterns and stuff like that. And you know, each boat has its own little kind of like significant thing that happens. There were a lot of things that were trademarks of his. But then when you really start looking at them, you know, this one's maybe a little different than the other. And they could be, depending on who was working on it in the yard, also, you know.

BUCKLEY: Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah. Was there any big differences between the skipjacks?

HARDING: [00:07:11] Well, not a lot because what they did do is they never -- he never had drawings or plans like that. But when they were doing some of the skipjacks, when they were doing the *Martha Lewis*, the *Lady Katie*, and *Rosie Parks* --

BUCKLEY: The three sisters.

HARDING: [00:07:30] The three sisters. They were building everything in threes. So there were some times when they might cut out a certain part and then take something and trace that, you know. And then have that be a template for the other to try to help speed up the process. Because the real object was, you know, he wanted to build a nice boat. And he wanted it to look good and work good and all that. But you know, they were for working. So they also wanted them to be somewhat as economical as you can make them. You know, people had to be able to afford to buy them, the workboats, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So are they the same though? When you see those three next to each other, do they all have their own specific --

HARDING: [00:08:19] No. I think the three of those were all real, real close. Now, over the years, things have changed. You know, different people have owned them and they've gone through you know, a whole 'nother life. Like *The Rosie*. I mean, they did a great job at

the museum. But you know, there wasn't a whole lot of her left when they started to rebuild her.

BUCKLEY: What do you mean? Expound on that.

HARDING: [00:08:45] Well, let me think of the right way.

You know, they had taken a lot of measurements off of the old original boat. But a lot of the boat had just fallen apart. It had already lived way past its lifespan. So you know, there was a lot of new wood in the new *Rosie Parks*, you know.

BUCKLEY: That had rotted away?

HARDING: [00:09:06] Yeah. And it had just been kind of

falling apart for a while. It was out of the water and been on land. And you know, I've been around some of Papa's boats, even workboats where when the bottom's planked, as you get towards the front, instead of it being planking, they call it staving. And it's not really like staving like you would see in a barrel or a coopering. But it's the same kind of process where you have these taper pieces and they're all different angles. And you just keep fitting the pieces. But instead of them going from the chine to the keel, they're more like more vertical and they become part of

the bracing also. And that's what they call the staving. But I've seen some boats of his where you know, they were really in the water pretty dry. And people lift them up and start working on them, and start to dry out. And the old iron nails had rotted out. And the staving'd just fall right off of it. But they all fit so tight, and while they were all swelled up with the water they stayed there, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:10:13] And they took it out, and they're working on the boat. And they're filling and fooling around, taking their time, and it dries out a little bit. Next thing you know, you go up there the next day, there's like five or six pieces of staving laying on the ground because it just fell out.

BUCKLEY: Wow. Wow. So was there a lot of repairs going on at the yard, these kind of issues that they were dealing with in terms of keeping those boats together? Or did the boats stay together for a certain number of years?

HARDING: [00:10:38] I think they stayed together pretty well for a long time. They didn't really get involved

with repair a whole lot. There were a couple of times -- I forget. I'm sure there were a couple of boats. I know O'Neal Dean told me they had a couple of boats that were, where they would call them Jonahs because it was kind of like -- it was almost like they were cursed from the beginning, you know. I mean, sometimes you know, sometimes no matter how good you are or how good your crew is, some things just go south on you. And I think, I've heard O'Neal speak of -- I don't know about it personally, but O'Neal has spoken about a couple of boats. And my Uncle Ralph. They would both chuckle about that.

They built a boat for Captain Irving Crouch, right up here in Rock Hall. And he wanted it a certain way because he was doing this fishing. And he was going to put this big winder on it for winding in his nets and everything. And they were like, "You know, that was a really nice-looking boat. And he was a great guy. But it was one of the dumbest boats we ever built."

Because it just wouldn't act right in the water, you know. When they went to back it up, it just -- you

know, for some reason, it just didn't respond or do the way they were used to. But that's what they referred to as -- that was really a dumb boat.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:11:59] But Captain Irving loved that boat. It did what he wanted it to do, you know. He had a big boat. He could be out in rough water. I know when I worked at Tolchester, [Allan Bramble?] loved Captain Irving Crouch. And he said there were days when guys would have their drift nets out. And he had this big winder thing on the back of his boat that was pretty much a new idea for a lot of people. And have like you know, bad weather come up and Captain Irving would tell them, "You just go on in, boys. I'll get your nets up for you." You know, he had a nice big boat. It could take the sea, and you know. He'd crank it up and take the guys' nets in and they'd pull them apart.

BUCKLEY: And before that they'd just have a bunch of guys, like in the old days, like up further north --

HARDING: [00:12:48] Yeah. Well, even today I think a lot of the guys who [pound that?], they pull everything by hand.

BUCKLEY: Really?

HARDING: [00:12:55] Yeah. It's hard. Especially if the tide's running real hard, you know. You wouldn't think that a net would you know, grab that much water when it's going through there, but boy, it sure does.

BUCKLEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Those fish are pretty heavy, too. Hope --

HARDING: [00:13:10] Yeah. Well, hopefully if you got some [laughing] fish in there. That's the key, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So any more personality traits about him besides his mathematical prowess that you would remember about him? Or you know, when you think about him, think back about his success and about his reputation?

