

Interview Log

Interviewee: Emil Myers
Helen Durning

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Interviewer: Virginia Jenkins
Ann Schiff

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Myers Grocery Store

Emil Myers
P.O. Box 106
Rock Hall, MD

May 10, 1999

Ann Schiff and I met with Mr. Myers in the living room of Miss Helen Durdning, in an apartment over the old Durdning Pharmacy on Main Street in Rock Hall. Mr. Meyers told us that he is 84 years old and had recently had a fall, which is why he is using a walker. Miss Durdning was recently hospitalized for a heart attack, but is looking and doing well. She had an afternoon appointment in Chestertown for cardiac exercise.

Mr. Myers was born in 1915 in Baltimore. His father was a firefighter and lost his leg in a fire-fighting accident the year he was born. He was a steam engineer. That's when they were driving horses. They were just diversifying and going over to motors.

As Ann was setting up the microphone and tape recorder, Mr. Myers told me that his brother Charles first worked up the street for Mr. Bob Lewis in a grocery store in Rock Hall, that's how they got in the business. He was a great fresh sausage maker. But George fell in love, married, and went away. When Mr. Meyers was in High School, he went to work for George and worked for him except for five years in the service during World War II.

He went to work at 12 in a barber shop in Main Street. He lathered, cleaned up the place, shined the shoes. Got his license when he was 16 to cut hair. .25 cents for a hair cut, .15 for a shampoo, .10 for a tonic, .15 for a shave. "Let me tell you, when some of these old watermen come in with a weeks growth on," he had to take clippers to the beard before he could lather and shave them.

The barbershop was next to Mr. Lewis' store where his brother George worked. Mr. Lewis promised George that he would sell him the business when George was 19 or 20, but he had an older daughter who got married, so that just nullified George in the business because she brought her husband home to work at the store, so that was it. George wasn't just going to take that. So the man over on the corner, Mr. Joe Daniel, had a big store and had a little store, of course it has all been torn down now, just a bare lot now, he told him, he said, George, you take that store and do what ever you please with it. If you pay me rent it's all right, this was back during the depression, if you pay me rent it's OK, if you don't it will be all right too. So that's where we went.

The came into Rock Hall "all the time from down the Bay." The store uppl ied three skipj acks "but what their names were we do not know." They were very, very, very good customers, very easy to get along with, and we did good business with them. He remembered

suppling what was called a "Western shoulder" about four feet long, that was cut out of a pig, smoked. That would last maybe a week, would slice it with eggs, boil it with cabbage, or whatever else they had on board. They gave us good business. One man would buy steak, T-bone steak. There would be seven men in the crew, but he would never figure that a steak was enough for one man so he always bought a dozen.

Mr. Myers never went to the front. He doesn't remember the watermen's names or boat names. They bought cabbage, turnips, potatoes, just general commodities for a staple meal. Nothing fancy, of course, them steaks, once in a while they would come, that would be a fancy meal. But they were nice, hard working men, we had very little trouble with them as far as the bar rooms and drinking see, because of prohibition.

As time went on with the oyster business, we had shucking houses, let me tell you, I know we had twelve shucking houses here. There was Crouch, Hudson and Ives, Gilbert Ashley, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Cully, he had one down in Gratitude, Mr. Mercer had one down in Gratitude. Hudson and Ives a big building still standing down there, and they were going to shuck oysters but they couldn't get enough, the oysters were a little slack, they couldn't get enough oysters, so therefore, they went into the strawberry business. They had big freezers there and everything so they prepared strawberries for ice cream companies and for different ones who packaged them in 10 oz. packages, 12 oz. packages.

When we first started, we were just general commodities. Moved into the store in Main Street in 1937. Employed young boys not going to school, had to be 14 years old. When they passed laws that children couldn't handle knives or use grinders, when they couldn't do that they were useless.

Now I was still going to school, working in the barber shop. I got off at the barber shop at nine o'clock before I come down to George and we'd begin. Now, nothing was pre-packaged. You'd have to weigh sugar, you'd have to weigh lard, and everything that came like rice and all that stuff, we'd have to put it up in paper bags and label the weight etc. George would slaughter calves, whenever we could get a good calf we would slaughter a calf. The demand for them was very, very, very quick. Somebody wanted the liver, somebody wanted the kidneys, somebody wanted the brains, and of course, veal cutlet and veal chops was somebody. Today I look at what Helen tells me about the price of this, the price of that and it just astounds me. Really. We used to get milk fed veal, and I mean, it was good. Her father, [Helen Durdin] he liked the brains, he liked the kidneys, he liked the liver, he liked the veal. There were certain cuts... The whole veal would be gone within a week. They weighed about anywheres from 215, 20, 225 pounds, that was a 12 or 13 year [week?] old calf. That's what you'd call number one.

Mr Myers said that he was one of the first draftees in the Army in

1941 and spent his time at Fort Meade as a cryptographer. He spent three and a half years at Fort Meade before being sent to New Guinea, where he had dengue fever, dysentary, a touch of malaria.

Mr. Myers: Of course, I went in the service and when I come back, five years, I looked at the books

Mrs. Durdington: Emil, Where you over here when you went in the service?

Mr. Myers: Yes

Mrs. Durdington: Well then they moved, they needed a larger store, I think. That's when my father decided he would move us and make a store out of their living quarters, out of the downstairs part, so that's what he did. When did you move over there, about 1937?

Mr. Myers: 1937. We moved everything over there on a Saturday night. Everything. So anyhow, I went in the service in January of 41, and I came home in December of 45, and the first thing I wanted to look at was the books. My sister was here yesterday, she worked with him all that time. I figured she made some money, the government set the price on the products, but the only trouble was you couldn't get as much as you wanted. And that's where the problem was. I said, George, you haven't made any money in five years. I said, you call that money?

So, anyhow, so what should I do. As time went on ..., so Helen's mother was from England, she was a war bride number one, World War I. I said, Miss Daisy, I said, do you mind if we took the partitions out of that building there and made a big store? She said no, as long as you pay for it. I said, don't worry about it, so we did. And we used this vinyl tile, this white vinyl tile, we got the whole store up in white vinyl tile. Well, we got new meat cases, we got carrying [?] cases, we got produce cases, we got a icebox, everything was new today, that was in 1946 - 47.

It wasn't long before we were picking up exceptionally good customers, DuPonts, McAlpin, Dr Fay, I can't name them all but these were money people. Miss Carpenter, did you ever hear of her? Miss Louisa Carpenter, she owned, she did own right from this

Anyway, we had all of these customers and they wanted gourmet food.

Black Beluga Caviar - 15 oz. tins

The only gourmet store in the county - that's why they did such a terrific business.

Gunning Clubs - **six** gunning clubs -- they wanted THE best

We still provided for our people, but it began to rub off on them that we were too expensive. We couldn't compete with the Acme and Grand Union.

Green groceries - traveled all over the Eastern Shore buying corn and tomatoes and all that stuff. I used to deal with Floyd Price, has a lot of farms, big in corn. Mr. Myer remembered that he would bring that truck load in the morning, wouldn't even have to unload if off the truck, the people bought it, just pull up. Then he would have to turn around and go get some more that they could put out front.

When I went to market on Friday, I figured that on Saturday was the sugar corn, 100 cantaloupes, and what ever else was there such as peppers and tomatoes and stuff. I had the front of the truck loaded and the back of the truck loaded.

Now our beef, we bought beef from Swift, S.K., Cochran, L. King, Armour. Today I doubt if you can buy meat from them, I mean the individual, because the chain stores have just about absorbed all their products.

We did very well, we did very well when we first started, me and my brother, age got the best of him. And prices, I'll never forget, we always sold a lot of condensed milk around Christmas time. John always made up the order for groceries then, so I said I guess I ought to get a case of condensed milk, 48 cans. 48 cans of condensed milk, that's a sweet milk, \$68.00 a case. He remembered the time we were selling it here for women to make formula for their children, we were selling it to them for 35, 45, 55 cents a can. That sudden change really killed him. He just couldn't believe, he had been in business so long, he just felt like he was being rooked. So he kind of got a little discouraged about business. He got so he didn't want to buy nothing. I told him, I said George, we can't continue unless you keep up. Our level was as been. But then the A&P and the Acme and all them began laying all the gourmet foods. And of course, you know them, they buy quantity and they got better prices.

When did the A&P and Acme open up in town?

They never opened up here, they were in Chestertown. Thirteen miles today don't mean nothing.

If you had been in this town back in, well, when we first came, I first came here, these were dirt roads, and the main street..., we had the Eastern Shore ferries, we had three ferries a day. And that was big business. Fishermen and that brought all the fish and that over to the bay ferries. Every store, I would say every building in this town had a store in it. If you didn't sell a whole lot, they were still there. They were like novelties, old mom and pop stores. That was true.

But we really did a wonderful business. We started handling number one beef, number one everything. We didn't handle nothing that wasn't number one. We really did a terrific business. We would

sell on the average 3 or 4,000 ears of corn a week. Two or three hundred cantaloupes, and the other, like peaches and all that stuff that come in season. I brought them in the truck load. I had one lady here who once in a while, she'd want to preserve some peaches and she didn't think nothing of buying six, eight baskets. And when you do that, you-know,-that sure ups your buying power.

But the store at first was terrible. This was back when you'd have to pack everything. Nothing come pre-packaged. Today, everything gets pre-packaged. Everything.

What did you package lard in?

We had trays, they looked something like a double end scow. They were like paste board, they were waxed, they had a coating on them. Lard came in 50 pound tins and we put it up in one pound, two pound, three pound, four pound, and five pound. And that was a lot of work, really it was. And of course you had to weight it exactly right, or you would be empty before you got your fifty pounds.

Miss Durdington: He told me also that they had chickens, and the chickens had the insides all in them.

