

Interview Log

Interviewee: Tom Burton **Tape #:** MAAF/KF/VA/FT11.18.200

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault **# of Tapes:** 1 of 2

Date: 11/18/97 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Onancock VA; at China Chefs restaurant

Topic: carving, local history; farming; potatoes, tulips; water business

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: File name: Vaft200.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN11.18.97. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription."

See Vaft201.doc for part two of the interview. This is the first interview of the project. Tom did not want to conduct this interview in his home, he said it was not fit for company. We elected to talk in the China chefs restaurant instead. There is some background noise on the tape, but the restaurant was not crowded that night.

BEGIN SIDE A

[starts a bit of the ways into the tape]

BIO: describing his school when he was young; moved to Boston for a while; war came on and moved back to VA ES; food shortages; grandparents lived on a farm; father was a produce broker in NY near Buffalo; for potatoes mostly; lived there for a while; moved back in 1945 again; went to VA Tech; Korean war came along so joined Navy to avoid being drafted into the infantry;

[slow interview, eating during this]

vegetable brokers: big job on the shore at one point; what that person does; middle man; locates buyers; raising mostly potatoes on shore then; diff in farming then and now

chicken farming then; raising from chicks; arrived in a box on a train from NH;

family history

planting practices: plant row of corn next to the potatoes so that when dig potatoes you worked the corn too; corn got early start;

when modern farming practices and machines arrived on the shore: 1950s,

INDUSTRY

tomato canning plant in Nassawadox owned by Jim Douglas; still see it; on route 13 as leaving Nassawadox; trees all grown up around it;

Saw Mill: had a steam engine that powered it; burned saw dust and wood scrap; T.A. Holland of Nassawadox knows about the steam engine;

HOMEcomings/PARTIES

First boat built when 16; no outboard motors on the shore then; existed but not there; things did as teenager on shore; fishing, parties they would have; take boats out to an island in Nassawadox creek called the Gin and Juice; gone now; eroded away; people from all around Northampton and Accomack Co.; would take the oyster scows out with lots of people; winter get together at a hotel in Richmond VA to have a dance or get together for a weekend; like a homecoming because people from all over who had left the shore would come; last reunion was in the 70s;

WWII AS MARKER OF CHANGE

Prior to WWII new people started to move in, especially during the Korean conflict; Air Force base at Bridge Tunnel; naval air base at Chincoteague; coast guard; all brought people in from outside and married girls here who didn't want to leave and they stayed;

Outboard motors became reliable and affordable in 50s; boats changed to accommodate this; how military gave sailors and personnel silver dollars and 2 dollar bills to spend so that community could see who was spending money and filling up the cash registers; this in response to complaints about the military being on the Shore; immediate visibility of economic impact;

Building boat ramps for military; boat building industry on Shore; white cedar building; Willis Wharf and other towns had people building boats in their back yards; couldn't buy one just built it yourself; talk of self-supporting characteristics; building things was part of daily knowledge for farmers;

Talk of Jay Cherrix; new birds he's carved;

Boats: diff types of boats, uses, that were all built on Shore prior to the outboard motor; how every kid had a boat, especially if you lived on one of the islands; called them "skooters"; paying people off in fruit, fish, etc; clam pie used as money;

More on outboard motors preferred on the shore;

Hancock scow; builder from Harker's island NC; lived on Chincoteague; carves too; still living; Louis Hancock; similar boat up north called a Garvey; Herb Chester built similar style boats; Chincoteague scow also name for it;

Chicken farming on shore;

Sail plane club he belonged to on the shore; aerial photographer in the navy; exploits in the navy;

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

Widening of roads on the shore especially route 13; due to trucks getting bigger in chicken industry; had to drive off road to let them pass; widen to two lanes; how VA and MD did not upgrade at same time; two lanes ended in VA and took MD years to widen;

Job as car salesman;

People he meets when he has his carvings out on the road; lots of cyclists; they always stop; very international group: Japanese, English;

CARVING: started that when unemployed and 14 year old daughter had to support; figured he could make as much carving as he could at minimum wage job; able to be home with daughter; did good until Black Monday in 1980s; bottom of market dropped out people stopped spending; tourists dropped off,

more tourists during winter months now; spreading them out more now;

didn't want to copy anybody else's style; did his own; had to learn to work with available wood: yellow pine; not easy to carve with a knife so had to use power tools; found a way to work with it; other woods are expensive and hard to find;

worked carving for a few years before he did his first fish; loves the fish; held off doing the because knew he would never do anything else;

fish and fishing related to his carving; talks about diff types of fish that he carves and some fish stories;

Chincoteague Artist and Carvers Assoc.: what they do; how organized; who involved; needs of organization; meetings; they are the only organization like this on Delmarva; some groups in Jersey and PA;

Other artists in the area; their work; leads;

Newcomers to area who are artists; politics of this [see FNs for Lyn Wyatt]; Pruitts around Cape Charles do good decoys; Griffith does fish decoys but more detailed and fancy, not locals really;

RAILROADS

Railroad in area; influence; when it stopped around end of Korean conflict; effects of that; end of passenger service; trains went through really fast then and the big thing then was to race the trains along route 13 with your car;

Freight trains; steam boats for freight; locations; story of dangers of boat freight;

Weather; predicting weather; couldn't get grandfather to explain how he did this; when you are outside you begin to watch the weather and be more aware of it; look at larger weather picture; stories of this; storm stories

More on sailplanes;

END TAPE

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Date: 11/18/97 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Onancock VA; at China Chefs restaurant

Topic: VA; fishing; commerical fish dealing business;

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This is part two of VA/FT 11. 18.200; we begin in the middle of a conversation about local watermen and the water business

BEGIN SIDE A

Hooksie Walker; friend of Tom's who is a waterman; stories of their times together; waterman/farmer; haule seine in area;

Absence of fish markets; had fish wagon instead that came around; more on boats and mobility; fish populations then: less rock in 50s than today; blames fish pounds; no trout; started going out for flounder; charter industry in 50s and 60s; when started; Wachapreague started and began flounder industry for tourists; now people come to Capt. Bob's on Chincoteague and catch a trout and throw it back because don't know what it is;

Trot lining in the area; 60s crab pots came in; see Fred Maddox on Pocomoke River in Shelldown; Fred on TV because of phisteria;

Some stories about family on the farm; women in his family were good shots with a gun, needed that on the farm; gender issues; women's work on farm;

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

Travelers and visitors to shore; cycling;

END TAPE

Tape #: MAF/KFNA/FT11.18-200

of Tapes: 1

of Sides: 2

Topic: Delmarva Folklife Project
Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation

Comments: There are several towns I was unable to locate on an Atlas and spelled them phonetically.

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T.B.: Chicks. They were day-old chicks. They shipped those by New Hampshire. Came down on the train and then if you can imagine, you get so many in New Hampshire, down here in a day today would be impossible. But the trains ran good. And so they'd be down here and ready to start eating by the time you got them. Of course, feeding them right away. In other words, don't do a lot of eating the first few hours, a day or so. But then they would get them and keep them in the house until they got warm and so forth for a few days. And then they'd start putting them out in the houses. Exact time schedule I don't remember. But like this, they raise the roosters were the ones that they usually fried because the roosters weren't, you only need one or two roosters per flock. And then they raised the hens, the pullets come off, the youngest pullet. And then the hens. And you had - nests that were sort of open. And they'd go in there and lay their eggs, and come back and get the eggs. Whatever eggs were extra, you took out to the store and sold them when you went. Didn't do it every day.

K.F.: Was there a way you could tell the egg had already formed a chicken, or -

T.B.: Well you don't - as long as you don't get it above a certain temperature, you don't worry about the chick. I don't know what the temperature is, but about the body temperature for a chicken, start setting on `em, and then somebody into poultry can tell you better than that, I'm sure. But I wasn't really into chickens, but we had them and, of course, we ate them. And when the hen got to the point where she wasn't laying anymore, then she was likely to go in the pot.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: And there's no need to feed her if she wasn't productive. And they didn't lay then like they do today. I mean their laying period wasn't all that long.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: So you took the eggs out, you had a couple cows, milk the cows, and then took the butter off - the cream off, made butter with it, which you didn't use. You took that to the store and sold it. You kept a running check on what you brought in, and then what you bought there at the store. And at the end of the year, then they settled up. And one of the storekeepers said, like my grandfather said he was the only one that we had to pay at the end of the year. Storekeepers had to pay him.