HARDING: [00:13:30] Well, I would say that as far as his reputation was concerned, he was really a pretty good guy all around, you know. He tended to see like the greater good and what needed to be done. But I also think that when it's time to stand up and be counted, you know, I don't think that him and some of his real close circle of guys -- I don't think he wanted to go up against them, you know. I think they could be...

They're pretty strong-minded, strong-willed about some stuff, you know. But you know, he got pretty politically connected. And he helped to get the Harbour Wingate all dredged down. I mean, that was just sort of like -- that part of the Honga River was real shallow, you know. It was hard to get in and out of. And he got that done.

BUCKLEY: And you have to go to Annapolis to get that done?

HARDING: [00:14:36] Oh, I'm sure. Yeah. Yeah. And --

BUCKLEY: Tell Karen about him running for office.

HARDING: [00:14:43] Well, he was running for county commissioner of Dorchester County. And his whole life, he was a die-hard Democrat, you know. And when he got ready to run, they said that they already had someone on the ticket. They didn't want him on the ticket. So then he was kind of like, "Well, I'll run as a Republican. It doesn't matter." So then he talked to them and they really didn't want him to run. But he refers to himself as a Democrat, but on a lot of brochures it would say the first man to appeal directly to the people as a member of the People's Party.

KAREN: Mm-hmm.

HARDING: [00:15:25] So he was basically running independent of anything, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. That's --

HARDING: [00:15:33] They were like that. You know, his shop before they had electricity, he had a battery system that he had set up, these banks of batteries. I actually still have a skillsaw out in my garage that runs on AC or DC current.

BUCKLEY: What's the difference between the two? Just in a nutshell there.

HARDING: [00:15:54] Well, DC is a direct current, which would be what comes from a battery. And AC is an alternating current, which is like what you have in your house. And I know that -- I don't know this from my own personal knowledge, but I've heard it said that as they were bringing electricity down there, they came to my grandfather and they said, "Well, Bronzie, we're going to come down here. For you to get hooked up, it's going to cost x-amount of dollars." And he's like, "Well, that seems like an awful amount." And they were like, "Well, you know, we figure there's 12 poles coming down this road and -- " He's like, "Well,

you're on your way to Toddville. Seems like I should just pay from the road to my house." And they're like, "Oh, no. We're going out of our way to bring you electricity and all that." So he told them to go around.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:16:41] I mean, he already had power. I mean, some of his stuff ran on the AC and then some of it ran off of an old tractor. Yeah. I mean, he eventually got the electricity once they went past him. Then he just got the regular hook-up, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:16:59] But, yeah. He had a couple of pieces of machinery, the bandsaw and the joiner. They would pull up a tractor and it had a big, flat belt. And it had these big metal wheels on these shafts that would turn from the tractor. The tractor had a power take-off on it. So you hooked the belt up on this tractor and run it. And then on the shafts, there was what they called the fast wheel and the idler wheel. And the idler wheel just kind of like spun on bearings. So if you weren't using a machine, they would take like a

board and like scooch the belt over. And it'd get on the idler and then that machine wouldn't run.

BUCKLEY: I've heard that term before. Idler wheel.

HARDING: [00:17:43] Yeah. Yeah. It's a common thing that they used I guess, days of machine shops and all that when you --

BUCKLEY: It just shifts into neutral.

HARDING: [00:17:52] Yeah. It's like if you're -- let me think of the right word for it. But if you've got like a line drive set up. So you have like a long shaft with a bunch of different pulleys of different sizes. And you're running various machines off of a single power source. Then if -- you don't want to bog the whole thing down, so if you're not using the machine, you put it on the idler wheel. And it's the same size as the wheel that's going to run.

BUCKLEY: So it helps rather than hinders.

HARDING: [00:18:21] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:18:22] Yeah. And then when you get on to the idler wheel, then the belt's not turning either.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So do you remember if there was electricity when you were a kid?

HARDING: [00:18:31] Oh, yeah.

BUCKLEY: So the time when it wasn't any, that was way before --

HARDING: [00:18:35] That was before my time. Yeah. That was before my time. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Tell me more about these guys that were you know, surrounding you down there. Now that I've been down there and I've had an eyeball of it, you know.

HARDING: [00:18:48] It's a different world, isn't it?

BUCKLEY: (laughs) Yeah. I went down last weekend, and yeah. Yeah. I didn't listen to the interviews on the way down. And that was dumb. I should have, you know. But I was just listening to the sound in my head, you know, because there wasn't much else. There was no traffic. (laughs)

HARDING: [00:19:03] No.

BUCKLEY: You drive all the way through the marshes and not see maybe one or two cars. I went all the way down Holland's Island you know -- not Holland, but --

HARDING: [00:19:14] Hooper's Island.

BUCKLEY: Hooper's Island and you know, watched it go down into nothing but the road.

HARDING: [00:19:19] Nothing. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: All the way as far as you could go. There was still a lot of activity and a lot of --

HARDING: [00:19:24] There's a lot -- oh, there's still a lot going on on Hooper's Island.

BUCKLEY: A couple of packing houses and some summer cottages and things like that. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:19:33] Yeah. The dock at Wingate looked fairly desolate. I'm sure there are a few boats there, but...

BUCKLEY: There was a long channel-like dock there, a lot of slips there. You could park side to the dock. And then there was the Stine that you mentioned.