When the chickens first started, had the entrails in them. Of course they were iced and everything, but you had to take out the entrails, cut them down the back and take the entrails out of them, wash them. We had two great big things in the back room, trays, and on one side of them I put in there, I put in about maybe a box of salt, and there would be clear water running all the time. And then we would take and put them back in the ice and we got them out, that's when we had to cut them up, the legs

Now our beef, when it first come in you got a full quarter. A full quarter of beef was anything halfway up to the front. And then you got the hind quarter, that was the T-bone steaks, and the rump roast and the round. And you got all that cut. As time went on, the producers found that they could cut this meat down for us and they could make some more money out of the bones, whereas we would have to throw them away.

The store business was something I really missed.

When did you retire?

87, 89? 89. Yes, we sold everything out, as much as I dreaded it. I didn't cry....

Miss Durdington - I love it, was the best *thing I* ever did. I closed a month or so before he did.

Miss Durdington - They served up, one of the boats that was dredging out here, they served them all the food, didn't you?

Mr. Myers - Yeah, that's the skipjacks you was speaking of. I couldn't remember their names. They'd come in once a week.

Miss Durdin - he'd` pick up the food at the pier down there and then he would take it out to the dredge where they were working.

Mr. Myers - You're thinking about the-dredge when they dredged the channel

Miss Durdin - Yeah, that's what I was talking about, when they were working out there.

Mr. Myers - Philadelphia dredge company. Now that was a big customer.

Miss Durdin - I can't think of what Mr. Fithian's first name was, what was it? Mildred's husband's father.

Mr. Myers - Bill Fithian, he had two landing crafts. He used to carry the food out to the dredge. When they come and ordered, their chef, he'd want a hind quarter of beef, he'd want a fore quarter of beef, he'd want a case of this and a case of that. We'd take it out there, and we had some problems with the man who got the ferry. The old mansion house was there, and it was a fair shake that some of them would live right in the old mansion house, and he was sort of like a taxi cab like for them.

Some times I'd go down there and look man, I'd tell him in the morning, get me about 50 quarts of milk down there. And he would, he would put 50 quarts of milk down there and break the ice up over the top of them until Bill Fithian got ready to take them.

So they took me out there one day for dinner. It was terrific. They had a cook, three of his assistants, they fed 75 men every dinner hour. And you talk about eating, they really did eat. That day we were there we had T-bone steak, french fried potatoes, corn on the cob, fresh lima beans. He made some kind of a lemon mousse or something and he didn't give you just a serving, he give enough to take home. But it was good, with all fresh whipped cream on top of it and everything. They ate very well. What was the captain name?

For the skipjacks, did you deliver to the boats in the harbor?

Oh no. No no, they come got their stuff and took it away. They were very good customers, I'll tell you. But there's none here now.

Did you sell eggs?

Did we sell eggs? I'll tell you a little story about eggs now. In the spring time, there were more women raising eggs, farmers, more

women raising chickens, it was nothing for us to take in 100 dozen eggs between Friday and Saturday. Ten cents a dozen. Sold them for fifteen. That was back during the depression. As time went on they were rationed and they got higher. Well, there was a time I know, there was a time when we, I remember one, we had J.D. Buffet in Baltimore, when we got an over load of eggs we shipped them to him. He was an egg dryer for bakeries and so forth. So, we had one lady in here, she was never our customer. And she come in one Saturday morning she had two cases of eggs. George were a little sceptical of her, but they were only twelve cents a dozen, or maybe fourteen, I don't remember now, but anyhow, he just marked them for J.W. Buffinger. And we had a freight man come around, he loaded them on, we told him what they were, they were to go to Buffinger. I guess that was on Monday. On Monday after two o'clock, George got a telephone call from Mr. Buffington- He said, Mr. Myers, next time you send me up two crates of chickens, I'm going to raise hell with you. She had went around where the chickens were setting themselves and she got every damn one of them eggs and some of them had little chickens in them, some of them, hell. But Mr. Buffington, he took it as a joke in one sense of the word. George told him, said it was a new customer

Tape Break

While the tape was being changed, Mr. Myers went on. Mr. Lewis killed pigs, six to eight every week. There was a slaughter house back there.

Flour was a product that was hard to handle. It came in a barrel and we put it up in ten pound bags. Later began to bag it. We got flour from Rosebud - Brooks Mill, Snowdrop - Church Hill, Sarasota - down the shore, but the main ones still were Pillsbury and Gold Medal. These were all mills that ground their own wheat. We put it in heavy brown paper bags, five and ten pound bags. They had no tape, you used string. When things started to get modern we always thought we were up town I can tell you. Some come prepackaged, nothing to it.

Same for sugar?

Yeah.

Did you sell sell much sugar?

Oh yeah, sure. Sugar sold for six cents a pound back during the Depression. I'll tell something we sold a lot of one time. Salesman come around, sold us a deal. We bought a barrel of jelly beans at Easter time. It was 300, 250 pounds, I can't remember, I won't say. Anyhow, it had pasteboard partitions in it. They were yellow, red, black, white, there was five sections. Would you believe me, we were selling them ten cents a pound.

[Clock strikes 121

Miss Durdling: What are they now, \$1.59 *for* eight ounces?

Mr. Myers: Would you believe me, I know it was a week before Easter and we was sold out. My that was something, when you come in, see a barrel of jelly beans. I said George, what kind of thing is that we're selling? He said if we don't sell them we'll give them away. He was very good in *that* respect. Always.

Your brother did the buying?

When it come *to gourmet* foods and stuff, I was *the* one who did the buying on that. He bought all the meat, all the groceries and stuff like that. He had alot of experience in it.

What about molasses?

No, we never fooled with molasses. We had two barrels and that was it, that was the last of them. They was the best mouse catchers we ever had. Sounds funny doesn't it, but it's true. Because you could never stop a wind. If you wound out a gallon jug of molasses and you shut it off there was still so much of a drip. And then when the mice would come in *to* get, they would get stuck in it now as heck. So we would used to say we didn't need no mouse traps, we got the mouse trap.

There had a lot of good funny parts, and then some other tough *parts*. *Oh*, we had store to door, I forgot to tell you about that. We had a big truck. It was a four wheel back truck, rear axle. We had a big oak slab of wood about that big [indicated 2-3" wide with his hands] went all the way across that back. Then we had an ice box built to keep the meat in. And we put shelving inside of the truck. And we'd go around, we had certain routes every day. Like Mondays we'd go down to what we called the colored section down here, Tuesdays we wouldd go to Skinners Neck, Wednesdays, Fridays we would go to Piney Neck, and Saturday we would go to all the shucking houses. But, I know, that boy of Ryans, Frank Parsons, he have to work Saturdays when those Negros got paid, you know. He'd call me two or three times to bring him down such and such an item. And we sold a lot of salt meat, we sold a lot of streak 'o lean, and they were from the South and that was the type of food they eat. They were great for beans and hominy.

Was was streak 'o lean?

The streak 'o lean was in the fat meat. It was fat belly. It was the upper part as we got to the pork ribs.

Captain Collier, he was captain of the dredge. It just come to me. I think they were here for almost a year, for the Brewington Channel. You've heard of it I'm certain.

Talks about purse nets and pound nets.

When you sold eggs, how did you package them?

Put them in a bag, that's all. We had no things like you have today. Eggs, well, in the early spring, there was a lot of chickens laying and that. If you got fifteen cents a dozen for them, you got a lot. You paid ten or twelve for them and sold them for fifteen.

I put them in a bag, loose in a bag.

That's when store keeping was work. When you say, when Buck and I, my brother and I, we would put up two hundred pounds of lard, anywheres from one pound to five pounds, and of course, then we stored that in the ice - box. And, just like flour, that was the biggest mess in the world.

For the workboats, did they buy it by the can r did they buy small quantities?

Well our boats here, they came back and forth to shore every day. They never bought much. They never bought much. The wife did the cooking and that, and they took their food with them for the day.

But the oyster boats, the skipjacks.

We're talking about the skipjacks. I don't, well see, by the time they got up here that was getting earlier. That's when we began to have three pound tins, we had six pound tins. But they always, before they left down where they come from, buy their staple commodities. Of course I think that was only because they, their town, like Tilghmans, they bought their commodities there. But when they got up here, the commodities that were personal, that's when they bought from us.

Those skipjacks, the majority of those families, really some men, I'll tell you. In my opinion. It was a hard life. I don't know whether it was a hard life or made hard men, because some of those men were really muscular, you know. They wern't big all of them. Regardless, summer or winter, they were just as bronze as Indians. And I admire them. Of course, some of our men were the same way. We had these purse seiners, and we had the pound netters. The purse netters went out on Monday morning, never come back no more until Friday night. They bought enough food enough to last them a week, unless they caught a big load of fish and then they would have to go in to the ice house to get extra ice, because they'd normally have plenty of ice on the boat. There was seven men to a crew. But they did away with that a long while ago.

BEGIN SIDE A

V.J.: Do you mind starting for me just by stating your full name?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: Do you mind starting for me by just saying who you are?

E.M.: Who you were?

V.J.: Who you are, introducing yourself.

E.M.: Emil Myers, I'm George's brother. There's one between he and I. Was four boys. All are deceased except I, and I'm 84. Anything you want to -- what I say is perfectly all right, 'cause I do a lot of jabbering. You know I did something like this for a lady over Johns Hopkins Hospital -- I mean not hospital --

V.J.: The university?

E.M.: University. Now this one yesterday, it's been about three years ago, she was very interested in country stores and how they operated, and etcetera. I can give her so much, then of course it's hard to explain to people how you operate because a grocery store is more diversified than the average because it's operated by one or two persons. It's not like a chain store where they have a board of directors, and they have this and they have that, see. So ask whatever you want to ask me, whatever you want to tell me, whatever you want to do to me, I'm with you.

V.J.: Okay, wonderful. Thank you. So I understand that there was not a skipjack fleet out of Rock Hall, but the skipjacks --

E.M.: There wasn't a what, ma'am?

V.J.: A fleet based in Rock Hall, but the skipjacks came into Rock Hall --

E.M.: Oh, yes, in the fall time, going down the bay. We supply three of the skipjacks. And ask me what their names were, and I do not know. But they were very, very, very good customers, very easy to get along with, and they didn't -- they eat like we eat because we (inaudible). Therefore, surprised me -- I never will forget this one man, he handled what they call the western shoulder.