K.F.: He was a good businessman.

T.B.: My grandfather was John Fisher, that was my mother's father. My other grandfather come down Wachapreague. I never met `cause he died when my father was 11 years old. Father was the youngest of - I'm not sure whether it was 9 or 11 children, down on Nikawomper's Creek.

K.F.: And when did the potato sort of stop being the number one crop around here?

T.B.: Probably somewhere in the 50's. Probably. The labor to dig them and work with them was getting scarce. The chicken plants, as we know them, like Perdue and Holly Farms hadn't started yet. But the people didn't, they just didn't have the labor, or it was getting scarce to work with potatoes or a crop like that. People were coming in from the Bohemian Islands for the summer. Spanish-speaking people weren't here yet. That was still in the future.

K.F.: And so what replaced the potato?

T.B.: Soy beans, tomatoes. I know my grandfather raised, I can remember several years that he did it. For whatever reason they did it for, I don't know, but he would raise, would plant one row of corn and one row of potatoes, so that when he dug the potatoes, he also worked the corn. The corn was about five or six inches high. And so he almost double cropped. Well really, he

T.B.: Yeah, just eroded away. And we'd go down, we'd have parties. It wasn't anything rowdy or anything like that. It was just calm and everybody enjoyed it. And we had people from all up, all over North Hampton County and Accomac would come down. And we'd go out in one of the - the Bayford Oyster Company scows, for those who didn't have a boat or room to get on a boat. And we used to, several times in the middle of winter, we'd all get together at a hotel in Richmond, and just meet and have a dance or whatever for one weekend. And some people were down, all over the country, and we'd come in for that one weekend.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: So we had sort of like a homecoming or whatever. The last time we had anything, Spunk Walker, Randolph Walker, Herman Walker's older brother, Herman's a lawyer down in Neck's Wharf (phonetic). He was sort of instrumental, if he wasn't solely instrumental, in getting the last reunion together, and that was, that was sometime in the 70's. Maybe the mid-70's somewhere. That was the last time I can remember the group, as such, got together.

K.F.: And who was in the group? I mean what -

T.B.: If anything, I was probably the oldest one. If Wooxy (phonetic) was there, he would've been older, but I can't remember if he went to either one. I can't remember if he did or didn't. In Richmond, when we met in Richmond. But likely, I was about the oldest one. Then it gone down to maybe some seniors in high school went out on the boats in the water.

K.F.: Was it all watermen, or -

T.B.: Huh?

K.F.: Was it all men or -

T.B.: No. Girls.

K.F.: Everybody?

T.B.: Dates, whatever. It was just everybody that was interested. Everybody got along fine, no problems nowhere.

K.F.: I've heard a few people talk about how a lot of things really changed right after World War II here on the shore.

T.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: I was wondering if you could tell me about some of those changes.

T.B.: Seems to me like for the most part, anybody who was here, family here before World War II, had been here for a long time. But after the second World War, a lot of people -- or during the second World War, and then particularly the Korean conflict, people came in here from elsewhere for the - we had an air force base near the bridge tunnel, where the bridge tunnel is now.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

T.B.: We had a naval air station Chincoteague, which was right good size. About the time it disbanded, I think it was about 4,000 people there, which was pretty good. And you had your Coast Guard groups, so they brought people in from everywhere, and a good many of them stayed. They married girls here and they stayed. Girls didn't want to go somewhere else.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: It was hard to get a girl to come here, but if they was from here, they didn't want to leave here.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: But he has some birds in there that are just about ready to paint. And I wished, I was in there last night. I wish I'd had my camera because they were just white wood, and they were ready to get started. I don't know whether he's started yet or not.

K.F.: Okay. He's the one that lives beyond the lighthouse?

T.B.: Yeah. You go down, you go down and turn at Shore Stop, you know, the 7/Eleven type thing?

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: On Church Street, and follow it on around to the decoy place - not decoy, kayak place.

K.F.: Kayak. Right.

T.B.: He's in the back.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: Or maybe up front. But if that pickup is there with a couple kayaks on it, he's there. And you got his number?

K.F.: Yes.

T.B.: And give him a call if you can, 6811, and I forgot what his shop number is, but his wife will give it to you. But tell him that you'd like to get in there for a few minutes and take some pictures of him with his work.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: `Cause it would be good. Now then his grandfather, R. Hudson, built workboats, little, I say little, 15, 14, 15, 16 foot boats. Now if you got somebody that has one, and I think there's one or two still left, they are - they're using them for clamming. You would skull them, you know, you know what I mean, skull?

K.F.: Yeah, right.

T.B.: With a single oar. Not row, skull.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: And skull, you could row them, you could pull them and you could put a sail on them. Because these all go back before the days of the outboard motor, see. And there is an old geography book. I have no idea when it was printed, but when I started school in 1936, it was already an old book. And I think it was quite old. But it had pictures of kids on Tangier, and the kids on Chincoteague on their boats. Every kid had a boat. Couldn't get off the island then except by water. And this is what they worked in, went clamming in, went oystering in them. Went fishing, whatever they did. And you called them scooters. And as I remember it, now see I was only about 7 years old when I read this and I don't think I've seen it since, and I'm 68 now. So-

(Laughter.)

T.B.: By my figures, that's 61 years ago. But there were scooters, and every kid had one because they started working early. And this was back in the time when if a man got paid \$1 a day, he was doing pretty good. And a lot of times, you didn't get the dollar. And this friend, Ray Walker, I was telling you about at King Fisher - on Ridge Road, talking about, I think it was his father, they went out clamming all week. And the guy didn't get paid enough, but that guy had a backyard full of cantaloupes, so he paid him off in cantaloupes. Another day, he paid him off in clams had he been down there all week. I mean times were tight. And I don't know what clam pie is, but if you can find out the recipe for clam pie, I think it's just about like chicken pie. But there was a lot of people ate clam pie.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Did you get in to see decoy shop down -

K.F.: I haven't been in there yet. I spent yesterday with a bunch of -- went to a square dance last night. And Sunday, went to about three church services, talked to pastors.

T.B.: You want to hit that thing no matter what.

K.F.: Thank you.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). We had people, friends from down Nassawadox who go up Pocomoke for square dance thing, some time ago. I don't know whether it's - I know he passed away, but I don't know whether he had - some in Exmore that were going. Donovan Plina (phonetic).

K.F.: Yeah, I met them last night.

T.B.: You did?

K.F.: Yeah.

T.B.: So he's still dancing then.

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Now when did like Tyson and Perdue, when did they come onto the scene?

T.B.: Sometime in the 70's. Late 60's, early 70's. Tyson was Holly Farms then.

K.F.: Right, right.

T.B.: And, yeah, they've been - must've been late 60's when they came down there, and I'm not sure, Perdue came later, I think.. I got my last sail, my second sail plane, and I landed in the Holly Farms Airport, you know, that's right there on the highway, that airstrip, I think they've blocked it off so you can't land now, but I just landed there, and out of that house came these two little boys, about four, five years old. One of them said - I hadn't even gotten out of the plane yet, Mister, could I have your autograph? That's the only time anybody ever wanted my autograph. So I said yeah. Came this guy stepping out his plane that had no motor on it, and he thought that was something.

(Laughter).

K.F.: Now what did you do in the Navy when you were there?

T.B.: I was a photographer - photographer.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: But mostly - I never got off the East Coast. A couple times, I was scheduled for a cruise, but that would fall through at the last minute, and somebody else would go. The chief was upset with me over something. He thought I'd done something. And I hadn't. And the other guy, I don't know what he thought about the other guy, but the other guy had three or four years, and he'd let me think that - I'd get everything all packed, and I was in line to have my gear down there, ready for the truck to pick up. He'd say, Burton, you're not going. And there was this other guy over here with his four kids. Right about the same time he told me I wasn't, he told him he was.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: He pulled that two or three times. So I never got on board ship to be stationed on it. And I got out of the Navy, and came home. I was stationed over to Norfolk for somewhere around 13 months. Seemed to me like I'd have 30 days sea time on the freights. That was before the bridge tunnel. Took about an hour and a half to get across.

K.F.: Before the tunnel?

T.B.: I was selling cars -and I had a friend, we'd get up just about as soon as it was light enough to go, be seen, be safe. Get up and ride back through the Pocomoke Forest and back, we'd tried 20, 30 more miles early in the morning and come back, then we'd go to work. And, boy, it's pretty back in there. Have you been to Melbourne Landing yet?