HARDING: [00:19:49] Stine's Railway?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Was there. And there was another one that said Packing House Road. There was actually a road that said Lewis Road. You said you were a Lewis --

HARDING: [00:19:56] Lewis. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Was I in the right place?

HARDING: [00:19:59] Yeah. You were in the right place.

That Lewis' Road went back to my Uncle Jim's house. I say my Uncle Jim's. He was really my mother's uncle. But we always called him Uncle Jim because that's what you always heard him called was Uncle Jim.

BUCKLEY: What was he like? What did he do and all?

HARDING: [00:20:16] Well, he was a dredger. And my Uncle Ralph always said that of all the sailors, that Jim Lewis was the slickest one of the bunch.

BUCKLEY: When you say sailor, you're talking skipjack sailing?

HARDING: [00:20:31] Yes. Skipjack sailing. And he said, "You know, when you go to Deal Island, you know, of course, my grandfather's brother, Orville, was always the one to try to beat in the race. There was no doubt about it. Orville's a great racer. He goes, "You know, he's a good dredging captain, too." But he said, "By far, the slickest one was Jim Lewis."

BUCKLEY: Orville Parks he's talking about?

HARDING: [00:20:56] Mm-hmm. Yeah. That's my grandfather's brother.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:21:01] But, yeah. Jim, he was the kind of guy, he could dock the boat under sail. And I've actually had seen him do that as a young person. And you know, they're under sail and it's like they look like they're going to run right into the dock. And all of a sudden he starts yelling. The guys are pulling on the damn hauls. And he grabs the wheel and just spins it. And it's like the boat almost just turns sideways and goes poomp. It's the craziest thing you ever saw in your life. But I guess to do it you also -- besides knowing how to do it, you got to have enough nerve to do it, because you can really tear something up.

(laughs)

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:21:41] But they also -- everybody always said that he could splice rope and you could never see where it was put together, you know, and that sort of thing.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I saw a guy down there piling up pots. I don't know if he was making them out of wire down there or whatever, but --

HARDING: [00:21:59] Most of the guys down there make their own pots. Or they did when I was young. My Uncle

Cyril in the summer would crab with pots. And he had a thing that was in one half of my grandmother's wash house. And he had it all set up so you could roll the wire off of a piece of pipe. And he had it all marked on this little bench. You'd go out this far and they you'd bend it. And you'd put wire in a -- he used to give me these pliers. They have these things, they look like little staples. It's kind of like what you'd put like a ring in a pig's nose with. But they were small. And the wire that would go around the outside edge to stiffen the pot up, he'd let me sit there and -

-

BUCKLEY: Crimp it down.

HARDING: [00:22:39] Crimp those things down. That was a big deal to be able to do that, be old enough to do that.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Do they make those pots pretty quick? How long did it take them? Do you remember?

HARDING: [00:22:48] I think he usually had a 100 and some pots. And he would usually make those in a couple of days, you know. But he had a system all down. He had it all laid out and figured out, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. And had to order the wire especially. Do you know if there's just -- maybe you know this from the years gone by, but if there's things that are specific or peculiar about Wingate and the ways things that were done by watermen down there versus perhaps as close as Hooper's Island or all the way up in Crisfield, you know. Was there --

HARDING: [00:23:23] Yeah. I would say down that area, most people did things sort of the same. Maybe a little different. Once you crossed the Virginia line and you got down around Tangier, it might have been a little different, but not a lot. The boats were built a little different further down because the sea would get so big. When you look at the boats that were built down around -- for guys down on like Deal Island and Smith Island and all that. Even though they were really close, it just seems like the water really rolls through there sometimes. And all their bows go like really, really high. And the front of them is like it's real sharp. And I think it's designed so they can just you know, cut through that sea, you know, better, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. But up in Wingate it was calmer?

HARDING: [00:24:16] Well, it still could get really rough, but it was just a little bit of a different style of boat, you know.

BUCKLEY: What do you remember about the tides around Wingate there and...

HARDING: [00:24:27] Well, I can tell you, when you'd be little and you'd be at my grandmother's front yard playing, when the tide would start going down, you could hear the yard go [makes sucking sound]. It would like squish. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: [Inaudible].

HARDING: [00:24:43] Yeah. You could hear like the water coming squishing through there.

BUCKLEY: And it's just coming up right all around you?

HARDING: [00:24:48] Yeah. Yeah. All around. Because you know, you're not very far above sea level there. And so it wasn't uncommon to like be at my grandmother's house and be like, oh, we got to go back into Cambridge. And get up around so far along, like by where World's End Creek goes, that little -- you had probably saw it when you went down there. It's a real

sharp S-turn and there's like a little creek that goes through the middle of the S. That's the top of World's End Creek. And it would always flood there. You know, and you couldn't get the car through. So you'd have to turn around and go back. And even in Mama's yard and all, it wasn't real uncommon to have water a few inches deep in the land. Now, during the Hurricane Hazel, it was actually up in the house.

BUCKLEY: That's a couple of feet.

HARDING: [00:25:43] Yeah. Two-and-a-half, three feet maybe. Yeah. It was up that high.

BUCKLEY: Did you get storm surge from Hazel?