V.J.: Western shoulder?

E.M.: Yeah. It was about that long, cut out of a pig, and it was usually smoked. And he would buy that. Now that would last maybe a week for the simple fact -- slice it for eggs, boil it with cabbage or whatever else had on board.

V.J.: So it's smoked pork.

E.M.: Smoked pork.

V.J.: Okay.

E.M.: But now they had --I will say one thing for `em. If they buy steak, they buy T-bone steak for every -- he had seven in his crew, but he never figured one steak was enough for one man. So he always wanted a dozen.

V.J.: You don't remember the name of the boat?

E.M.: No, I do not. I never went to the front. I know him, remember the man's name. Now you're talking about -- gentleman in 15 years.

V.J.: What was the man's name?

E.M.: I do not know. And, you know, that's a shame because I should have it. If I have known it, I forgot it by this time.

V.J.: So other than meat, what did you sell these boats?

E.M.: Well they bought, like I say, cabbage, potatoes, just general commodities for a stable meal. Nothing fancy. And, of course, them steaks every once in awhile would come in. That would be a fancy meal. But they were nice hard-working men, had very little trouble with them as far as the bar rooms and drinking and that see, because we didn't have whiskey right at the first time. Whiskey didn't come back until after beer, but beer was back in, what, '32.

V.J.: Right. So you're remembering from the 1920's? That's when you first went to work?

E.M.: Well I went to work -- let's see, 15 -- I went to work on Main Street when I was 12 years old. I went to work in a barber shop.

V.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: And I lathered and cleaned up the place, shined the shoes. And when I was 16 years old, that was four years, they didn't give you a license in them days, they gave me a certificate. I got a certificate, qualification to cut hair, which I did. We got 25 cents for a haircut, 15 cents for shampoo, 10 cents for tonic, 15 cents for shave. And let me tell you, some of these old watermen come in with a week's growth on them, and I know many one I had to take clippers and clip 'em before I could lather and shave 'em. But I did have, I had a good buddy, Dr. Beal, I just want to -- he was really some doctor. And his father was a druggist. And them two were like that. Well nevertheless --

H.D.: What's that?

E.M.: Dr. Beal and your father.

H.D.: They were very good friends.

E.M.: So anyhow, as time went on with the oyster business and that, it became -- we had shucking houses, let me tell you. One, two -- I know we had 12 shucking houses here. There was Crouch, Hudson and Robbins, there was Bill Ashley, there was -- what was Mr. Kelly's name?

H.D.: Who?

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: Who?

E.M.: Mr. Kelly. Dorothy's father. Now he had something else. Then Mr. Culley, that's K-E, but this is C-U, Culley. He had one down in Gratitude. Mr. Mercer had one down in Gratitude. So Hudson and Robbins, the main building is still standing down there. And they were going to shuck oysters. But they couldn't get -- oysters were a little slack, he couldn't get enough oysters. So, therefore, they went into the strawberry business. They had big freezers there, and he said they prepared strawberries for ice cream companies, and for different ones for packing, like 10-ounce pack, 12-ounce pack.

H.D.: Are you all too warm up here? No?

V.J.: This is really comfortable.

H.D.: Okay.

E.M.: So the strawberry factory, the lady that lives there, she calls it the strawberry factory. And she had a -- what do you call it?

H.D.: Bed and breakfast.

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: She had a bed and breakfast.

E.M.: Yeah.

H.D.: But now she's moved, sold it. I don't know who bought it.

E.M.: When we first started over here, we were just general commodities. But I've got some pictures here. Now this was a picture of Darden's boat store.

H.D.: That was the front of the building before they made his store.

V.J.: This building here?

H.D.: This building right where he's standing.

V.J.: Okay.

H.D.: See this was Darden's store, and this was where we lived.

V.J.: Right.

H.D.: Then a little front yard and all. Then my father converted where we lived there into there, and that was their store.

V.J.: I see, so he built it out in the front.

H.D.: Right. So this up here is where you are now. Then he converted this into an apartment for us to live in.

E.M.: Here's a larger one.

V.J.: So was this all the store, was this the drug store and the --

H.D.: Yeah, that's the drug store.

V.J.: That's the drug store on the left.

E.M.: Right.

H.D.: This door was the divider. And this was --

V.J.: The market.

H.D.: The market. It shows where they kept all their vegetables outside and nobody took anything.

V.J.: Right.

E.M.: Here's a picture of my brother and myself

V.J.: In the store.

H.D.: In the store, yeah.

E.M.: Have you ever been acquainted with Tolchester?

V.J.: Tolchester. No, I've never been to Tolchester.

E.M.: Never -- well that little fellow in the center there, he had the penny arcade. And he come down to see us and his wife took a picture of George and I in there because he often talked about us. And then, of course, this is just another scene of Rock Hall.

H.D.: That's the back of this building. This is where --

V.J.: Where the parking lot is now?

H.D.: Yeah, you come in right there. Okay. That's Myer's store right there. These two buildings were connected. Okay?

V.J.: Right.

E.M.: And here's Alan setting --

A. S.: Nice. So you two really grew up together.

H.D.: Yeah, long time.

A. S.: That's nice.

H.D.: Fifty-some years.

E.M.: And after we moved over, long before -- we moved over in '37. And we had, different -- young boys going to school, and we had to be 14 years old. And as long as that went on, that was all right. Then all of a sudden they came in with this law where children can't handle knives such and such an age, and they can't use grinders and all that. Well if they couldn't do that for us, they were useless. So anyhow, I was drafted in the

Army . I was one of the first draftees in `41. I spent my time over in Fort Meade. I was a cryptographer. And I also worked, I was a chief cook and a (indiscernible). And I spent three and a half years at Fort Meade. And then they shipped me down to New Guinea. That's where they crucified me. I had -- fever, I had caught the dysentery, I even had a touch of malaria -- I come home.

And my dear lady, I can tell you, I seen truckloads of bags of young boys. Very sad, very sad. And you wonder -- I went up the hospital to see some of my buddies, and I'd come out of there -- didn't seem no bigger than that. See `em with the legs off, the arms off. This one boy particularly, he had been -- a piece of shrapnel went across his buttocks. And he was a well-built young man. And, of course, over there they couldn't put no (indiscernible) because the leg was rotten. They used these, I call `em -- what are they, children used to play with, remember those things? But anyhow, that's what they used, little metal things to hold their legs together. And it was quite eerie to think that they drilled the bone, and set the bone and that's the way it looked. And some of it was terrible. I mean you'd see a boy about 24, 25 years old, leg off, and an arm off. What was his potential later? I mean he was -- and the Japanese, I couldn't buy a Japanese car. I wouldn't have one if you give it to me. I'm very, very bitter. I'll never lose it. And I see our people buying them cars, and now I hear all this sell -- and all that stuff. You know, Japan had a high economy because of us. You read it. They've slowed up a lot, hasn't it?

V.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: Right. Now you want to get back to the grocery store.

V.J.: Yes. What were your responsibilities in the store?

E.M.: Everything.

H.D.: Emil, did you tell her first that George had worked up the street and then you come down?

E.M.: Oh, yeah. Well George had worked for another man.

H.D.: Yeah, that's how they got in the business, okay.

E.M.: Bob Lewis. Mr. Bob Lewis. And he was a great sausage maker, fresh sausage maker. Well I was next door over in the barber shop, see. And he promised George that he was selling the business, George was 19 or 20. So anyhow, his daughter, he had an older daughter. She got married. So that just nullified George in the business because he brought her husband home to work in the store. So that was it. Well George just wasn't going to make that. So man over there on the corner, Mr. Joe Downey, owned a big store over here, and he owned a little store -- of course, it's all been torn down now (indiscernible). He told him, he said, George, take that store and do whatever you please with it. He said if you pay me rent, it's all right. This was back during the depression. If you pay me rent, it's okay. If you don't, it will be all right too.

So that's where we went. Now I was told once, working in the barber shop, I got in the barber shop at 9:00, come down to George and we begin -- now nothing was pre-packaged. We packed away sugar, we packed away lard, and everything that -- we'd take like rice and all that stuff, we had to put it up in paper bags, and label the weight and etcetera. And, of course, George -- we did kill start calves. Whenever we could get a good calf, George would slaughter a calf. And the demand for it was very, very, very quick. Somebody wanted the liver, somebody wanted the kidneys, somebody wanted the

brains. And, of course, veal cutlet, and veal chops and stuff. Today when I look at the price of this, the price of that, it just astounds me really. Because what we got for it and what they're getting for it now, many times that. We used to get milk-fed veal, and I mean it was good. Our father, he liked the brains, he liked the kidneys, he liked the liver, he liked the veal. We had certain customers, they would buy -- the whole veal would be gone within a week. It weighed about anywhere from 215 or 20 to 225 pounds. That was a total of a 13 year-old calf, and that's what you call number one. And we started with that. And, of course, I went in the service. And when I come back, five years, I would --

H.D.: Emil, were you over here when you went in the service?

E.M.: Yes.

H.D.: Then they moved. They needed a larger store, I think. That's when my father decided that he would move us and make a living out of our living quarters over the downstairs part. So that's what he did. And then when did you move over there, about 1937?

E.M.: 1937.

H.D.: Right.

E.M.: We moved everything over there on a Saturday night. Everything. So anyhow, I went in the service in January of '41, and I came home in December of '45. First thing I wanted to look at was the books. My sister was here yesterday, she worked with him all that time. I figured she made some money. The Government set the price on the product. The only trouble is you couldn't get as much as you wanted. That's where the problem was. And I said, George, you haven't made any money in five years. I said you call that money? So anyhow, as time went on, I said -- mother was from England. She was a war bride, number one year, World War I. I said, Ms. Stacy, I said do you mind if we took the partitions out of that building there and made a big store? She said no, as long as you pay for it. I said don't worry about it. So we did. We used this (indiscernible), white -- we did the whole store up in white -- we got new meat cases, we got dairy cases, we got produce cases, we got an ice box, everything was new then, that was in 1946, '47. And wasn't long before we were picking up exceptionally good customers. DuPonts, McCalkin, hotel people, and doctor -- what's his name?