K.F.: No.

T.B.: It's real pretty. It's nice. It's rustic and shed land and its across, across the river, but further up. And that's not so rustic. And it's real nice, got real good camping there. But it's all pretty back in there, and it's real good biking territory back in all of that. It's flat. But the people that are used to hills get down here, and they can't stand this flat land, 'cause it's constant going.

K.F.: Right, right.

T.B.: Even though in a hill, they're used to going up the hill, but they're used to coasting down.

K.F.: Coasting down, right.

T.B.: But I did, for years there, did a survey on the people riding through here. See what they're doing, see how much they were spending. And one of the last ones I talked to was a 75 year old Englishman on his second 10,000 mile tour of the United States on a bike that I wouldn't go from here across town in. And his wife had passed away, his kids were grown, and he had nothing else to do. He had an accent, English accent I'd never heard before, and I had a time. He never spoke loud. He'd just - I said where's your tent? And he didn't really answer me the first time, finally I kept after him. Then he said I don't have one. He said you're staying outside all the time, most of the time. And he said yeah, but says if I have a tent, somebody can see it. And I just lay down on a piece of plastic for ground cover, and another piece of plastic over me, he says people don't see me. So I said all right, you know what you're doing. But his second 10,000 mile tour, and I never heard from him. I took him across the bridge tunnel, set him up on a camping area over there just across the bridge.

K.F.: Yeah.

T.B.: I think one of his - I think his son was a doctor, and his daughter was a head nurse at some hospital. So he said I don't need to worry about them. All they do is worry about me.

K.F.: Now when did you start carving?

T.B.: Well I did a piece here, and I did a piece there for years. And I painted some flat work back in the 70's and sold a few pieces. But carving, I didn't really start until I was out of a job again. And my daughter was 14, 15, somewhere along in there. And I couldn't just leave her somewhere and go pick up a job for just a few dollars an hour. And I owned the place there where I am. And like I'd do a few decoys and do as much there as I can, minimum wage or whatever. And I did. And I did that first, it worked out good, but I was working. And I didn't have many minutes to sit around and rest. So I was there at the house, she was there, and I did good until - and that was in '87. In October, which was the first Monday in October was Black Monday, and then the bottom just dropped out, that was it.

K.F.: You mean the tourism, people quit coming to the shore?

T.B.: Well people quit spending. Because, I mean, they were scared, I guess, because of it. And, of course, normally about that time, the tourist industry dropped, stopped coming down here. People come down here, each year, more people come throughout the year it seems like, been doing it anyway. And but at that time, didn't have as many in the middle of the winter as we do today. But we had a good - during the summer, it was good. And I did all right. But I had, I started with scratch in the first of June, and did - by July and August, I was doing good. If I'

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

T.B.: Well that's what it looks like to me in pictures. I've never seen a live one. But on a fishing program on t.v., in the books, it's a bad looking eye, and I think that's my problem. (Laughter.)

T.B.: Depends on the season, it seems like, as to what kind of fish sells. I mean if it's times when a lot of bluefish or tuna being caught, then I might sell some tuna, even though people don't know what the doggone thing is. I have people, women come up there, they can name everything that I've got there. Well that makes me feel right proud if they can come up there, look at my stuff and say that's a so-and-so, and this is a such-and-such, and they're right. But a lot of them come up there, and they don't care what it looks like, what it is, they don't know. And I don't care as long as they buy it, they take it home and they're happy with it. Hope they'll come back with another one.

K.F.: What would you say is the - before I ask that question, let me ask another thing. The Carvers' Association.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: We were talking about some of the things that they do on the peninsula. And you do things, or you do shows -

T.B.: Yeah. We had three shows on Chincoteague here - they've always show the one comes up Thanksgiving, then Chamber of Commerce show Easter. And then the Carving Association show, present time, is Labor Day weekend. And no matter what, most of the Carving Association participates in these shows. The good part of the carvers and artists in either of these shows is the Thanksgiving and Easter show, for our members. It's not limited to them. The one that is limited is the one at Labor Day which is for the carvers and artists. But they don't have to live on Chincoteague. They can live anywhere in the country, but they're a member. And they may not come to the meetings, or be able to come to the meetings, but they're a member.

K.F.: Now is there an association in Maryland also for the carvers, or -

T.B.: As I can understand, I think it was a shock when we found out, somebody found out that we're the only organization like this on Delmarva. There are other carving and artist associations, but we're different, the way I can understand it. There are groups in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and such, but here on the Delmarva Peninsula, I think we're the main one. Now there are other art groups, like the one down here - well in North Hampton County, but it's not limited to North Hampton County. It's the Eastern Shore Art Council or something. And I really don't know, I see it in the Eastern Shore News, but other than that, I don't know that much.

K.F.: Now what would be the difference between the Carvers' Association and possibly smaller groups of carvers on Delmarva?

T.B.: I think - we're Decoy Carvers and Artists. We have several Nancy West, Joyce Carpenter. Gosh, there's another girl, Sue - she's a young girl. I say she's young. She's got three or four kids. Karen Pruitt, I think it is. Have you met her or talked to her, Karen Pruitt?

K.F.: No.

T.B.: She hasn't been making that long, and she does real good. Beautiful work. Generally speaking, I think she's what they call untrained. Like probably Nancy West has got more so-called training than all the rest of them put together, seems to me like. But that lack of training, it doesn't show through. Seems to be more natural. So I don't know of anything else. I

K.F.: You mean racing in a car?

T.B.: Yeah. And there was, there were several half-step train, or that train when it went across at Westover. The track, you can still see that there were tracks there. Somewhere up in there, down the road, and they would race it one down. And the train was fast though because that was going a straight stretch. Didn't have any towns to go through because back then - I'm trying to think what else might be changed, but went through all these little towns. Some of them are still there, like - Keller and West - Bird's Nest and so on. But it's a long straight stretch. I think it's one of the longest, I think the railroad here was the longest straight stretch in the country.

K.F.: Really?

T.B.: And it's away I've heard it put, longest straight stretch in the country. And you can go from, I think it's Matachapunga. And about the time you come through Matchapunga on a good clear night, there's no traffic or anything ahead of you, you can see the light at Nassawadox. There's a road right there. I think it's six miles straight that you can see. And then it keeps on after that, but it's nothing you want to see on the other side of it. There's no light down there. But that was - see them lose that railroad.

K.F.: So it really affected a lot of the businesses that were going on here as well.

T.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: Agriculture. I mean were the potatoes shipped on a train out of here?

T.B.: Yeah, back in - yeah, the railway's been down here just a little over 100 years. And that opened this whole area up. See a friend, Captain Fred Mears, if I remember him right, he had his captain's license when he was 14 for carrying freight up and down the bay here.

K.F.: Freight -

T.B.: Yeah, boats. Anywhere.

K.F.: Anywhere?

T.B.: Anywhere. And whatever it happened to be. I mean before- one day, he was young, he was pre-teens, he gone with his dad up to Baltimore. Carry something up, but his dad knew a storm was coming. You know, didn't have weather reports like you got today. So he put him on the train to come home from Baltimore and said I'll meet you at Exmore and get you off the train. Well he came down in the boat, sailed down the boat, went up Nassawadox Creek, end up just about to what the Cat Harbor that one branch up there. Get in this - and this was about five or six miles maybe, or more, from Exmore from his house by road. Got in the horse cart and went out and was waiting for Captain Fred when he came down on the train. So that was coming down pretty good seemed to me like. `Cause I mean the train then was moving. It wasn't a slow thing. So had good connections there. And that always impressed me that the poor guy was faster than the train, which didn't take the same route.

K.F.: Well how did people tell the weather? Because I mean agriculture depends on the water, and so would the watermen.

T.B.: You learn. Like my grandfather, I never got him to explain things to me. I kept watch. But he would say well the wind's going to change. It's going to rain in a little bit before so and so. I look up, pretty blue skies, nice blue cloud. Well I wasn't going to argue with him. But sure enough, whatever he said was going to come about came about in time. And in the time, what he said. But you're outside and you begin to watch the weather now. There's not many weathermen today that do that, can do it. And they'll tell you a lot of times that you want to know what's going to happen today, you just ask a Chincoteaguer working on the water, and he

K.F.: Oh, okay.