HARDING: [00:25:51] No. I think the wind -- it just all came all at once. I don't know if you would call it storm surge or not. I was real little then. I think that was in '54. So I was like three.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:26:01] I can remember my grandfather walking through the house with a kerosene lamp and has galoshes on. And I was there and my sister, Brenda, and Candy, and [inaudible]. All the cousins were all there. And it was really strange because you know, it was

obviously a real dangerous time, but you know, you never got that from any of the adults, you know. It was just like hmm, tide's up. You know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. It's like Chicago and having a snowstorm, right?

HARDING: [00:26:33] Yeah. Yeah. And I think, too, they didn't -- they would go to great lengths not to alarm the kids, because if you got out unscathed you were all right, you know. And there wasn't anything that was going to turn back the storm, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Were people in the boatyard, the guys, were they always working or was there times when they had meetings or anything you can remember, when they'd get together and talk things over, and you know, come up with strategies maybe in the morning, or maybe at the end of the day, or anything? Or did they just go to --

HARDING: [00:27:06] No. I think they'd show up and it was kind of like you know, it was almost like they knew what to do. I'm sure that there were times they would discuss something if they had a problem trying to do something, or you know, do a certain part of the project or something. But usually I think the way it

worked was that between Papa and my Uncle Ralph, they had everybody paired up or people doing the jobs that their skillsets allowed them to do. You know, if you weren't real high-skilled, they still had something for you to do, you know. But it might not have been a high-skilled job. But you know, the whole time in the boatyard, it seemed like there was always chatter going on. Everybody was always talking, or singing, or you know, somebody'd walk by and they'd throw sawdust on somebody, down the back of their neck or... You know, because it was hard work and everybody was doing things to amuse themselves and you know, try and enjoy what they were doing, you know. They were all...

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Being --

HARDING: [00:28:07] But I can really remember that. It was like really just a lot of jibber-jabber, you know, a lot of talking and joking around and stuff, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:28:21] I guess it made the world go round, made it fun, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. How would you describe like to Karen or somebody that hadn't met you and me, like your Uncle Ralph?

HARDING: [00:28:32] (laughs) I would say my Uncle Ralph really considered himself a renaissance man. He really learned a lot of my grandfather's methods and all that, but he later in life -- he was a great sailor, knew a lot about the water. But he always had like some kind of philosophical thing he would tell you. And --

BUCKLEY: Like what? Do you remember anything?

HARDING: [00:29:02] Oh, yeah. I can remember being with him and taking a piece of wood. He goes, "You know the first thing you need to learn about the water?" And he took this little piece of wood and threw it out in the creek. He said, "You see it there? It's out there floating, isn't it?" I go, "Yeah." He said, "Well, if you don't work at it and tend to it, and keep that afloat, it's eventually going to go to the bottom. And no matter what you put in the water, if you don't work at it and keep it afloat, that's where it'll end up is the bottom. That's the first thing you need to learn about the water." And when you think about it, he's

really pretty right. He says some things will take longer than others, but he goes, "Old Man Sea will eat everything you put into it unless you keep it up."

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:29:50] And he bought a plane. He got a pilot's license and a plane that was like a light metal tubed frame. And it was canvas around it. It was the coolest thing. And you know, of course, he would fly his plane. He'd fly it up here to see Donald Edwards in Rock Hall. They were real good buddies. And, yeah. He was just on top of the world. One time I went to my grandmother's house and he was sitting there at the kitchen table. And he had this book. And I was like, "Uncle Ralph, what are you reading?" He said, "The dictionary."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:30:29] Oh, yeah. I was like, "Oh, really?" He goes, "Yeah. Right now I'm on aspiration," you know. And he had real bushy eyebrows. He'd like raise his eyebrows. He goes, "Now, is aspiration when you aspire to do something?" I was like, "Well, I guess so." He goes, "Well, it could be the method that an

engine takes in air. You know, there's an aspirating engine. It's aspiration." But, yeah. He would always be doing stuff like that, you know. And thinking and trying stuff.

One time the creek froze up real hard. And it was, boy, I bet you six or eight inches. It was unusually cold. And I'm going to say I was about 10. So he's like, "Come on. We're going to go down the boathouse." So we went there. And he took some four-by-fours and notched them so they made like a cross. And then he fashioned this type of tiller thing that went through a -- drilled a hole and he made -- a pipe came up through this hole, and he had a wooden tiller on it. And he got some angle iron and he ground it, and he kind of curved it up. Then he put a couple of boards on the top of it. And Mr. du Pont's skipjack that Papa built -- it's a pleasure boat, the *Barbara Batchelder* -- had -- they called it a sailfish, sort of like a sunfish, but it was smaller. And so he had put a hole where those posts were crossed and set that sailfish mast in it. And he made this ice boat.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:32:13] Oh, yeah. He's like, "Come on. We're going to go try this thing out." And we got it, you know, drug it down to the creek. And, boy, I'll tell you what. When he finally got her going, man, we were really rocking. We were going -- and of course, everybody's on the dock going, "Yeah. There's Ralph Ruark. Yeah. Looney tune. He's crazy." But to me, that was you know -- he was one of the greatest guys around. After my grandfather died, he was a really, really big figure in my life.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So how did his life play out?