H.D.: Huh?

E.M.: What was the doctor --

H.D.: Dr. Fay.

E.M.: Dr. Fay. I can't name 'em all, but these were money people, Miss Carpenter.

Miss Louisa Carpenter, she owns -- she did own right from this --

H.D.: -- 45 over to 13.

E.M.: Over to Route 20. She was really a nice person. But nevertheless, we had all of them customers. And then they began to want gourmet food. So I got in touch with, first one I got in touch with was -- first one I got in touch with was Cashane, the company up in New Jersey. And then Cashane sold out to Hadden House -- and after I'd been dealing with them for a while, I could call New York or anywhere else 9:00 in the morning, and I could have you a pound of Beluga Caviar in Rock Hall by 12:00.

V.J.: Did it come on the train?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: On the train?

H.D.: By bus.

V.J.: By bus.

E.M.: They put it on Greyhound, and Greyhound would bring it into Wilmington, and Midstar would bring it from Wilmington to Chestertown. That was their route anyhow. And we would sell it -- we would sell it. And after I see the price of it today, I'm astounded. They come in 15-ounce tins, black Russian Beluga. It sold for a full \$185, 15 ounces, they call it a pound. Now today you can't touch it under \$600. That's terrific. And we handled, we handled a lot of funny stuff like grasshoppers, snails. Well Alan and I ate snails. I love them. What else did we have, Helen?

H.D.: I don't know. Everything that came along, you know. Oysters that were pickled and --

E.M.: Smoked.

H.D.: It was the only gourmet store in the county. So that's why they did such a terrific business.

A. S.: So who ordered the grasshoppers?

E.M.: Pardon?

A. S.: Who ordered the grasshoppers?

H.D.: Some of his customers. Now we'd get a big --

E.M.: They would come to buy them.

H.D.: We would have one of everything new that come in, you know, and that was a good seller too.

E.M.: Well caviar, we had caviar in little glass jars. We had black caviar, four ounces was \$7.85. And going down to about one ounce. Just -- George always worked with his son in the afternoon. So when I come back on Monday morning, I usually -- I don't know why, I just always took stock to see how things had gone. And I said to him, I said George, you had a good weekend on caviar, didn't you? He said why? I said there were five jars gone. Somebody had pocketed them. Yeah. We had -- Mr. McCalkin was a good, the McCalkin Hotel, he owns a beautiful home down in Quaker Neck. And, of course, we do business with George Shultz, and that was RCA. I could go on, and on, and on. Oh, yeah, we had gunning clubs before the state took the east neck island over. And there were six gunning clubs down there. And I mean they wanted the best. And that's what we got for `em, and that's -- high level. And always somebody was buying something from us that just gave us a little better outlook. Now we still handled products for our people, but it got to the point where I think it began to rub off on them that we were too expensive for them. But we couldn't compete with the Acme, A&P and them.

H.D.: Tell her about your green groceries now. You traveled all over the eastern shore buying tomatoes and corn and all that stuff

E.M.: Oh, yeah. I got it here. I used to deal with Floyd Price up here in --

H.D.: You're not familiar. Floyd Price Bindings. He's a big -- has a lot of farms and he's big in corn and all that kind of stuff. But he would bring that truckload home in the morning. He didn't even have to unload it off the truck. The people bought it, just pull up then he'd have to turn right around to go back to get some more that they could put out front. But those days are gone forever, you know.

E.M.: But when I went to the market on Friday, I got 1000 ears of sugar corn, 100 cantaloupes and whatever else was there, such as peppers and tomatoes and stuff. I had the front of that truck loaded and the back of the truck loaded. Now our meat, we bought

our meat from the Swift, Eskay, Carpin Hill, Virginian, Armor. And today, I doubt if you can buy anything from `em, I mean individual. Because the chain stores have just about absorbed all their products. Now you can see their product -- you go in an independent store, and you see their product. He has bought it through a distributor, he hasn't bought it direct from the plant. He's bought it from the distributor. But we did very well. We did very well.

Of course, later on, my brother got -- age got the best of `em and prices, I'll never forget. We always sold a lot of condensed milk around Christmas time. So I always made up the order for grocery then. And I -- I said well I guess I ought to get a case of the condensed milk, 48 cans. Forty-eight cans of condensed milk, that's a sweet milk. Sixty-eight dollars a case. And he remembered a time when we were selling it here for women to make formula for their children, we were selling it to them for 35, 45, 55 cents a can. That sudden changed really killed him. He just couldn't believe that he had been in business so long that he just felt like he was being rooked. So he kinda got a little discouraged with business. He got so he didn't want to buy nothing. I told him, I said George, we can't continue unless you keep up our level what it has been. But then the A&P and the Acme and all them began to handle gourmet foods. And, of course, you know they buy quantities and they got better prices.

A. S.: When did they open up?

E.M.: Pardon?

A. S.: When did the A&P and Acme open up in town?

E.M.: They never opened up here.

A. S.: Okay.

E.M.: In Chestertown. Thirteen miles. People to shop, people will go down to shop in Dover.

H.D.: Oh, yeah. They all go to like Sam's and B.J.'s and places like that because, you have to buy in quantity, but it's cheaper.

E.M.: There's no taxes. No taxes.

H.D.: And in Delaware, there's no taxes.

E.M.: I had one man who I dealt with, Mr. McGuiness, when he retired from farming, he said I'm going to fix my house up. He did. He spent \$40,000 on his house. Everything he bought was out of Delaware. Of course, he had no trucks to haul the stuff. And he told me he figured, counting the taxes and that, that he saved himself over \$8,000. That's unusual too. But if you'd been in this town back in -- well when we first came, when I first came here, these were dirt roads, and main street. We had the Eastern Shore ferry. Did you know about that?

V. J.: Yes.

E.M.: Yeah. Only had three ferries a day, and that was big business. Fishermen brought all the fish and that over to the bay ferries. I don't know. Every store, I would say every building in this town had a store in it. If they didn't sell a whole lot, they were still there. It was like -- they used to call them mom and pop stores, and that was true. But we really did a wonderful business, I mean because we started over handling number one beef, number one everything. We didn't handle nothing that wasn't number one. And we really, we did a terrific business. When you sell -- we sold on the average of three or 4,000 ears of corn a week; two or 300 (indiscernible), and not counting the other, like

peaches and all that stuff that come in season. I'd go over and get a truckload. And I had one lady here every once in awhile, she'd get -- she wanted preserve some peaches. She didn't think nothing of buying six or eight baskets. And when you did that, you know, it sort of ups your buying power. But the store first was terrible. I mean this was back -- we had to pack everything. Nothing come pre-packaged. Today, everything is pre-packaged, everything.

V.J.: So what did you package things like lard in?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: What did you put lard in when you packaged it?

E.M.: We had trays, they were sort of like -- they look something like a double-end scowl.

H.D.: They were like pasteboard, but I think they had a coating on them.

E.M.: Oh, they were waxed.

H.D.: Waxed, yeah. They had a coating on them, I think.

E.M.: And we would -- lard come in 50-pound tins, and we'd put it up in one pound, two pound, three pound, four pound and five pound. And that was a lot of work, really it was. And, of course, you had to weigh exactly right or you'd be empty before you got your 50 pounds.

H.D.: You told me also that they handled chickens, and the chickens had the insides all in `em.

E.M.: Yeah, when they first, chickens first started, only had the insides in `em. Of course they were iced and everything, but you had to -- put `em in the back and take the insides out of `em, wash `em. We had two great things there in the back, trays. And on one side of it, I put in there, maybe a box of salt. And the other would be clear water running all the time. And then you were getting -- put `em back in the ice. And when you got `em out, that's when you had to cut `em up, the legs -- now our beef, when it come in, first come in, you got a full quarter. A full quarter of beef was anything half-way up to the front. And then you got the hind quarter. That was the T-bone steaks and the rump roast and the round. And you had all that cut. But then I think as time went on, the producers found that they could cut this meat down for us, and they could make some more money out of the bones whereas we would have to throw them away. I really, I really -- the store business was something that I really missed. The people you knew, you didn't see them any more. Terrific. But we had so many good customers, I mean money customers. Mr. Eberling, who was RCA, and I can't remember all the names, but they were -- these gunning clubs. Are you acquainted with Baltimore?

V.J.: Sure.

E.M.: You seen this Piper who has the --

H.D.: Piper, Flynn and something, the real estate or something?

V.J.: I've seen the signs.

E.M.: Well that's the son. But his father used to come down here gunning. And it was James Bartlett, Kent Bartlett, and old man Dixon, I know you don't -- Dixon been dead for years. And then there was a man -- I can't think of his name now, he was president of the First National Bank. But anyhow, Mr. Piper, I'll just tell you an incident that happened to him Christmas week. Everybody supposed to come to the gunning shore. But anyhow, he and Mr. Jim Bartlett made a deal that they would come down. Of course, didn't have to have the help `cause always had -- had a woman and a man. So Mr. Piper

come in the store, he was getting ready to buy (indiscernible) down there. Who walks in but Mr. Jim Bartlett. He said Kip, what are you doing? He said I'm getting something. He said don't bother. We'll go down to Chesapeake, have dinner.

So anyhow, in the meantime, Mr. Piper said to me come on around the corner. I want to show you something. I went around the corner. His wife had bought him a big Chrysler car, beautiful green, and on the back seat was a Wyemarer dog. Never said a word. He wound the windows -- it was cool, and he wound the windows down a little bit so the dog would have plenty air. So when he come back from down the shore, he and Mr. Kip having dinner, he called me around. He said look at this. God damn dog had dug the roof out of that brand new Chrysler car, and had dug that cushion on that back seat clear down to the springs. I said what are you going to do with him. He said I'll take my gun right now and shoot that son of a bitch. I said oh, Mr. Piper, I said that's what you get for leaving him. I said he's probably been a trained dog, used to being with someone, not left in an automobile. So he said I wonder what I'm going to tell my wife when we go back to Baltimore? I said well there's only one thing, to tell her what happened. I said you try to make up anything else, you're going to get in more trouble. He told me that they took that back to the Chrysler plant, and it cost `em \$4,000 to repair what that dog had done.