T.B.: See that heats, the way it used to do, and still does somewhat, have big boilers in there and they heat water in that piping to different buildings. And so that has enough heat coming out of the stacks that some days you can get in there and climb. Stand on the wingtip, it's a tight turn, but you can go on up. And some days, out there flying, that's the only lift we could get. And you go up 4, 5,000 feet some days. And in a sailplane, altitude is time and distance. So you stay up there for a few minutes before you got to get in there and go on up again. Then there were fields around there where it was good. Then at times, we'd take off and go out to New Castle, Virginia to a private field out there. Used to be a meet at Elmira, New York for Thanksgiving. Go up there, but that was cold. It gets cold up there. So we'd go around different places. Sometimes we'd take the club plane sometimes, just our own. And then I got married, and hadn't decided when we left the house where we were going to go after the wedding. She says where you want to go? I said well we can go either north or south. Which way do you want to go? She says let's go to Elmira. Sounds good to me. And we got up in there, and the 134 had just been certified somebody else could fly it other than the company pilot. And I was, I think I as the first to fly the 134, John Doe, to do it. And I told Paul Schwitzer, I said I'm going to fly it like I'm going to buy it. Wasn't a month I bought one. And serial number nine. And that was all metal, 15 meter wing, and she was redlined at 142, and she had terminal velocity - dive brakes that you could open the dive brakes, put your nose straight down and you wouldn't exceed your redline speed. And sometimes you could even do that in a cloud, some parts of the country. So we, I just really enjoyed it. I think I had one-third owner in a 126 which was smaller, maybe 40 foot wing span. Now she would've just really felt like she was part of you. I mean that 134 felt like we were flying the B-29 by comparison. But to beat the 134 was faster. And the 126, you could get right down and fly with a turkey buzzard. And I did several times, but one time I got in with some black vultures. And just about over where the business center is now, I was on my way in, and I saw them there and I realized that they had some lift, so I got in there with them, and they flew off my wing tip, and we went up about 4,500 feet, and then they'd decided they'd gotten high enough. They were going to go, it was in April, and they were heading north. So went up the coast a little bit, and had a ball just flying with them. Right good size, probably about 15 or 20 in the flock. And I turned around and came back home. But that was a lot of fun. We just have hawks come in when they - one time I was in -- to train. And a little hawk, I don't know what it was, little broad-wing hawk came in and got right underneath my wing tip and then he put on his brakes, just like he was backwatering there. And we flew in formation for a good while. And then he'd get as high as he wanted to go, I could go on higher, and he'd take off and go on up the coast. He was going north too.

(END OF TAPE.)

Interview Log

Interviewee: Tom Burton

Tape #: MAF/KF/VA/FT 11.18-200

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault

of Tapes: 1

Date: November 18, 1997

of Sides: 2

Location: OVC "C" ~ C LVA

Topic: Delm Mid Atl klife Project s Foundation

*L. I, Virginia's
Eastern Shore, potatoes*

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: There are several towns I was unable to locate on an Atlas and spelled them phonetically.

BEGIN SIDE A

(Recording begins mid-sentence)

T.B.: Had to start late because of when my birthday was.

K.F.: And what was the school like in Rockbed (phonetic) in '36?

T.B.: It was two rooms, had two teachers, and I'm not sure how high it went. Seems like probably about sixth grade was as far as it went there. I'm not sure. Only went to the first year, and then we went to - moved up north for a couple years, and went to school up in Boston. And once the war came along, we came back down here. There was a lot of talk then about east coast cities being born.

K.F.: Right, right.

T.B.: Food shortages and so forth, and since my grandparents lived on a farm, then we came back down to Ace Neck (phonetic) in North Hampton County.

K.F.: Okay. And what did your family do mostly? Were they farmers?

T.B.: My grandparents, grandfather was. My grandmother passed away some long, you know, time, and it was somewhere around the early part of the war. And that left my grandfather on the farm by himself, which was a 40-acre farm, which was not bad back then. Not small. And everything was done with horses. And we lived there during the war period. The last year, dad got a job in upstate New York. He was a produce broker.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: And potatoes, mostly. And -well almost entirely potatoes. And went to Wellsco, New York, for a year. That's about 80 miles south of Buffalo, up therein the snow belt. Real pretty country. And I enjoyed it. I was glad to get back down here. And that spring is when the war was over, 1945. So came back and stayed down here since. Then graduated from high school, went to Virginia Tech, and Korean War came along, and I was going to be drafted. So I went in the Navy. Didn't want to go in the infantry.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: And let me just ask you if you could explain what a vegetable broker is because I'm not certain some people would know what that is.

T.B.: A potato broker is one that buys and sells potatoes, in between man. Buys from the, makes arrangements with the farmer, and then - for how many he's going to put out that day or whatever, and finds a buyer for him. And this was back in the days when they had the tall telephone, and you picked up the receiver and talked to him and asked Betsy, the operator somewhere, to get you so and so, whether it was New York or Seattle or somewhere else, she knew the numbers just as well as you did because wasn't any dialing. This was still before the days of dialing. And, of course, on the Eastern Shore, they were raising mostly potatoes here. Hadn't started raising soybeans, hadn't started raising corn - not corn, tomatoes or things like that. Raise corn, raise corn to feed the team with, the horses, and the chickens. But nobody raised chickens like you do today. Couldn't even imagine it. Take about 16 weeks to get a chicken even close to now in what we get about six or seven or eight. And seems like it was pretty close to 16 weeks to get a frying chicken. And I don't know, grandparents raised, seemed to me like they had 4 or 500 chickens, they had a lot of chickens. And then you started them in the house. You got these boxes, about 100 to the box, and they came from -

K.F.: And were they chicks or eggs?

T.B.: Chicks. They were day-old chicks. They shipped those by New Hampshire. Came down on the train and then if you can imagine, you get so many in New Hampshire, down here in a day today would be impossible. But the trains ran good. And so they'd be down here and ready to start eating by the time you got them. Of course, feeding them right away. In other words, don't do a lot of eating the first few hours, a day or so. But then they would get them and keep them in the house until they got warm and so forth for a few days. And then they'd start putting them out in the houses. Exact time schedule I don't remember. But like this, they raise the roosters were the ones that they usually fried because the roosters weren't, you only need one or two roosters per flock. And then they raised the hens, the pullets come off, the youngest pullet. And then the hens. And you had - nests that were sort of open. And they'd go in there and lay their eggs, and come back and get the eggs. Whatever eggs were extra, you took out to the store and sold them when you went. Didn't do it every day.

K.F.: Was there a way you could tell the egg had already formed a chicken, or -

T.B.: Well you don't - as long as you don't get it above a certain temperature, you don't worry about the chick. I don't know what the temperature is, but about the body temperature for a chicken, start setting on `em, and then somebody into poultry can tell you better than that, I'm sure. But I wasn't really into chickens, but we had them and, of course, we ate them. And when the hen got to the point where she wasn't laying anymore, then she was likely to go in the pot.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: And there's no need to feed her if she wasn't productive. And they didn't lay then like they do today. I mean their laying period wasn't all that long.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: So you took the eggs out, you had a couple cows, milk the cows, and then took the butter off- the cream off, made butter with it, which you didn't use. You took that to the store and sold it. You kept a running check on what you brought in, and then what you bought there at the store. And at the end of the year, then they settled up. And one of the storekeepers said, like my grandfather said he was the only one that we had to pay at the end of the year. Storekeepers had to pay him.

K.F.: He was a good businessman.

T.B.: My grandfather was John Fisher, that was my mother's father. My other grandfather come down Wachapreague. I never met `cause he died when my father was 11 years old. Father was the youngest of- I'm not sure whether it was 9 or 11 children, down on Nikawomper's Creek.

K.F.: And when did the potato sort of stop being the number one crop around here?

T.B.: Probably somewhere in the 50's. Probably. The labor to dig them and work with them was getting scarce. The chicken plants, as we know them, like Perdue and Holly Farms hadn't started yet. But the people didn't, they just didn't have the labor, or it was getting scarce to work with potatoes or a crop like that. People were coming in from the Bohemian Islands for the summer. Spanish-speaking people weren't here yet. That was still in the future.

K.F.: And so what replaced the potato?