HARDING: [00:32:44] Pretty well. Of course, you know, he had worked -- he was one of Papa's main men in the boatyard. And after his death, you know, that all came to a screeching halt. But he would trotline for crabs. And he was a dredger. So he did all right dredging. And then some time in the spring and summer he would run Stine's Railway down there. So he would do some repair work. But he also was the guy who kept up the *Barbara Batchelder* for Mr. and Mrs. du Pont.

BUCKLEY: What was the boat called?

HARDING: [00:33:23] The *Barbara Batchelder* [mispronouncing as "Bachelor"].

BUCKLEY: *Barbara?*

HARDING: [00:33:24] Yeah. *Barbara Batchelder*. So *Barbara Batchelder* was Mr. du Pont's wife's maiden name. She was a Batchelder.

BUCKLEY: Oh.

HARDING: [00:33:33] But you know, every --

BUCKLEY: So it's kind of a weird name for a boat. And usually you have a woman's name, but not bachelor.

HARDING: [00:33:41] Bachelor, yeah. But she was a Batchelder. That was her maiden name. So that's how that came to be. But you know, until it got to the point where he died, when he passed away -- right now they keep her at Edwards' marina down in Lankford Bay now. But she always would sit right there by Stine's railway.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Still in good condition.

HARDING: [00:34:06] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: It's well taken care of.

HARDING: [00:34:08] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Is it still owned by the du Pont family?

HARDING: [00:34:10] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: Yeah?

HARDING: [00:34:12] I know recently -- that was a few, maybe five or six years ago, I met up with Mr. and Mrs. du Pont. And we were chitchatting. And she was saying -- I was like, "Oh, it's so great you guys still have the boat." And she goes, "Well, you know, our friends for years have been saying, 'When are you going to get a new boat?'" And she goes, "Ralph Ruark gives me a new boat every year."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:34:35] Can you excuse me for one minute?

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Sure. Yeah. Oh, I love hibiscus.

KAREN: Do you?

[00:34:46] [NON-INTERVIEW BETWEEN MICHAEL AND KAREN]

[00:36:26]

BUCKLEY: So you were just telling me about the end of his life there. How long did he live? Your Uncle Ralph?

HARDING: [00:36:32] Uncle Ralph was in his late seventies or early eighties when he passed away. You know, I think he did pretty well pretty much all the way through till like the very end, you know.

BUCKLEY: So it's good to have a good attitude and a light heart.

HARDING: [00:36:53] Yeah. I think so. Yeah. I knew when we went to visit Abigail and Dave when they were working for CBF at Port Isabel, when they were first down, when Abigail was first down there, they had a big meeting. And by the time she got all of her stuff for the breakfast there and the only place to sit down was the table that had like all the older guys who were like the captains and the local guys. So she kind of walks over there. And they're like, "It's all right, honey. You can come sit down here."

And then she started putting cheese in her coffee cup. And they were all kind of looking at that. And they're like, "Now where are you from?" She goes, "Well, I'm from Chestertown." They're like, "Oh, another one of those, huh?" She goes, "Yeah. But I'm nice, you know." You know how Abigail is. And so they were talking about the Karen Noonan Center, which is down at Bishops Head, down by Crocheron. And they were like, "Well, we better explain to her where Bishops Head is."

And she was like, "Oh, well, I know where Bishops Head is. I've got an uncle who lives in Bishops Head." They're like, "Really?" She goes, "Yeah. My Uncle Ralph." They're like, "Your Uncle Ralph who?" She goes, "Ralph Ruark." And they're all going Ralph? Oh, they all knew who Ralph Ruark was. They were like, "Ralph Ruark is your uncle?" You know. She goes, "Well, really he's my Dad's uncle, but I still, you know, I still call him Uncle Ralph."

But for a while there, in some of the last years of his dredging, some of the guys who were his crew were from Tangier. And he was calling some guys. And he's like, "Is everybody good you know, for dredging this week?" And a couple of guys are like, "Well, can't, Ralph. We're all froze up down here. I don't know how it is up where you are, but we're froze up. We can't get out of here." He goes, "Oh, I'll come get you." And that's what he did. His plane that he had was a two-seater. So the passengers sat in front of the pilot. So he would fly from Wingate, come down pick one of them up. Then flew back.

BUCKLEY: Made two trips.

HARDING: [00:39:10] Yeah. Made like three trips and of course, that was a big deal down there because Tangier's like Wingate. There's nothing going on there on that little tiny island, but you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:39:21] And I think he, yeah. Yeah, well, it's not going to stop us. I'll fly down there and come get you, you know. (laughs)

BUCKLEY: He's a jetsetter.

HARDING: [00:39:29] Yeah. Yeah. He was that kind of guy. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: So tell me more about O'Neal Dean. I was kind of looking. I saw like --

HARDING: [00:39:40] It says F. O'Neal?

BUCKLEY: Headstone said -- no. It said O'Neal, you know.

HARDING: [00:39:45] I think there were several different O'Neals down there, but O'Neal Dean was a great guy. Good craftsmanship, good craftsman. And not only could he build a really nice boat, but you know, he would have like a metal lathe in his shop so he could -- if he had re-tape a shaft for a certain prop or something

like that. He could do all that kind of stuff. And where his place is is just as you're heading towards Wingate, just past Stine's Railway. It's right there on the right. There's a sign there that's -- I guess the sign's still there. It said F.O. Dean.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. I pulled in there. Yeah. I went driving back there toward the water.