A.S.: That definitely has a moral.

E.M.: Huh?

A. S.: That definitely has --that's a story that has a definite moral. Don't leave your dog alone --

E.M.: In the car. Well we're having little difficulties, not right here, but in the county as a whole. Every -- there's more pick-up trucks in this little town than any other town, any other feast town. And all of `em either have Chesapeake Bay or a Newfoundland in the back. And somehow along the line, they want to get the state police to go to the governor and make it against the law to let a dog ride loose in the back of a pick-up truck. If you want to ride him, put him in the front with you. So I don't know what the end results are going to be or how much weight it's going to carry because there's a lot of persons will sign a petition.

V.J.: When did you retire?

E.M.: Pardon?

V. J.: When did you retire?

E.M.: Eight -- what was it, Helen, `87 or `89?

H.D.: Eighty-nine.

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: Eighty-nine.

V.J.: Did the store close then?

E.M.: Yes. Yes, we sold everything out as much as I -- I didn't cry.

H.D.: He's hated retirement. It's very hard. I love it. Best thing I ever did.

A. S.: When did you -- when did you --

H.D.: I closed a month or so before he did.

E.M.: It's just -- I did mind the retirement because I got so I was looking for people. Terrible, terrible. You could almost -- when the door slammed you almost knew who it was in a little town, you know. But in the summertime, it was terrific here, wasn't it, Helen?

H.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: Still is. We -- you never been down around this waterfront?

V.J.: Yes, I have.

E.M.: Something, isn't it?

V.J.: Yes.

E.M.: Yachts.

H.D.: And main street too now has really come up, that -- those -- what's it called over there? I don't know what it is. This guy next door has all those little houses in the back with all the gift shops. Have you seen that on main street?

V.J.: Yes.

H.D.: And on the weekends, the town -- even almost the whole year too because now they have concerts over there in the mainstay almost every Saturday night, and that brings people from all over, okay. Of course, I think we're going to be something like St. Michaels, just retirement, you know. Not be able to cross the street and all that. Do you live in Washington?

V.J.: I do.

H.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well how are you connected with the -- were you the one that called?

V.J.: Yes. I was hired by the museum to do this project on the food on the workboats. So I--

H.D.: They serve one of the boats that was dredging out here, they served them all the food, didn't you?

E.M.: Yeah.

H.D.: I don't know what it was.

E.M.: That's the skipjacks you were speaking of.

V.J.: Right.

E.M.: Yeah. I couldn't remember their names.

V.J.: Is it --

E.M.: `Cause they only come in once a week.

H.D.: Yeah. He was the one that had two launches, he would pick up the food at the pier down there, and then he would take it out to the dredge where they were working.

E.M.: Oh, you're thinking about the dredge where they dredged the --

H.D.: Yeah, that's what I was talking about when they were working out there.

E.M.: Philadelphia Dredge Company. That was a big customer.

H.D.: But I can't think what Mr. Fithian's first name was, what was it?

E.M.: Who?

H.D.: Mr. Fithian's first name. Mildred's father.

E.M.: Whose father?

H.D.: Mildred. No, Mildred's husband's father.

E.M.: Let's get to Mildred first.

H.D.: Mildred Coleman who used to go with Ben.

E.M.: I know.

H.D.: Her father-in-law, Mr. Fithian, what was his first name?

E.M.: Oh, Bill Fithian.

H.D.: Bill, William. Right.

E.M.: Yeah, he had two -- he used to carry the food out to the dredge. When they come and ordered, their chef, he'd want a hind quarter of beef, or he'd want four quarter of beef, and he'd want a case of this and a case of that. And when we'd take it out there, we got -- sometimes the man that was their ferry, he'd bring the help -- the old Manson house was there and it was in fair shape, and someone lived right in the old Manson house, they brought him ashore, you know, it was a taxicab like for them. And sometimes I'd go down there, look man, I'd tell him in the morning, you need about 50 quarts of milk down there. And he would, he'd put 50 quarts of milk down there and break the ice up over top of `em and tell them to bill -- got ready to take him. So they took me out there one day for dinner. It was terrific. Had cook and three of his assistants. They fed 75 men every dinner hour. And you talk about eating, they really did eat.

V.J.: Do you remember what you ate?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: Do you remember what was served?

E.M.: Oh, sure I do. That day we were there, we had T-bone steak, French fried potatoes, corn on the cob, fresh lima beans, and he made some kind of a lemon mousse or something. He didn't give you just a serving, he gave you enough to take home. But it was good with fresh whipped cream on top of it and everything. They ate very well.

Captain -- what's the Captain's name?

H.D.: I don't know.

E.M.: He come here for a long while. We had a boy got killed out there on it. They had these big, big pump pipes, and they had hooks, and the tugs would drag `em around where they wanted to where there was silt. And this boy, they were always told once you hook up, you get on the other side of the cabin. He didn't. And that thing broke loose, come back just like a slingshot, struck him right there. He was dead. They flew him to Baltimore. They had a seaplane come out, but it was no use. And we had another boy, he got buried in the mud. He was on the inspector's depth crew. And he was rowing, and when he was rowing like that, oar locks come out, and when they did, he went to get up, the boat swung around, because of the (indiscernible), there's this big thing. Buried him. It was quite awhile before he came to the top. You remember --

H.D.: Who's that?

E.M.: Levy Ashley.

H.D.: I forgot that.

E.M.: Remember we -- it was Fourth of July. Remember we'd been up to --

H.D.: No, I don't.

E.M.: -- Delaware Park? We come back, and somebody told us about Levy.

V.J.: For the skipjacks, did you deliver to the boats --

E.M.: No, no.

V.J.: -- in the harbor?

E.M.: No, no. They come got their stuff, took it away. They were very good customers, I'll tell you. But there's none here now.

V.J.: Did you sell eggs?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: Did you sell eggs?

E.M.: Did we sell eggs? I'll give you a little story on eggs now. In the springtime, women -- there was more women raising -- farmers, more women raising chickens and

stuff then than there was ever. It was nothing for us to take in 100 dozen eggs on Friday and Saturday, 10 cents a dozen, sold `em for 15. As time went on, they progressed, they got higher. Well there was a time -- I know there was a time when we -- I remember when we had J.D. Buffeton in Baltimore. We got another load of eggs, we shipped them to him. He was an egg dryer for bakeries and so forth. So we had one lady went in there, she was never our customer. And she come in one -- I believe it was Saturday morning. She had two cases of eggs. George was a little skeptical of `em. It was only 12 cents a dozen, maybe 14 now, but anyhow, he just marked `em for J.W. Buffeton. And when our freight man come around, he load the ones, and we told him what they were, they were, they were to go to Buffeton. I guess that was a Monday. On Monday after 2:00, George got a telephone call from Mr. Buffeton. He said Mr. Myers, he said next time you send me up two crates of chickens, he said I'm going to raise hell with you. She had went around where the chickens were setting themselves, and she got every one of them eggs, and some of `em had little chickens in `em, and some of `em -- isn't that awful? But Mr. Buffeton, he was -- he took it as a joke in one sense of the word. George told him, said it was a new customer --

(END SIDE A - BEGIN SIDE B)

E.M.: -- but then the main ones still were Pillsbury and Old Mill.

V.J.: Where was Rosebud flour from?

E.M.: Pardon me?

V.J.: Where was Rosebud?

E.M.: Rosebud was made by Brooks Mill.

V.J.: And Snowdrop was Chestertown?

E.M.: And Snowdrop -- I forgot that man's name. But that was right down at the foot of Church Hill, you went out, there was a little -- they were all mills that ground their own wheat and everything. And -- come from down the shore, I don't know. But Pillsbury and Gold Medal, naturally, were the big operators.

V.J.: When you put the flour in bags, what kind of bags were they?

E.M.: They were the brown paper bags.

V.J.: Paper?

E.M.: Yes. Well you put flour up back then in five and ten-pound bags, that was it. Had no tape or nothing to tape it. We strung `em, used string. As things began to get modern, we really thought we were uptown, I'll tell you. Stuff come pre-packaged, and nothing to it.

V.J.: Same for sugar?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: Same for sugar?

E.M.: Yeah.

V.J.: Did you sell much sugar?

E.M.: Oh, yeah. Sure. Sugar sold for six cents a pound back during depression. I'll tell you something we sold a lot of one time. Salesman come around and sold us a deal. We bought a barrel of jelly beans at Easter time. That was 300 or 250 pounds or -- I can't remember. I won't say. They had -- partitions in `em. They were yellow, red, black, white -- and I can't -- it was five sections. Would you believe me, we were selling `em 10 cents a pound.

H.D.: What are they today, \$1.59 for 8 ounces.

E.M.: Would you believe me, I know it was a week before Easter, we were sold out of `em.

H.D.: A week before Easter.

E.M.: That was something, when you could see a barrel of jelly beans --I said George, I'm going to never sell them. He said well we don't sell `em, we'll give `em away. He was very, he was very good in that respect, giving, always.

V.J.: Your brother did the buying.

E.M.: (Inaudible) -- when it come to gourmet foods and stuff, I was the one that did the buying on them. And he bought all the meat, all the groceries and stuff like that. He had a lot of experience in it.

V.J.: What about molasses?

E.M.: No, we never fooled with molasses. We had two barrels, and that was it, that was the last of `em. And the best mouse catchers you ever had. Sounds funny, doesn't it?