T.B.: Soy beans, tomatoes. I know my grandfather raised, I can remember several years that he did it. For whatever reason they did it for, I don't know, but he would raise, would plant one row of corn and one row of potatoes, so that when he dug the potatoes, he also worked the corn. The corn was about five or six inches high. And so he almost double cropped. Well really, he actually

did. But you had got your potatoes out, but you didn't have a full crop of potatoes, and the same thing with the corn, it wasn't a full crop of corn. But the corn got an early start. And so as I say, it wasn't quite two crops, in a sense, two full crops. But you came ahead on it anyway. And they didn't have potato diggers as a machine yet. They talked about, some people may have had them or were working on them, but at that time, the ones that I knew of left an awful lot in the peeling. Had to go back, sneak up - that didn't - got through.

K.F.: When did the machinery sort of enter agricultural business down here?

T.B.: In the - I think it was probably in the 50's and 60's. Some of the people that are close in to it, better records, because I'm just going from memory, not written record. They really didn't have much in the way of tractors until sometime in the 50's as far as most people having them. They had - Jim Douglas had a tomato canning plant there at Nassawadox. Still over there if you know where to look, south of Nassawadox as you're going out and going south.

K.F.: Is it on the seaside road, or -

T.B.: Out Route 13.

K.F.: It's on 13?

T.B.: Right on 13 as you're leaving Nassawadox. It's over there, all grown up around it. You'll be able to see it now the leaves are off the trees.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: North Hampton Lumber Company had a steam engine that powered the sawmill, and they burned sawdust and wood scrap in there. So I don't know whatever happened to that. It's a shame that it's gone. And there was a crew that kept that going.

K.F.: The other day, you were talking about, I guess when you were a teenager or something, some of the activities you guys used to do.

T.B.: Oh, before I forget it, T.A. Holland at Nassawadox can tell you about that steam engine.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

T.B.: I've been meaning to tell you about North Hampton, 'cause that was one of the main things in this area.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: He lives in Nassawadox down close to the hospital, I think, where you turn off of the, don't know what the name of the street is, but when you come off of 13 and go on back.

K.F.: Oh, right.

T.B.: And you turn on that lane right down to the hospital, he's on the right, just about, I think on that corner.

K.F.: Okay. You were telling us about some of your memories of growing up.

T.B.: That was - okay. Parties, you might say parties and whatnot, I grew up fishing on Nassawadox Creek out of Bayford. Had my first boat built when I was 16. It was a rowboat. It was before the days of outboard motor. I mean they existed, but we didn't have them. And a 16 foot rowboat, and we rowed it, and we found - a friend and I found an old target, airplane, airplanes towed the target, another airplane shot at it, or it was shot at from boats and whatnot. And we made a sail out of it. We did a lot of fishing and had a lot of fun. Later on after I got out of the Navy, a lot of us would, on a Sunday afternoon, get together in the summer and go take our boats out to the mouth of Nassawadox Creek, a little island out there we called Gin and Juice (phonetic). I think it's gone now. That was back in the --

K.F.: Washed - eroded?

T.B.: Yeah, just eroded away. And we'd go down, we'd have parties. It wasn't anything rowdy or anything like that. It was just calm and everybody enjoyed it. And we had people from all up, all over North Hampton County and Accomac would come down. And we'd go out in one of the - the Bayford Oyster Company scows, for those who didn't have a boat or room to get on a boat. And we used to, several times in the middle of winter, we'd all get together at a hotel in Richmond, and just meet and have a dance or whatever for one weekend. And some people were down, all over the country, and we'd come in for that one weekend.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: So we had sort of like a homecoming or whatever. The last time we had anything, Spunk Walker, Randolph Walker, Herman Walker's older brother, Herman's a lawyer down in Neck's Wharf (phonetic). He was sort of instrumental, if he wasn't solely instrumental, in getting the last reunion together, and that was, that was sometime in the 70's. Maybe the mid-70's somewhere. That was the last time I can remember the group, as such, got together.

K.F.: And who was in the group? I mean what -

T.B.: If anything, I was probably the oldest one. If Wooxy (phonetic) was there, he would've been older, but I can't remember if he went to either one. I can't remember if he did or didn't. In Richmond, when we met in Richmond. But likely, I was about the oldest one. Then it gone down to maybe some seniors in high school went out on the boats in the water.

K.F.: Was it all watermen, or -

T.B.: Huh?

K.F.: Was it all men or -

T.B.: No. Girls.

K.F.: Everybody?

T.B.: Dates, whatever. It was just everybody that was interested. Everybody got along fine, no problems nowhere.

K.F.: I've heard a few people talk about how a lot of things really changed right after World War II here on the shore.

T.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: I was wondering if you could tell me about some of those changes.

T.B.: Seems to me like for the most part, anybody who was here, family here before World War II, had been here for a long time. But after the second World War, a lot of people -- or during the second World War, and then particularly the Korean conflict, people came in here from elsewhere for the - we had an air force base near the bridge tunnel, where the bridge tunnel is now.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

T.B.: We had a naval air station Chincoteague, which was right good size. About the time it disbanded, I think it was about 4,000 people there, which was pretty good. And you had your Coast Guard groups, so they brought people in from everywhere, and a good many of them stayed. They married girls here and they stayed. Girls didn't want to go somewhere else.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: It was hard to get a girl to come here, but if they was from here, they didn't want to leave here.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: A lot of things happened after that. Somewhere in your early 50's was when outboard motors got to the point where you could have them. They were more reliable. Boats have

changed. I know I was down in service in the Navy, down in Jacksonville, Florida. And the boating groups, they started forming boating groups. Outboards were small enough, light enough, powerful enough. Boat design changed. And the boating groups had clubs, got together, and several times, they would get everybody that was going out somewhere, and they load their pockets up with silver dollars so that when they spent that silver dollar, whoever they spent it with knew what group it came from. Nobody else was spending silver dollars. The boating groups were spending the silver dollars, and the community could see the silver dollars coming in the cash register, they knew where it had come from, who had spent the first silver dollars. You could get silver dollars then. It's difficult now. But another thing was the \$2 bill. That's what the Navy did. They - when the people in a town started raising a whole bunch of fuss about the Navy, then the Navy would pay off all the sailors in \$2 bills. And they were spending \$2 bills. And here all everybody had a cash register full of \$2 bills, well the Navy is responsible for this.

K.F.: They knew what kind of economic -

T.B.: Yeah, impact that they had. And this was back before, with the silver dollars and the boats, going up the St. John's River, a number of other rivers all over. You needed boat ramps. They didn't have boat ramps like we know today. So this was help - some incentive for the politicians just start putting in boat ramps. Because it was a lot of money being spent. There was money to be spent on it, because up until somewhere in the very early 50's, you didn't have a boat that could get up on a plane and had a little bit of speed to it that John Doe could have. There was a lot of boat building industry here on these small boats, all wood. Most of them were made out of white cedar. Wasn't until later that they were made out of plywood, and then later the fiberglass. And the fiberglass boats are the factory-made boats.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: But you'd find down at Willis Wharf, a good many places, you had one or more people building boats in their backyards. If they wanted a boat, even up to that time, there were several people in the area that wanted a boat, went ahead and built it their selves. You could buy one.

K.F.: Now how did you, how would someone learn these skills to build a boat? I mean that's not a backyard hobby really.

T.B.: Oh, I think people back then, see it was mostly farmers, and they were used to doing things and didn't take, wasn't anything extra for them to be able to do it, most of them. It was within their daily technology, you might say. And there was, gosh, I can't think of the names. If you called them, I'd know them. They were just like they'd be familiar, but for me to call them up, I can't do it. Around Willis Wharf, this friend Jay Church I talk about on Chincoteague, have you seen him yet?

K.F.: No.

T.B.: You need to get in there. If you can get in there tomorrow, because he's got some birds that are just about to be finished. If you could get in there with your camera, whoever's going to do it

K.F.: Oh, okay - in the morning.

T.B.: But don't stay a whole lot. He's running behind schedule. I mean he's in a panic.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: But he has some birds in there that are just about ready to paint. And I wished, I was in there last night. I wish I'd had my camera because they were just white wood, and they were ready to get started. I don't know whether he's started yet or not.

K.F.: Okay. He's the one that lives beyond the lighthouse?

T.B.: Yeah. You go down, you go down and turn at Shore Stop, you know, the 7/Eleven type thing?

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: On Church Street, and follow it on around to the decoy place - not decoy, kayak place.

K.F.: Kayak. Right.