HARDING: [00:40:26] Yeah. And his boathouse and shop, when you look at it, there are some things that are different. It's a little bit more modern. But where the windows are in the shop and the way the shop's laid out and all is very, very similar to my grandfather's shop. And O'Neal had told me that when he went to see Papa, he'd gone in the service like really, really young. Like at 15 or something like that. And he had gotten out of the service and he was maybe like 17. And he goes, "And you know, and I was an orphan, too. And then Bronzie kind of knew that and he kind of took a shine with that." But when he came to see --

BUCKLEY: Are you leaving?

SALLY: Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Oh, I was hoping you'd be a part of the end, but we'll come back and do more another time. You can pitch in.

HARDING: [00:41:23] She's going to church.

BUCKLEY: Okay.

HARDING: [00:41:25] But he said, "Papa asked me, he goes, 'Well, O'Neal, tell me. What do you know how to do?'" And O'Neal told him I know how to do just about nothing. And he goes, "Well, you know what? I believe you're just the kind of guy I'm looking for because I can show you the way I want it done and then you'll do it the way I want it done." And he and my grandfather really were pretty close. They were good friends. I mean, he was younger than my grandfather and all that, but -- and I always admired O'Neal. He was a musician, played guitar. And even the later years when I was up working at Tolchester, I would go to see O'Neal Dean because he had some connection for getting mid-Atlantic white cedar some place out of North Carolina. Go there and buy white cedar from him. And that was always great because you always got to see him, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:42:26] You know, and even as a kid he was the kind of guy you would kind of -- I don't know. You just -- I just naturally kind of gravitated towards when he was around the boatyard, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:42:36] And then when he went on his own, he would -- you know, he built some gorgeous boats. But there were still times after he'd gone on his own and kind of left working at the boatyard where Papa would go to him and say, "Hey, O'Neal, why don't you come and finish these two cabins off for me?" You know, and it was probably at a time when O'Neal had probably just finished a boat. Maybe he didn't have something else going on, you know. And that's the way things would work.

BUCKLEY: Share the load. Share the work.

HARDING: [00:43:07] Sure. You know, try -- usually if you try to get greedy and you try to get it all for yourself, you usually don't end up with very much, you know. But if you can pass it all around and everybody around you is doing good, then you're probably doing pretty good too, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So is there any of his boats still around?

HARDING: [00:43:26] O'Neal's?

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:43:27] Oh, I'm sure. You know, I don't know the names of them, but I'm sure a lot of them are around.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:43:34] I saw him one time. I'd gone down to visit Mama and I went to the dock to see what was going on. I'm going to say I was in my twenties or something like that. And O'Neal had his boat. It was blocked up on land. And he had made this big metal ring. And he had these rods going from his keel. And he was making this like cage around his prop and everything. And I went over there and kind of joked with him. I was like, "O'Neal, what in the world are you doing?" And he turned around to me. He looked like he was as mad as a hornet. And he said, "Pres, whether it works or you fail, if you don't try something new, you're never going to learn anything." I mean, he was mad, you know. And then it dawned on me. Everybody and their brother's going to, I wonder what O'Neal's doing. You

think that's going to work? I don't know. It's hard to tell what he's -- you know, he'd been listening to that all day. I was coming up to make a joke with him and [laughing] I kind of caught him a little bit, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Was there cages around props? Was that --

HARDING: [00:44:48] Well, I think the whole -- he was trying to develop or figure out something so -- sometimes when the crabs are going real good, sometimes the pots would be sat out there sometimes so thick. And there's nothing worse than you know, grab a crab pot line and wind it up on your shaft and have the crab pot coming, you know, get all mangled up. And it's all -- of a sudden you're dead in the water, you know. It's got all this --

BUCKLEY: The crab pot would just --

HARDING: [00:45:14] Yeah. Just say if your prop's turning, even if you're going slow, and for some reason you run over you know, a buoy or like a little float that's holding the end of the line up and you don't see it. And it gets tangled up in the prop. It'll wind it right -- if you're going real fast it's not too bad

because a lot of times you'll just cut it right off, you know. But if you're going slow, like when you're fishing your pots, you can wind one up --

BUCKLEY: They're hard to get off.

HARDING: [00:45:42] Yeah. You know, all of a sudden, you got to stop. You got to fool -- you know, there's a whole bunch of stuff you got to do to get it off of there. And it's when you should be pulling your pots, you know. That's not any fun, you know. So he was trying to develop something there, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:45:58] But whenever I had a chance and I was in Wingate, if I had a chance to stop in and see O'Neal, I always did, you know. You always learn a little something from him, you know.

BUCKLEY: Did you ever have a chance and sit when two -- your grandpa and Jim Richardson were together, hear anything that they might have had to say --

HARDING: [00:46:21] Well, I went with my grandfather to Jim Richardson's yard one time. And I'm not really quite sure what the visit was, but he was working -- he had some kind of small vessel there that he was doing some

restoration work on for the Smithsonian Institute. Of course, they were talking about it, but I was little. I didn't know what that was. But it was pretty neat because they had that windmill down there. You know, they had like almost like a wheel on the end of it, and it would spin around so it could always face the direction that the wind was going.

BUCKLEY: Where was this at?

HARDING: [00:46:58] Down by Jim Richardson's place. I think he actually built that windmill.

BUCKLEY: Where did he live at? In Cambridge or?