But it's true. Of course, you could never stop a wind if you wound out a pound jug of molasses and you shut it off, there'd be still so much of it drip. And then when the mice would come in to get that, they'd get stuck in it, and that was it. So we used to say we don't need no mouse traps, we got the mouse trap. It had a lot of good funny parts, and again had a lot of little tough parts. Oh, we had a store at the door. I forgot to tell you about that. We had a big truck, was a four-wheel back truck, International. We had a big oak slab of wood about that big went all the way across the back, and we had an ice box built, keep the meat in, and we put shelving inside of the truck, and we go out and we had certain routes every day. Like Mondays we'd go down to what we call the colored section down here; Tuesdays we would go to Skinners Neck; Wednesdays, Fridays we would go to Piney Neck, and Saturday we would go to all the shucking houses. But I know the boy that run it, Frank Parsons, he'd have to -- or Saturdays when those -- got paid, you know, he'd call me two or three times to bring him down such and such items. And we sold a lot of salt meat, sold a lot of streakoleen. They were from the south, and that was the type of food they ate. They were right for beans and hominy.

A.S.: What's the second thing you said, strickalene?

V.J.: Streakoleen.

A. S.: Oh, streakoleen. Okay.

E.M.: Streakoleen was in -- streakoleen was in this fat meat. That was the name of it, streakoleen of it.

H.D.: That was what, fat meat?

E.M.: Yeah, it was fat belly.

H.D.: Oh. I'm not familiar with that.

E.M.: I don't know whether it was streakoleen. I think that was the upper part, we got to the pork ribs.

A.S.: So when you were saying that some guy had two launches and he used to deliver food to these dredge boats --

E.M.: Do what?

A. S.: The Philadelphia dredge boat, was there more than one dredge boat affiliated with Philadelphia?

E.M.: Oh, you mean when they dredged that channel? Have to have one as big as it was.

A. S.: When you were talking about selling food to Mr. Fithian, you said something about him that he was connected to some Philadelphia company?

E.M.: Captain Collier, the man was -- he was captain of the dredge. Come to me that quick `cause --

H.D.: Bill Fithian just had a contract to carry the food to the dredge.

E.M.: He just had a contract to take the food and --

H.D.: I imagine the chef did the shopping --

E. M.: And bring the --

H.D.: -- the orders and they took them to the shore. Mr. Fithian picked `em up in one of his boats, and then he would carry them out to the dredge.

A.S.: So were there a lot of dredges that contracted with Mr. Fithian or just one?

H.D.: No, just the one. That was the only one that was in this area at the time. But I imagine it was fairly big because that was a big project.

E.M.: I think they were here for almost a year. The Burlington Channel. You've heard of it, I'm certain. Now you've probably seen -- stuff's going on in the paper about pumping again, Tolchester and all that. That man Diper up here, he had 500 acres. He's not in very good health. He's going to get \$1 million for those two farms. And when they pumped all this stuff up there, they ruined that whole neighborhood up there in Tolchester. You can't tell me, that stuff stinks like nobody's business.

V.J.: That's right.

E.M.: `Cause I've been out there when those men were pumping. And you didn't have to get close to `em. You could've been 100 yards, 200 yards away from `em and you could smell it.

V.J.: The bay mud is certainly stinky.

E.M.: Well you know, I was surprised --

H.D.: -- you have to pump out and all, or at least you're supposed to.

E.M.: I had a lady call me a couple weeks ago. I don't know what she -- but anyhow, she been down to Tilghman's Island for some information. But they didn't even know we had purse nets at one time. And they couldn't tell her how the -- how men put down pound nets, `cause I talked to her on the telephone, and I would tell her how the purse net was a net, just what it said, purse. You had drawstrings that pursed it. You had a big tong at the bottom of it when they dropped it. It weighed anywhere from 150 to 175 pounds according to how much net. And they would lay around the face, that thing had gone down and it would purse the rope. They bring that together, and the man had two smaller boats, I would say 25, 30 feet, and would get inside and he begin to bring the net up until he got to the fish. I was very young, I was only about seven, eight years old. I was riding with a man and we used to go carry people out on a boat in Tolchester. Get `em down the shoreway, you know, for something like 25 cents. Of course, I was always a large boy for my age. So I used to tie the boat up when we come in and when we went out. So this evening, we were coming home. This fellow Captain Curry, he had later on bought some fish. He weighed just a pound. So we went over there to him. He said would you take the little fish into Baltimore for me? He said I ain't going to have enough room. He had caught 20 ton. Some of them fish weighed as much as 60 pounds. He had to turn them loose. That was the first big catch of fish I ever saw in my life.

V.J.: So did you go to Baltimore that night?

E.M.: I went to Baltimore that night, yeah. There wasn't a damn thing to it. We went along and back. The man come down and loaded the fish. I said -- what are we going to do? He said I'm going to edge my way out of here, but he was kind of afraid of them big

ships coming in, you know. They wouldn't see a boat 45, 50 foot long. But anyhow, he put the lights up, all his lights out, all his travel lights. We started out, and I laid down in the bottom of the boat and went to sleep and I didn't do nothing to it. He said come on, boy. Tie up the boat. I slept almost an hour and a half I think I was about eight, maybe nine then.

V.J.: Did you grow up in Tolchester?

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: Did you grow up in Tolchester?

E.M.: No, I was originally from Baltimore. My father lost his leg during an accident in the fire department. I was born in 1915. He lost his leg, same year I was born. He was a steam engineer, that's when they drug the fire -- by horses. And they were just diversifying going over to motor -- people and all them. And they build these, American France people.

H.D.: You want some more iced tea?

A. S.: No, but this is great. Maybe later.

H.D.: Okay.

E.M.: What else do you want to know?

V.J.: When you sold eggs to --

E.M.: Pardon?

V.J.: When you sold eggs, how did you package them?

E.M.: Put them in a bag, that's all. We had no things like you had today. Eggs were all, in the early spring a lot of chickens laying in that -- if you got 15 cents a dozen for `em, you got a lot. You paid 10 or 12 for `em, sold for 15.

A. S.: But would you put them in straw, or paper or --

H.D.: People just bought `em in a basket --

E.M.: Basket.

H.D.: --I know down in a basket with a handle on it. But they would just put them in like that. But I guess when you brought a dozen eggs from the store, they just put them in a bag. I don't know, do you? I don't know, I don't remember.

E.M.: Yeah, I put them in a bag. We used to bag `em.

H.D.: Whoever invented those little crates really had made out all right, I would think. Wouldn't you?

E.M.: Well I'll tell you. That's when storekeeping was work. And when you say Okenheim, my brother and I, we would put up 200 pounds of lard, anywhere from one pound to five pound. And, of course, then we stored that in the ice box. And just like -- that was the biggest mess in the world.

V.J.: With the work boats, did they buy it by the can, or did they buy small quantities?

E.M.: Well our boats here, they came back and forth to shore every day. They never bought much. They never bought much. The wife did the cooking and that. They took their food with them for the day.

V.J.: But the oyster boats, the skipjacks --

E.M.: You're talking about the skipjacks. I don't -- well see, by the time they got up here, was getting -- that's when we begin to have three-pound tins. We had six-pound tins. Now but they always -- where they left down where they come from by their staple commodities. Of course, I think that was only because they -- in their town like Tilghman's, they bought their commodities there. But when they got up here, the ones

that were perishable, then that's when they bought from us. Those skipjack, I bet you one of those -- were really some men, I'll tell you, in my opinion.

V.J.: It was a hard life.

E.M.: I don't know whether it was a hard life or it made hard men, because some of those men were really -- you know, they were big all of `em, regardless, summer or winter, they were just as bronze as Indians. And I admire `em, because some of our men were the same way. They had these purse netters and they had pound netters. And the purse netters went out Monday morning, they wouldn't come back no more 'til Friday night. They bought enough food to last `em a week unless they caught a big ton of fish and they would have to come into the ice house to get extra ice, because they normally carry plenty of ice on the boat. There were seven men to a crew. But then they done away with that a long while ago, they done away with purse net fishing. And what else did they do? I can't remember now. But I can imagine someone who was a sports fisherman would -- what we saw, what I saw that day as a young boy, I didn't know it was that many fish. I can imagine they thought they had caught all the fish in the bay.

(Laughter.) I had the same -- myself. I had the same net. I (indiscernible). Boys talked me into it. And had one big haul, big haul down here straw banks near Love Point. We caught 10 ton of hard eggs. Time we -- we were maybe 10. By the time we get it all up, I mean -- about 55, \$60 a piece.

A.S.: So you wouldn't get that kind of cash now.

E.M.: Anyhow, I decided I was losing money. So it's all the same. It was -- it was fish 30 foot deep and the full bay's -- which is the wings, I imagine on each side of them they were at least 100 yards, so it was 600 feet. We'd go out 300 feet plus the rail and the rope, we let it go out. Now the boys I was -- didn't have no boat, but the boys had the boats had winders on the back of the boat. And they'd anchor the boat on the shore and let the rope out far as they wanted it. And as soon as you got the scene laid off, brought the rope, one rope back in. And they would start winding. And they got in so far in the shallow water, and they would get their man -- what they call foot the bottom rope. When he pulled that bottom rope, he kept his foot on that bottom rope all the way back. And then when they got to the end of it, what was that called? Where the thing comes through. It would be right -- when they got almost to the end of the thing, they would pick it up and it was a great, great big -- that's where you got your 30 feet from. It would be a great big thing -- and they pulled it up and they'd all be inside. And they caught 10 ton of hard heads. I couldn't believe it. We had to make two trips around to the ice house. Got 10 cents a pound for `em. (Laughter). I said that's it. I used to have Wednesdays off, that's when I used to go. Had to try it. My brother used to raise war with me. He said you can find more useless things to do than good things.

H.D.: You want to ask him anything else?

V.J.: No.

A. S.: If you're done with most of yours, I have some quite specific questions that actually Mrs. Durdling might be able to answer, or both of you corroboratively. I'm trying to track down the seafood processing houses in Rock Hall that dealt with crabs.

H.D.: Oh, okay.

A.S.: And I've heard that Hubbard's did.

H.D.: Hubbard's Pier? They didn't process any, did they?

E.M.: That's gone.

H.D.: What she wants to know about it. I know Hubbard's, but did Hubbard's Pier process crabs?

E.M.: Yeah. They picked crabs now, but they bought crabs, they bought fish, they bought everything.