T.B.: He's in the back.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: Or maybe up front. But if that pickup is there with a couple kayaks on it, he's there. And you got his number?

K.F.: Yes.

T.B.: And give him a call if you can, 6811, and I forgot what his shop number is, but his wife will give it to you. But tell him that you'd like to get in there for a few minutes and take some pictures of him with his work.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: 'Cause it would be good. Now then his grandfather, R. Hudson, built workboats, little, I say little, 15, 14, 15, 16 foot boats. Now if you got somebody that has one, and I think there's one or two still left, they are - they're using them for clamming. You would skull them, you know, you know what I mean, skull?

K.F.: Yeah, right.

T.B.: With a single oar. Not row, skull.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: And skull, you could row them, you could pull them and you could put a sail on them. Because these all go back before the days of the outboard motor, see. And there is an old geography book. I have no idea when it was printed, but when I started school in 1936, it was already an old book. And I think it was quite old. But it had pictures of kids on Tangier, and the kids on Chincoteague on their boats. Every kid had a boat. Couldn't get off the island then except by water. And this is what they worked in, went clamming in, went oystering in them. Went fishing, whatever they did. And you called them scooters. And as I remember it, now see I was only about 7 years old when I read this and I don't think I've seen it since, and I'm 68 now. So

(Laughter.)

T.B.: By my figures, that's 61 years ago. But there were scooters, and every kid had one because they started working early. And this was back in the time when if a man got paid \$1 a day, he was doing pretty good. And a lot of times, you didn't get the dollar. And this friend, Ray Walker, I was telling you about at King Fisher - on Ridge Road, talking about, I think it was his father, they went out clamming all week. And the guy didn't get paid enough, but that guy had a backyard full of cantaloupes, so he paid him off in cantaloupes. Another day, he paid him off in clams had he been down there all week. I mean times were tight. And I don't know what clam pie is, but if you can find out the recipe for clam pie, I think it's just about like chicken pie. But there was a lot of people ate clam pie.

K.F.: I have met a woman who -

T.B.: Knows how to do it.

K.F.: -- knows how to make one. I'm getting ready to interview her next time too.

T.B.: And Louis Hancock, oh he was at the north end of the island somewhere up there, he built the Hancock Scows, which is - it's a scow, it's a speed scow, it's a fast workboat. That was developed about the time that the first, about a motor big enough to plane the boat.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: Up until the outboards came along with power, your boats were cutup in the stern. But for something that's going to plane, it's got to come back flat and sharp at the stern. So this causes a lot of drag, the cut up causes a lot of drag when they get up fast. But on a slow, it makes it run easier - row or whatever. And so somewhere in the early to mid-50's, I don't know which company it was, came out with a lightweight two cylinder, two cycle engine that developed somewhere around 12 to 15 horsepower, depending on how you looked at it. Mercury came out with a small, high speed - revving, it would turn fast. But they used an entirely different type of bearing in the Mercury, and the Mercury could stand it. The others used a babbit bearing, and if you turned too fast, it overheats and goes to pieces. But Mercury had a roller and ball needle bearings, so they could really turn up a lot faster and get you a whole lot more power out of a light weight. But Gayle and whoever made this, started the other one, there was a motor that you could put on a 14, 16 foot boat, and it would get it up there on a plane with more speed. Particularly when you had been used to something less than, not a whole lot more than walking speed. So once you get up on top, she'd go. And those boats were built, like I say, all up and down here. And the old guys around Willis Wharf can tell you who was building them, probably show some pictures of them. And that opened up a whole new livelihood. People could use them. Outboard motor could go further, faster and carry a different load. It could do a whole lot more. And the scow was not pointed. It's sort of long. And a slight V, it comes back - it was barely a V in the stem, and it was fast by comparison to what they had. And Louis was one of the early ones to build this, called a Hancock Scow, and he was a good builder. He come from Harker's Island, North Carolina.

K.F.: Okay, right.

T.B.: And was in the Army and met his wife up here, and married and he stayed here. And he does a lot of carving, or he's done it, and he has several brothers down on the Outer Banks down in Hatteras - Harker's Island, North Carolina, who are still carving.

K.F.: Is he still around, or has he passed away?

T.B.: No, he's still there, and he may be at the show.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: He retired from over there a few years ago, and it's Louis Hancock. I'm not sure how it would be listed in the phonebook, but somebody could tell you over there. A similar boat up north is called a Garvey, so I don't know which one came along first and whether one had any effect on the other one or not, Hancock Scows and the Garveys and whatnot. And other people just building them, and a lot of people built that general style boat. You see them out here now still - they copied the general design in fiberglass - the fiberglass, Chincoteague Scow is another term for it.

K.F.: Okay, right. I've seen a couple of wooden boats that have been fiberglassed, like fiberglass over.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Did you get in to see decoy shop down -

K.F.: I haven't been in there yet. I spent yesterday with a bunch of -- went to a square dance last night. And Sunday, went to about three church services, talked to pastors.

T.B.: You want to hit that thing no matter what.

K.F.: Thank you.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). We had people, friends from down Nassawadox who go up Pocomoke for square dance thing, some time ago. I don't know whether it's - I know he passed away, but I don't know whether he had - some in Exmore that were going. Donovan Plina (phonetic).

K.F.: Yeah, I met them last night.

T.B.: You did?

K.F.: Yeah.

T.B.: So he's still dancing then.

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Now when did like Tyson and Perdue, when did they come onto the scene?

T.B.: Sometime in the 70's. Late 60's, early 70's. Tyson was Holly Farms then.

K.F.: Right, right.

T.B.: And, yeah, they've been - must've been late 60's when they came down there, and I'm not sure, Perdue came later, I think.. I got my last sail, my second sail plane, and I landed in the Holly Farms Airport, you know, that's right there on the highway, that airstrip, I think they've blocked it off so you can't land now, but I just landed there, and out of that house came these two little boys, about four, five years old. One of them said - I hadn't even gotten out of the plane yet, Mister, could I have your autograph? That's the only time anybody ever wanted my autograph. So I said yeah. Came this guy stepping out his plane that had no motor on it, and he thought that was something.

(Laughter).

K.F.: Now what did you do in the Navy when you were there?

T.B.: I was a photographer - photographer.

K.F.: Okay.

T.B.: But mostly- I never got off the East Coast. A couple times, I was scheduled for a cruise, but that would fall through at the last minute, and somebody else would go. The chief was upset with me over something. He thought I'd done something. And I hadn't. And the other guy, I don't know what he thought about the other guy, but the other guy had three or four years, and he'd let me think that - I'd get everything all packed, and I was in line to have my gear down there, ready for the truck to pick up. He'd say, Burton, you're not going. And there was this other guy over here with his four kids. Right about the same time he told me I wasn't, he told him he was.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: He pulled that two or three times. So I never got on board ship to be stationed on it. And I got out of the Navy, and came home. I was stationed over to Norfolk for somewhere around 13 months. Seemed to me like I'd have 30 days sea time on the freights. That was before the bridge tunnel. Took about an hour and a half to get across.

K.F.: Before the tunnel?

T.B.: Yeah. I was on the Accomac when she was just put on, and I was on there when she broke the record, I think it was an hour and four minutes. She was moving across there. But we couldn't let her do it because she threw everything else out of schedule. And we had a converted LST to North Hampton that had been cut in the center, and then a section added in there. And I was just, I think it was Easter weekend, it was a pretty weekend, and I was up on the bow, and they were loading from the bow at Little Creek. And somebody down on the ground says hey, we can't let any more foot passengers on, we've got 750 now, and then put a car on yet. So it was quite a, it was just a sea of white, because everybody was in whites. White hats. And when we got off at Kiptopeke, man, it was just - and another freight came in about the same time, just a sea of white out there. And one of the guys would come over during the week, the big parking lot, come over during the week when they didn't have to wait in line to get on the ferry, and bring their cars over, park their cars in the parking lot, then catch the next ferry back, or catch the ferry back.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: And then on Friday night, they would just go down and get on the ferry, pickup your car and go on up New York or New Jersey or wherever.

K.F.: So they wouldn't stay in this area. They'd just -

T.B.: No, they just -and that was when we had a three-lane highway out here, 13 was three lane, and boy, killed a lot of people, killed a lot of sailors a lot of times. Because you'd go to pass and that center lane, somebody else up here was passing too, a lot of real bad wrecks. So it was, when Virginia went four lanes up down here, I think it was in '64, all the way, Maryland was still three lane. By the time Maryland decided to upgrade their highways, the way it seems to me, I'm not sure about this, but the government required any new highway to have a shoulder on it.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

T.B.: -- had shoulders. And out on Dividing Creek Road, you know, just across, going north, just across the river, that road down there by the liquor store, Dividing Creek Road.