HARDING: [00:47:06] He lived outside of Cambridge. I think they called it Town Point. [Mobile sounds] We went way down there. And --

BUCKLEY: Just a minute. Not me.

HARDING: [00:47:15] It's not me. You want to stop till it stops?

BUCKLEY: Just take a second. [Mobile sound continues] It's not you either.

HARDING: [00:47:28] No. It's something that's in the kitchen.

BUCKLEY: Oh, okay. Oh, there we go. [Mobile starts again, laughter]

HARDING: [00:47:36] Let me shut this thing off. I'm sorry.

BUCKLEY: No, that's all right. There. It shut itself off. It gave up. It's got such a, I don't know, flipball sound to it or something like that. The Olympics or something. Not ready to start...

HARDING: [00:47:56] It's my nephew trying to call me. I'll get him later.

BUCKLEY: Okay.

HARDING: [00:47:59] But the one thing I remember when I went there is Jim Richardson had like this handlebar moustache. And at that time you know, we had a TV and all that. And we would watch that show, *Have Gun, Will Travel*. And there was a character, Paladin. And he had a moustache like Jim Richardson. So I was little. I was calling him Paladin. (laughs) Yeah. Because he looked like that. But you know, Jim Richardson was there the day my grandfather was killed.

BUCKLEY: Oh, he was there?

HARDING: [00:48:28] Yeah. Because he was going to be like the moderator or the mediator.

BUCKLEY: For the price that was in question.

HARDING: [00:48:36] For the price that was in the question about all that stuff. And when Willis Rowe was -- when they decided that they would both accept whatever Jim said, he was like, "Well, how do you know he'll do it?" And Papa said, "You just ride there to his yard. And you tell him that I said that I sent you there to get him. And he'll come." Because he and my grandfather, they were good friends, you know. And so basically what I learned later in life was that they had said that Jim just told him, "Well, it's a good thing you didn't have that done at my yard because it would have been more money than what Bronzie's asking for." You know, and then he walked outside and then he heard the shots. And you know, people deal with some of that a lot of different ways. I know that they said that Papa's brother, Orville, never spoke to Jim Richardson again. You know, he said Jim would walk by and say, "Captain Orville, how you doing?" You know, Orville would just like...

BUCKLEY: Because? Why do you think?

HARDING: [00:49:49] I don't -- you know, everybody deals with that kind of thing a different way. You know what I mean? I mean, I think about some of the ways I dealt with it. And you think you're -- especially when you're young, you think you're the only one dealing with that, you know. But even my cousin, Barry, who was you know, his Dad was in the service. So he wasn't around very much. They were traveling all over creation. But you know, him and my cousin Candy and Patti, you know, everybody's affected by it. And you don't realize till later in life that it's not just you. So I'm sure for some reason or another, you know, it's easy to blame somebody over something like, oh, well, you know, maybe if he'd stayed, this could -- who knows? All I know is he was there because he was Papa's friend. And Papa asked him to come. And he came.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:50:46] So, you know. That's, you know, the real story as much as I can figure out from everything I've heard from older people because that day I wasn't around. And I was like real little, you know. You

kind of gather information and you kind of -- over the years you have to kind of sift through it.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:51:08] You know. Some things you got to -- people will tell you some things and I call it over ten. They say, "Over ten?" I was like, "Yeah." Because if he's talking to you, if you divide it by 10, you're going to get kind of close to -- you know, things get embellished a lot, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Especially with time and [inaudible].

HARDING: [00:51:25] Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm. But, yeah.

They were really good friends.

BUCKLEY: Do you know the story? Yeah.

KAREN: Did some background reading.

BUCKLEY: Oh, you did. Yeah. Yeah.

HARDING: [00:51:39] So, yeah.

BUCKLEY: So are there any other characters down there that we should mention, you know, from that area down there? Where did I run off?

HARDING: [00:51:50] Well, when I think about my Uncle Ralph's family, he had a brother named Cyril, C-Y-R-I-L. And so you had two brothers who married two

sisters. So Uncle Cyril was married to my Aunt Joyce, who was Papa's youngest daughter. And Ralph was married to Martha, who was my mother's twin. And Ralph and Martha had Candy. But then later, after Uncle Cyril and Joyce got married, Ralph and Martha had Patti. And Joyce and Cyril had Trudy. And they were a month apart. So because there's like two sisters and two brothers, they looked almost exactly alike. They would dress them exactly alike.

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:52:46] You know what I mean? And so they were some characters. Their father had the bi-boat, *The Sterling*. And when I would go tonging when I was young with my Uncle Cyril -- this is after '58. And a lot of -- Bichell had his boat at different places, but a lot of times it was in Fishing Bay. And my Uncle Cyril would keep his boat in [Tige's Creek?]. And we would go out there and he'd tong. And then when he'd get done tonging, we would be on the bi-boat. And for a while they'd let me run -- well, I called it running the cash register. They had this little board that they called the tally board. And it was like six

inches wide and maybe a foot or so long. It had all these lines drawn on it. And every time the metal bucket came up, it made a vertical dash in between those lines.