H.D.: And they sold it, but --

A. S.: Who picked crabs?

H.D.: Mr. Mercer, did he pick crabs, Mr. Mercer?

E.M.: Yeah, he picked crabs down at Skinner's Neck.

H.D.: Right. But they just picked it and sold it, I think, by the pound. They didn't -- like down at Crisfield, Eugene, they used to process the crab meat and the crab fingers and all that kind of stuff. They never did anything like that at Mr. Mercer's. That was kind of after his time, so to speak.

A. S.: So he picked it and he sold it right there?

H.D.: Yeah. The ladies picked, he had a lot of ladies that picked the crabs, and they packed it and sold it, okay?

A. S.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: And then regular come in --

H.D.: Regular.

E.M.: Regular.

H.D.: Claw.

E.M.: Claw.

H.D.: Regular and backfin is what they called it in those days.

E.M.: But today, you've got ever so many.

H.D.: Right. Yeah, you've got backfin, and big backfin, and bigger, bigger backfin. I don't know. It all has a different name.

E.M.: Well that is another changed story, changed story. They do that, they confuse their competitor.

H.D.: Did Mr. Culley pick crabs?

E.M.: Yeah.

H.D.: That was down at Gratitude.

A. S.: Okay.

H.D.: That was C-U-L-L-E-Y. He picked, they did the same thing. I mean in those days, there was no such thing as processed or freezing or -- when they were in business.

E.M.: Now Culley was really, he was diversified. He even canned tomatoes.

H.D.: Picked crabs in the same building.

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: They do that in the same building?

E.M.: Sure, sure.

H.D.: Okay.

E.M.: If you saw the way they scrubbed them wooden tables, you would think so.

H.D.: Oh, okay.

A. S.: So when was that?

E.M.: He canned tomatoes, and they were very much desired by different wholesalers.

H.D.: But what year, Emil?

E.M.: Let's see.

H.D.: I don't remember, but I've heard of it. Mr. Mercer, I knew a little bit about that. Were they doing it when you were a boy that used to row over there?

E.M.: Well we used to down --

H.D.: Yeah, so how old would you have been, 10, 12?

E.M.: Twelve. I would say 12. So that was about '27.

A. S.: Okay.

E.M.: And we used to go down there and label. We hand labeled them. He was particular. But we went down there in this can house used to be located down on this corner down here. They had a label machine down there, and you never knew whether they were swell heads or what was going through them. They went through there so fast.

H.D.: I think Mr. Mercer and Mr. Culley really -- did Mr. Ivans ever pick crabs, Hudson and Ivans?

E.M.: Hudson and Ivans, no.

H.D.: No?

E.M.: They bought crabs, but they didn't do no processing.

A. S.: So who were --

E.M.: This was really a big oyster place.

H.D.: The natives. I mean, you know --

A. S.: Would you have had schoolmates who, during the summer picked --

H.D.: No. These were mostly women who their husband probably were watermen, and these women had to work to make some extra money. And it was just seemed to me it was down at Skinner's Neck, all those wives down there picked crabs for Mr. Mercer.

E.M.: Women shucked oysters too.

H.D.: Yeah, but they were -- I mean every day was like local, like you said from college and things, look for summer jobs, but no, that was afterwards. Okay, this was way before.

E.M.: Just like when I used to take food down Wilmer's -- truck at the door. He'd be in the shucking house. And I walked in the shucking house --

H.D.: You're mainly interested in the crab picking. Is that it?

E.M.: -- and see them women shuck oysters.

A. S.: It's not necessarily (inaudible) --

E.M.: That is tough. Them women had wrists on them like nobody's business.

H.D.: Have you been to Crisfield?

A. S.: Yes. We've talked to places in Crisfield and Hooper's Island. They do a lot of crab processing.

H.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). These friends of ours, he's dead, the guy who -- Worton his name was, was really in the crab business in a big way down there --

A. S.: Lenox Worton?

H.D.: Lenox was his brother.

E.M.: He had a place down there.

H.D.: Eugene was -- Eugene Lenox. Did you talk to Lenox?

A. S.: No. I've heard of his name.

E.M.: Alvin Ivan --

A. S.: I haven't talked to him.

H.D.: And Eugene's wife, first name Mildred.

E.M.: Helen?

H.D.: Huh?

E.M.: What was the man's name that had the pier down here and left.

H.D.: That had what?

E.M.: They were in Annapolis. His wife and him married and moved down Skinner's Neck. Come on now. You're worse than I am.

H.D.: Thank you.

E.M.: He was a little fellow. Had a son, two sons. She was very attractive.

H.D.: Oh, yeah. Woodfield.

E.M.: Woodfield.

H.D.: Al Woodfield.

A. S.: Down in Galesville.

H.D.: Yeah, right. Now he was here at Hubbard's Pier with Mrs. Hubbard.

A. S.: Really?

H.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). And they bought, like I said fish and crabs and stuff like that. Of course, see Hubbard's Pier is no more. That's --

E.M.: Woodfield family is a big seafood dealer.

H.D.: -- marina with floating docks in it. Okay. But Woodfield and Hubbard were in business together here.

A. S.: That's interesting. I didn't realize there were connections between the eastern and western businesses.

H.D.: Yeah.

E.M.: The Woodfield family down in

H.D.: Galesville.

E.M.: Galesville?

H.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

E.M.: They're a big seafood dealer. Big. You can't mention Woodfield without mentioning Galesville.

H.D.: Well to go back to Crisfield, you've got to talk to Mildred or her brother-in-law, you can tell them that you were up talking to Helen Durning and Emil Myers.

A. S.: Thank you. She'd probably be fascinating to speak to.

H.D.: Yes.

A. S.: How did you meet her? How did you become friends? I mean it's so faraway.

H.D.: Well Worton and --what was the other man's name. What were they doing up here? Eugene's father.

E.M.: Mr. Nelson? They come up here during the depression. Well they didn't -- depression didn't hit 'em. They come up here to process oysters and that. And they built a place down there where that boy's got that marina down there, Smith. That was Mr. Nelson. And Mr. Worton, he was going to take over where Kendel owned.

H.D.: Down on Norton Avenue, you mean?

E.M.: Yeah.

H.D.: But anyway, Worton had a boy and a girl. And, I don't know. Eugene stayed sometimes. Like they would go -- sometimes they would go back during the winter months. But somehow or other, Eugene stayed. And Eugene and Emil were friends at a very young age.

E.M.: We went around together.

H.D.: And we've always been friends for --

E.M.: He lived here with some of the people. It was tough times, really.

A. S.: When was the Mercers' plant operating?

H.D.: Just about the same -- a little later than Mr. Culley. Wouldn't Mr. Mercer been a little later than Mr. Culley?

E.M.: Both about the same time.

H.D.: Both around the same time, 1930, something like that.

A. S.: And did most of the watermen live in Skinner's Neck?

H.D.: No. No --well Piney Neck, Skinner's Neck, East Neck and Rock Hall. We always considered that Rock Hall, even though that's little -- I don't know what you call it, (indiscernible), Rock Hall. But they come from all around. But just this little area. Because see we're at the end of the line. You can't go any further unless you go overboard. Okay?

A. S.: Right.

E.M.: This little town has really improved. I tell you ladies right now if any time you want to go out, come down for a good dinner, go to any of these restaurants. We got I would say one, what's this one down here, Swan Point?

H.D.: That's Spray Point, Swan Point and --

E.M.: And I would take -- walk around here. What was the other one?

H.D.: Waterman's.

E.M.: Waterman's Crab House. Now Waterman's Crab House is --

H.D.: That's up there.

E.M.: There's no decorations or nothing up there, but the food is damn good.

H.D.: You've probably been there, haven't you?

V.J.: No, I haven't.

H.D.: Oh, okay.

E.M.: Swan Point has a little zest to it.

A. S.: So when you want to go out, which one do you go to?

H.D.: I like them all. I mean I like -- I like Waterman's Crab House very much. I love Osprey Point. It's very, very expensive. Swan Point Inn is --

E.M.: Mediocre.

H.D.: -- very nice. And Bay Walk too. They're all like on the same thing.

E.M.: Got good food though.

H.D.: They've all got good food.

E.M.: I remember the time you had to shuffle around to find a good restaurant in Rock Hall.

H.D.: Well there wasn't any.

E.M.: Best part was frying pan and (indiscernible). But that's not true today.

H.D.: You would, you know, have to go out of town.

E.M.: That was in the day you could make (inaudible) --

H.D.: Now you don't even go out of town because of the *traffic*, and if you have a cocktail, then you could get picked up by the law for drinking. You know, so we just stay home. Well I go to Chestertown like every Friday, and we always have lunch someplace different, the Old Wharf, or Giodino's. There's a lot of nice places there too.

A. S.: And other places walking distance here too?

H.D.: Well Waterman's is right down the street here, a half a mile right there on the water. You can see it almost from here.

A. S.: I guess neither of you had to go very far to get your groceries, though.

H.D.: Well I always stop next door.

A. S.: Right.

H.D.: Well I didn't do the -- my mother did it, Mable did it, now all the sudden I'm doing it, and I'm not a very good shopper for meat. Okay. I don't mind telling you. I don't know it, and we've had some -- since they've been out of the business, meat, we haven't had too much --

E.M.: Well it's not your fault, because the store you go to don't handle meat. They don't handle no more meat. They handle choice or --

H.D.: So I bought from Omaha for about 10 years, and you kind of get tired of that too. But I have gone to a little country store down in Pamona. I went there for the first time. A lot of people told me about it. Emil likes his ground beef. Well you don't just buy a package. He wants you to say I want a pound of round ground twice. Where you gonna get that anymore? Got it down that little store. I went there Friday for the first time.

E.M.: Would you believe in our store in the course of a week, we'd sell anywhere from 100 to 200 pound of round ground a week, just because we handle number one meat and ground it twice.

H. D.: We all call it hamburger now. He says that's what it is, hamburger.

E.M.: Well normally hamburger is hot-dogs and anything else they can throw into it. True.