K.F.: Okay, right.

T.B.: Going down to Melbourne Landing, I got married in '69, October '69, then we moved out there. And that was really a one-lane road. And we had, by this time, chicken feed trucks were getting big. And if you met another car, you had to put two tires off on the shoulder in order to pass. So sometimes in the early 70's, I don't remember just which year, seems like it was around '72, they fixed that road. Now it's a nice wide - it's two lane, but it's nice and wide so chicken trucks don't run you off the road. It was a thrill sometimes. But Maryland had upgraded its highways and road then.

K.F.: So that's one of those state boundary problems, I mean it could be -

T.B.: Yeah. There's a lot - I used to, back in the late 60's and on into the 80's, I was doing a lot of biking, 10-speed. Nothing excessive, but I mean I'd run 40, 60 miles a day. Get up early in the morning and I'd be back before the middle of the morning. Ride from Pocomoke over to Crisfield and back. And for a while there, I had a job that I didn't have to be to work in until sometimes late in the morning or around noon.

K.F.: What job was that?

T.B.: I was selling cars- and I had a friend, we'd get up just about as soon as it was light enough to go, be seen, be safe. Get up and ride back through the Pocomoke Forest and back,

we'd tried 20, 30 more miles early in the morning and come back, then we'd go to work. And, boy, it's pretty back in there. Have you been to Melbourne Landing yet?

K.F.: No.

T.B.: It's real pretty. It's nice. It's rustic and shed land and its across, across the river, but further up. And that's not so rustic. And it's real nice, got real good camping there. But it's all pretty back in there, and it's real good biking territory back in all of that. It's flat. But the people that are used to hills get down here, and they can't stand this flat land, 'cause it's constant going.

K.F.: Right, right.

T.B.: Even though in a hill, they're used to going up the hill, but they're used to coasting down.

K.F.: Coasting down, right.

T.B.: But I did, for years there, did a survey on the people riding through here. See what they're doing, see how much they were spending. And one of the last ones I talked to was a 75 year old Englishman on his second 10,000 mile tour of the United States on a bike that I wouldn't go from here across town in. And his wife had passed away, his kids were grown, and he had nothing else to do. He had an accent, English accent I'd never heard before, and I had a time. He never spoke loud. He'd just - I said where's your tent? And he didn't really answer me the first time, finally I kept after him. Then he said I don't have one. He said you're staying outside all the time, most of the time. And he said yeah, but says if I have a tent, somebody can see it. And I just lay down on a piece of plastic for ground cover, and another piece of plastic over me, he says people don't see me. So I said all right, you know what you're doing. But his second 10,000 mile tour, and I never heard from him. I took him across the bridge tunnel, set him up on a camping area over there just across the bridge.

K.F.: Yeah.

T.B.: I think one of his - I think his son was a doctor, and his daughter was a head nurse at some hospital. So he said I don't need to worry about them. All they do is worry about me.

K.F.: Now when did you start carving?

T.B.: Well I did a piece here, and I did a piece there for years. And I painted some flat work back in the 70's and sold a few pieces. But carving, I didn't really start until I was out of a job again. And my daughter was 14, 15, somewhere along in there. And I couldn't just leave her somewhere and go pick up a job for just a few dollars an hour. And I owned the place there where I am. And like I'd do a few decoys and do as much there as I can, minimum wage or whatever. And I did. And I did that first, it worked out good, but I was working. And I didn't have many minutes to sit around and rest. So I was there at the house, she was there, and I did good until - and that was in '87. In October, which was the first Monday in October was Black Monday, and then the bottom just dropped out, that was it.

K.F.: You mean the tourism, people quit coming to the shore?

T.B.: Well people quit spending. Because, I mean, they were scared, I guess, because of it. And, of course, normally about that time, the tourist industry dropped, stopped coming down here. People come down here, each year, more people come throughout the year it seems like, been doing it anyway. And but at that time, didn't have as many in the middle of the winter as we do today. But we had a good - during the summer, it was good. And I did all right. But I had, I started with scratch in the first of June, and did - by July and August, I was doing good. If I could've kept that up all year long, I would've been real happy. But I didn't, I didn't do the style that, I didn't copy anybody else's style, because so many people have so many things very similar,

that I just went ahead and did something else. And I had to learn to work with wood that I could get yellow pine, Southern Yellow Pine, and I think it's classed as a soft wood, but when you're working with it, it's hard. And I had to work up a way to work with it. But to work with some of these soft woods, like most the rest of them use, then they're expensive, they're hard to find, and they're getting harder every day to find, so that it just wasn't worth it for me to try and use them. And I worked with the yellow pine, and shelving board. And I make my - I don't know, I've been doing it for several years before I started doing any amount of fish.

K.F.: How did you come upon doing the fish?

T.B.: Well I've always like fish. I held off on doing it because I said if I ever start one and it sells, I'll never do anything else. I mean real poor rationalization, I'll tell you. But when I started, they done pretty good until - that's just about what I had time to do. I mean that would sell, but I won't move more dollars for a fish than I will the other, seems like, the way things are right now. It evolved into it. So and I do them, I do them out of two inch yellow pine too. But they take longer to do and don't move quite as fast. So I stop until I get a good stock built back up. To work with the shelving board, 1" shelving board, which is really actually 3/4 of an inch, it's getting close to 1/2". And you go to buy it now - I just kept doing that. And I don't know how many pieces I could have, because all of the sudden somebody will come in that has a shop somewhere, and they'll buy a number of pieces. Mostly, I don't do any mail order.

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: It takes me too long to pack one up and send it off. Not that I'm against it, but I don't encourage it right now. I might later on, but I had a youngster that was helping me who was 19 when he started, and he was real good, but he got a job, he was - couldn't take a regular job say from 8 until 4:30 or 5, because his wife liked to work at night, and both of them were workers. Both of them young kids. I think she was younger than he was by just a little bit. And she liked to work, and she liked to work at night. Well that meant that he had to stay up and help her, be with her. He wouldn't leave her alone while she was working. But he could help me. Finally, he did get a good daytime job, I don't know what they do. But he was a big help, and a lot of people came back and they wanted a piece that he had made, and they wanted him to sign it, and they got disappointed when he wasn't there. So but it's hard to find somebody to work like the hours and whatnot that I work. Has to be somebody that is free on the weekend and wants to work. And, of course, like it's been this year, if the weather's bad, you don't get anything done 'cause I'm outside.

K.F.: Now how did you decide which fish to start carving?

T.B.: Whatever comes across my mind. Nothing in particular. It's not that I don't do, it's not that I don't do a certain kind. It's mostly that I'm - if somebody comes in here, I'm out of it or I haven't done that one yet. You know. I've never finished a walleye, people that freshwater fish, a lot of people want walleye, and that's about the ugliest fish to me. And I've never been able to finish one. I've got a whole bunch of them started, but I just haven't been able to finish them.

K.F.: Why not?

T.B.: Mental hang-up. I mean - this lady came in from Michigan. And that's all she could talk about was walleye. And she enjoyed fishing walleye, said they're good, fun to catch and all that. But it's got a funny eye, looks like it's blind. You ever seen a blind horse?

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

T.B.: Well that's what it looks like to me in pictures. I've never seen a live one. But on a fishing program on t.v., in the books, it's a bad looking eye, and I think that's my problem. (Laughter.)

T.B.: Depends on the season, it seems like, as to what kind of fish sells. I mean if it's times when a lot of bluefish or tuna being caught, then I might sell some tuna, even though people don't know what the doggone thing is. I have people, women come up there, they can name everything that I've got there. Well that makes me feel right proud if they can come up there, look at my stuff and say that's a so-and-so, and this is a such-and-such, and they're right. But a lot of them come up there, and they don't care what it looks like, what it is, they don't know. And I don't care as long as they buy it, they take it home and they're happy with it. Hope they'll come back with another one.

K.F.: What would you say is the - before I ask that question, let me ask another thing. The Carvers' Association.