And then, for some reason or other, once you had four of those, you had to put a dot near the bottom of the fourth one. And then the fifth one you drew a line, a diagonal line through it. And then you had to holler out tally. And the whole time you're doing that, the guy who's shoveling them off of his boat, every time he puts the bucket up, he would put an oyster on his washboard. So they would be keeping track. And I always thought it was pretty interesting because their father's name was Bichell, B-I-C-H-E-L-L. And that's what he did for a living.

BUCKLEY: (laughs) On the bi-boat.

HARDING: [00:54:35] Yeah. He had a bi-boat and he bought you know, shellfish, you know. But his name was Bichell Ruark. (laughs) I always thought that was kind of humorous, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. So was there a lot of Ruarks down there?

HARDING: [00:54:48] Mm-hmm.

BUCKLEY: I know there's the Ruark Boatyard up in Cambridge.

I did an interview there with an old guy one time.

HARDING: [00:54:54] Well, there's a lot of Ruarks. As a matter of fact, there was one fellow -- and I think somehow or other, he's not directly rela -- or closely related to my Uncle Ralph or Cyril. But there's another set of Ruarks. And somehow or other, he was like a second cousin, something or other to my mother. And his name was Rufus. And Rufus was always on the edge of something, you know. Something that was just not quite right. And George Pelley had the store, the general store there. That got robbed one time. And apparently I think they cut through the metal roof or something like that, and dropped in there, and took the safe --

BUCKLEY: Wow.

HARDING: [00:55:43] -- that was in there. And of course, a lot of people said it's hard to tell how much money was really in that safe, you know. Some people say a 100 thousand. It could have been 300 thousand. Who knows? But they always... One time William Murphy said to me,

he goes, "Yeah. Rufus Ruark, he was with that bunch that robbed George Pelley's store." And I was like, "Well, you know, he was never convicted of that." Now, Rufus had been to jail before. But I know the story my Mom would tell me about Rufus was they were in the High Spot, my Mom and my Dad. They were young. And everybody's hanging out there and music's playing.

BUCKLEY: What's the High Spot?

HARDING: [00:56:27] It's like a little restaurant that was downtown. It was like a hangout spot. And some guy kept coming over and asking my Mom to dance. And my Dad was like, "You know, shove off sailor. She's with me. Get on out of here. She's with me." And Dad had apparently gotten up and gone to the bathroom or something. And when he came out, this guy was getting ready to stab him. Oh, yeah. I mean, oh, yeah. And Rufus intervened and just beat the living tar out of this guy. Well, the police came. And they're arresting Rufus. And all this was going on. And my Dad's trying to explain to the police that this other guy was you know, he was trying to help him. And Rufus was like, "You know, Pres, all I'm going to do is go to

jail for a night. That's nothing." He goes, "Just get Mary home. Just go ahead and get her home." You know, some Mom, and then, even though he was pretty [ornary?], they were all real fond of Rufus.

Now, Abigail had told me that when she was talking about the school where she's working now in Urbana, at Christ Church School, when they started their oystering program and oyster farming, she goes, "You know, there's a guy down here that's growing oysters in a really big way. And, boy, he's really been nice and he's helped us. When you get down here, you're going to have to see his operation. And his name is Rufus Ruark." I said, "Abigail, Rufus Ruark is like your grandmother's like second or third cousin or something like that." I was like -- and she goes, "Well, this guy's pretty young." I was like, "Yeah. Might be a different set of pups." She goes, "But you know, Rufus' Dad is named Rufus also." And I was like, "Well, I'll just have to check with Mom to see if it might be a different set of pups or something." And

Abigail goes, "Well, it's hard for me to believe that there's more than one person named Rufus Ruark."

BUCKLEY: (laughs)

HARDING: [00:58:25] Well, lo and behold, there is, because it wasn't from that same clan. But when I met the Virginal Rufus Ruark and his Dad, really great guys. And we got to talking. And I asked him how long they'd been in that area. And they said, "Really, you know, since somewheres around you know 1870 to 1880 or something like that." I was like, "Oh, yeah." And they said, "Yeah. And before that, our family came from Hooper's Island." (laughs) So everybody's somewhere on the li -- it's like, well, everybody said, you know, everybody down there's related. And you know, it's really not like that, but it kind of is, you know. Distantly, you know, where a lot of people are all tied together, you know.

BUCKLEY: Yeah.

HARDING: [00:59:15] Through marriage and different things like that.

BUCKLEY: There is a packing house on Hooper's Island, a Ruark.

HARDING: [00:59:23] Sure. Yeah. There's lots of Ruarks
down that way. Yeah.

BUCKLEY: They were a packing seafood company or whatever.

HARDING: [00:59:28] Yeah.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. Cool. So we got it?

HARDING: [00:59:34] I think so. How about you? You
feeling all right?

BUCKLEY: Like I said, you know, I'm always willing to come
on over and get some more if you think of some more
stories, you know, because probably as soon as we say,
you know, we've done what we need to do, then some more
things will pop up.

HARDING: [00:59:49] Well, it's been a real pleasure. Thank
you very much.

BUCKLEY: Yeah. You too, man. Yeah. I'm so glad Karen
could be here for her --

KAREN: Yeah. I'm so sorry I missed the middle, but I'm
so glad you let me sit in on the rest.

HARDING: [01:00:00] Yeah. It's fun.

KAREN: You really are a good storyteller. You know, you
know how to take a thread and go with it.

HARDING: [01:00:08] Oh, I don't know. It's --

END OF AUDIO FILE