H.D.: What else do you want to know?

A. S.: This has been really helpful. If you can think of anything else, I guess -- was there a lot of crab processing ever done in this area, or was it mostly fish?

V.J.: Oysters.

A. S.: Oysters.

H.D.: Oysters, yeah. And clams.

A. S.: And the clams --

E.M.: Do you live in St. Michaels now? Do you live in St. Michaels?

H.D.: No, it just really started -- I never heard too much about clams. Clams is an industry that they recently, now what I mean by recently --

E.M.: Washington?

V.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: What part?

V.J.: Tacoma Park.

H.D.: -- but they're those clams, they're not like those Long Island things that you buy. They have that snout on `em.

A. S.: The long neck?

H.D.: I guess you cut that off, I don't know.

A. S.: Yeah, you do.

H.D.: I know I don't eat that part of `em any more. And of course we were a fi t1 u VJ&6 Get a

H.D.: -- but they don't get here. But the only clam they get here is that clam with that snout on it.

E.M.: I was a Redskin fan 50 years. Had to give up `cause my arthritis kills me --

A.S.: I know the crabs don't like to be in water that's not salty enough. Is this a good crab area?

H.D.: It is a very good crab area, but the crabs, when they die off, they bury in the mud. But most of `em like go, I would say south, and then they have to kind of wait for the

crabs to come up this way. Because down in Virginia, they get the crabs much sooner than we do get `em here. Okay?

A. S.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

E.M.: There's a big fallacy down there. They dredge `em, they dredge out of the water.

H.D.: I'm sorry Denny's not here. He could've told you all about the crabs, my --

E.M.: -- we were down there to visit him, and he took me down to his place and he showed me -- when he just bought these crabs over the weekend. We were down there Saturday and Sunday. They had a dance over to the yacht club. So anyhow, we went down there, and all this juice was running out of `em. And I said where's all this juice coming from? That was a female crab with the eggs on her. Now you know that's -- I said what are you doing? He said we get ready to steam `em. He said the women take them crabs out and wash each crab before they put it in the steam because they come out of the mud too.

A. S.: -- seafood market. There are no crab houses now in Rock Hall. It's interesting to see how that's changed.

H.D.: Well people come in buy their crabs like from New Jersey all around because they're the ones -- down at Cains. Steamed here down at Cains. I forgot about that.

Cains. C-A-I-N-S.

A. S.: Louis?

H.D.: Louis. You ever talk to him?

A. S.: He's on our list.

H.D.: Huh?

A. S.: He's on our list. He's the one who used to pick crabs.

H.D.: They don't pick `em anymore, but they buy crabs and they ship them, and they steam the crabs. That much I do know. And they sluff soft crabs. They have that rigged where they can do it inside, you know, with the water running and all that stuff.

Down at Mr. Cains, Emil.

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: Down at Louis Cains, they do crabs.

E.M.: Yeah.

H.D.: But that's the only place I know. Most of the crabs, when the crabbers come in, they seem to have their own run someplace, or somebody comes from some restaurant and they buy `em like that, and they steam their own, and etcetera.

A.S.: And don't market them.

H.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But Mr. Cain does steam crabs now. He did -- I think the government really got -- see a lot of these local businesses, you know, home businesses, that's a lot of crab meat, but it's --

A. S.: Right.

H.D.: I mean that's where I got my crabmeat from --

E.M.: I remember we get a lot of `em from the creek. And I remember my brother, he was a little older than I, and my older brother owned a store, all three of us crabbing. Nothing for us to catch 25, 30 dozen soft crabs a day. And the biggest price we ever got for `em was 50 cents a dozen. We would go down to them -- houses and sell them. That's a lot of crab.

A.S.: We'd be happy to talk to people who are retired from that. We don't want to talk to anyone who might get in trouble by talking to us.

H.D.: No, I know you don't. But a lot of these girls around here do that, pick the crabs at home. But you're not supposed to. When the crab season comes on, nobody mentions any name. Oh, where do you get your crabmeat from? Oh, from a friend. But nobody wants to say because nobody wants to get them in trouble. First off, they don't charge as much as you would have to get at the market, like if you go to one of these B&E Seafood in Chestertown, or this little seafood place down here --

E.M.: And some of `em pick a damn site better too.

H.D.: -- if you're coming into Rock Hall, Fords. I mean he buys crabs, and he has something to do with that clam house down there. So you don't have to be particular where you say what you have to say. But the meat that those girls pick is wonderful. It really is.

E.M.: You know, you couldn't believe a little store like we had here --

A. S.: Fresh, fresh, fresh.

H.D.: Yeah. You know, I have an order, I get like two pounds every week.

A. S.: What do you use it for?

H.D.: Well I make crab cakes, crab imperial, crab soup, something like that. And then (inaudible).

E.M.: We'd sell on the average over the weekend, I'd sell 2,000 tons of corn. And cantaloupes, I never bought less than 100.

H.D.: And then I have some friends that they can't get any of it, and you know, maybe I don't want two pounds. I'll put it in a little cooler and take it with me and they'll take it.

E.M.: People come out of the city and see the price on `em. But like the gourmet stuff, most of the time, we sold that to rich people, like the DuPonts. We had about four families of DuPonts here. Mrs. Carpenter. Mrs. Carpenter was really a good cook. I

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A. S.: Have you come across anyone who is retired from doing it? That no longer does it and would like to talk about it. This is partly for the exhibit and partly for an archive, so this wouldn't be --

H.D.: Would you mention names?

A. S.: I don't know. If they were interested, they could call the folklorist who's recording interviews for this and work out the details with her. She's not interested in talking to anyone -- she doesn't want to get anyone in trouble. So she -- but I'm not sure exactly whether -- whether that means she wouldn't want to talk to someone, or if she'd like to talk to them, kind of keep it off the record. But --

H.D.: Well I'm telling you I got mine from the same place for so long, and they don't do it anymore. Now Miss Helen, I'll put you in touch with somebody and they'll call you.

A.S.: Well I'll tell you what I could do. I could give you Elly's name --

H.D.: I'm not so sure. But if you call so-and-so, she may be able to tell you somebody. They don't never want to give you a name, okay?

A. S.: Right.

H.D.: And we'll bring it to you. Don't come and get it, we'll bring it to you. But I like to know who's picking my crab meat.

A.S.: That's the original kind of quality control before the government got involved.

H.D.: You want to know if they're clean or not, I assume, and I hope all of `em are clean. I've never heard anybody say that they ever got crab meat that wasn't quality. But you just can't do it unless you got stainless steel sinks and basins and all that stuff It's

against the law, which I can understand. But I'm sure none of `em -- just like some of `em pick ducks or geese or something like that, you know, during the season, I don't know whether that's a legitimate business or not. At least the government hadn't gotten into it as yet. Want some more iced tea?

V.J.: No, thank you. I'm fine.

H.D.: So anyway --

A. S.: Interesting. So how many people would you say, just from a guess, how many people would you say in the area are picking crab meat?

H.D.: People that I know?

A. S.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

H.D.: I would say at least 10.

A. S.: And then this is kind of unrelated, but kind of related. I ran to Virginia with a question last week. She gave me a partial answer. I'd be interested in hearing what you have to say. When did you start eating crab cakes? Are crab cakes more popular now than they used to be or --

H.D.: I thought they've always been popular. I think the crab cakes have been more popular first than crab imperial. Now that's just my opinion.

E.M.: Price had a lot to do with that. Went to a restaurant, got a crab cake was cheaper than crab imperial.

H.D.: But I remember when we --

E.M.: Now clams is a big deal here.

H.D.: Emil?

E.M.: Huh?

H.D.: When we used to go to -- well like when I was in school, you know, we used to go -- dad used to come get me and we'd go to Mill Brothers for dinner. They had the most delicious crab imperial that, you know, ever was, but you didn't see that very much. And we didn't make it in our homes. But nowadays we make everything to put in the freezer.

A. S.: And how big are the crab cakes that you make?

H.D.: Well now across the street, Miss Virginia's crab cakes, I would say they're a good, they're a good four inches.

A.S.: But the ones you make, or the ones you usually make are smaller?

H.D.: Well I don't always make `em that big. Like three, three and a half ounces.

A. S.: And what do you put in them?

H.D.: God. Probably an egg and mayonnaise, and a little salt and pepper, and a little Worcestershire sauce, maybe a dash of mustard. You'll read all these recipes, and they're all fundamentally the same thing.

A.S.: Some people put in more stuff, some people put in less stuff --

E.M.: Most people now put a little bit of --

H.D.: Sometimes if I want to make `em fancy, but I always like fresh parsley in `em.

And then if I was going to put maybe crab imperial, I might put some pimento chopped up in it to give it a little color. But she's, of course she's dead now, her son works over here at the -- what's it called across the street, Emil?

E.M.: What's that?

H.D.: What's that over --

E.M.: Captain's?

H.D.: Huh?

E.M.: You mean the Captain's place over there?

H.D.: Yeah. What's it called?

E.M.: Well it is Captain, isn't it?

H.D.: No, it's not Captain.

E.M.: I always thought --

H.D.: God. What is it called? Well anyway, Miss Virginia's crab cakes are made over there and sold. And at the end of the season, they sell -- you know, they have customers that would come say give me a dozen crab cakes frozen, take `em home with `em.

America's Cup, that's what he's called over there. But that's where Miss Virginia's crab cake, she used to work up to Bramble's Marina at Tolchester. And she made her crab cakes up there, and that's how she kind of became famous in Kent County, I would say, for her crab cakes. I know they just started making vegetable crab soup. So I assume he's getting some crabs some place. B&E Seafood, that's where he gets them, in Chestertown.

E.M.: I used to love steamed crabs. And we had one of those heavy storms where the tide was so high that was almost like a hurricane. Somehow or another, these big ships pumped -- had diesel oil out and those crabs got that diesel oil. And the one that I had that night that I ate had diesel oil in him. And I had a diesel-oil burp for about three days.

A. S.: I'm amazed you've eaten crabs since.

(END OF RECORDING.)