T.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: We were talking about some of the things that they do on the peninsula. And you do things, or you do shows -

T.B.: Yeah. We had three shows on Chincoteague here - they've always show the one comes up Thanksgiving, then Chamber of Commerce show Easter. And then the Carving Association show, present time, is Labor Day weekend. And no matter what, most of the Carving Association participates in these shows. The good part of the carvers and artists in either of these shows is the Thanksgiving and Easter show, for our members. It's not limited to them. The one that is limited is the one at Labor Day which is for the carvers and artists. But they don't have to live on Chincoteague. They can live anywhere in the country, but they're a member. And they may not come to the meetings, or be able to come to the meetings, but they're a member.

K.F.: Now is there an association in Maryland also for the carvers, or -

T.B.: As I can understand, I think it was a shock when we found out, somebody found out that we're the only organization like this on Delmarva. There are other carving and artist associations, but we're different, the way I can understand it. There are groups in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and such, but here on the Delmarva Peninsula, I think we're the main one. Now there are other art groups, like the one down here - well in North Hampton County, but it's not limited to North Hampton County. It's the Eastern Shore Art Council or something. And I really don't know, I see it in the Eastern Shore News, but other than that, I don't know that much.

K.F.: Now what would be the difference between the Carvers' Association and possibly smaller groups of carvers on Delmarva?

T.B.: I think - we're Decoy Carvers and Artists. We have several Nancy West, Joyce Carpenter. Gosh, there's another girl, Sue - she's a young girl. I say she's young. She's got three or four kids. Karen Pruitt, I think it is. Have you met her or talked to her, Karen Pruitt?

K.F.: No.

T.B.: She hasn't been making that long, and she does real good. Beautiful work. Generally speaking, I think she's what they call untrained. Like probably Nancy West has got more so-called training than all the rest of them put together, seems to me like. But that lack of training, it doesn't show through. Seems to be more natural. So I don't know of anything else. I think the rest of them are - the other groups, most of them seem to be more focused on whatever they're interested in, certain kind of art, but I'm not really good one to say this, and certainly not

to take it as gospel, I don't mix with them. I don't like to say it that way 'cause it sounds like I don't want to. I don't have time, or haven't gotten the time or the *effort* to go with it, see what somebody else is doing or who else is there. We've got several people in here that come in here from somewhere else. I was thinking about - saw on the news couple weeks ago about a man and his wife, they're sculptors, if I remember right. They had some pictures in there what they were doing, small pieces, and they sell for a good bit of money. I'm not a good businessman.

K.F.: We all have our talents.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: But anyhow, there was a small group in Belle Haven that just meet, four or five people, I think. I know, I probably know all of them, but I may not know all of them that they are associated with. Bradshaw is one of them, I don't think there's any formal meeting or any officers or anything like that. They just pick up and get around and carve one or two nights a week or whenever. And then there's something like that down around Nassawadox and Bird's Nest area. And down around - there's a couple guys down around Cape Charles that I - his name is Pruitt down there, does some real pretty work. His is, mostly his is decoys. It's Griffin. I think it's G-R-I-F-F-I-N, but it might be T-H. He was retired from the Coast Guard, and he was in command up at Chincoteague. Does fish. And there's one or two others that do fish, but they do more detail and real pretty pieces.

K.F.: I could just ask around Cape Charles for him?

T.B.: Yeah. I think they've got a museum down there. Ask who does down there. Anybody that I knew in Cape Charles has either left the area or has passed on. And these people, I know when I see them, I talk to them. But as far as remembering names, I never was good at it and I'm getting worse.

K.F.: Now what would you say would be the biggest change that's happened here on the shore since you've been here?

T.B.: Tourist industry. The way farming, the way -- the watermen situation, the seafood industry. And the poultry, the way that's come up. Hard to say. My grandfather was one of the first to ship - ship cut flowers off the Eastern Shore of Virginia. And if my memory's right, we'd take the things out by horse and cart, or horse and wagon depending on how many we have. If it's wagon, there was two horses. If it was a cart, it was one. Out to the -- to get on like the 11:00 train. And they'd be in New York in the market late that afternoon or evening. Seems to me like my grandfather would get the check back the next day. Try that today by train.

(Laughter.)

T.B.: Or any other way. And it certainly wasn't next week or something else. It was very quick. And that was a big change. Up until about the time that the railroad was - railroad stopped carrying passengers to an extent, which was somewhere around the end of the Korean conflict. I'm not sure of that. But when they moved out of Cape Charles and down to - moved out of Cape Charles and down to Kiptopeke, that was the end of the passenger service there. But the trains would move through here real, real fast. I mean 60 and 70 miles an hour. And there was one thing, of course, up and down 13, 13 parallel -

K.F.: Right.

T.B.: To race them. I don't remember ever racing in one.

K.F.: You mean racing in a car?

T.B.: Yeah. And there was, there were several half-step train, or that train when it went across at Westover. The track, you can still see that there were tracks there. Somewhere up in there, down the road, and they would race it one down. And the train was fast though because that was going a straight stretch. Didn't have any towns to go through because back then - I'm trying to think what else might be changed, but went through all these little towns. Some of them are still there, like - Keller and West - Bird's Nest and so on. But it's a long straight stretch. I think it's one of the longest, I think the railroad here was the longest straight stretch in the country.

K.F.: Really?

T.B.: And it's away I've heard it put, longest straight stretch in the country. And you can go from, I think it's Matachapunga. And about the time you come through Matchapunga on a good clear night, there's no traffic or anything ahead of you, you can see the light at Nassawadox. There's a road right there. I think it's six miles straight that you can see. And then it keeps on after that, but it's nothing you want to see on the other side of it. There's no light down there. But that was - see them lose that railroad.

K.F.: So it really affected a lot of the businesses that were going on here as well.

T.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: Agriculture. I mean were the potatoes shipped on a train out of here?

T.B.: Yeah, back in -yeah, the railway's been down here just a little over 100 years. And that opened this whole area up. See a friend, Captain Fred Mears, if I remember him right, he had his captain's license when he was 14 for carrying freight up and down the bay here.

K.F.: Freight -

T.B.: Yeah, boats. Anywhere.

K.F.: Anywhere?

T.B.: Anywhere. And whatever it happened to be. I mean before - one day, he was young, he was pre-teens, he gone with his dad up to Baltimore. Carry something up, but his dad knew a storm was coming. You know, didn't have weather reports like you got today. So he put him on the train to come home from Baltimore and said I'll meet you at Exmore and get you off the train. Well he came down in the boat, sailed down the boat, went up Nassawadox Creek, end up just about to what the Cat Harbor that one branch up there. Get in this - and this was about five or six miles maybe, or more, from Exmore from his house by road. Got in the horse cart and went out and was waiting for Captain Fred when he came down on the train. So that was coming down pretty good seemed to me like. `Cause I mean the train then was moving. It wasn't a slow thing. So had good connections there. And that always impressed me that the poor guy was faster than the train, which didn't take the same route.

K.F.: Well how did people tell the weather? Because I mean agriculture depends on the water, and so would the watermen.

T.B.: You learn. Like my grandfather, I never got him to explain things to me. I kept watch. But he would say well the wind's going to change. It's going to rain in a little bit before so and so. I look up, pretty blue skies, nice blue cloud. Well I wasn't going to argue with him. But sure enough, whatever he said was going to come about came about in time. And in the time, what he said. But you're outside and you begin to watch the weather now. There's not many weathermen today that do that, can do it. And they'll tell you a lot of times that you want to know what's going to happen today, you just ask a Chincoteaguer working on the water, and he can tell you far better than the weatherman on the base, because he's looking at a whole other

thing, but he doesn't look at, in my way of thinking of it, the micro - they call it micrometeorology, the small. One day we were, I wanted to go fishing, going fishing out of Remakville. They said the trout were biting. So about 10:00, I looked up, back northwest, and that side didn't look any too good. So I called a friend that was in the weather bureau there on the base. Said we got a storm coming in here this afternoon? No, don't show anything. I said there's something building, I think. Kept watching it, watching it, and I called him three, four - I know the man, I worried him to death, because he was normally accurate. But I said that sky's not right. So finally we got the crew together after work, and we got in the boat and we went out. And I said we'd like - I said when I tell you to move, we're going to move, we're going in, pull your stuff in. And finally, I could see she was starting to move. I said let's go. Didn't have too far to go. I mean might've gone a mile or two, no more than that. And there were other people out there. I said we're going in. We got in, and we just got that boat in the trailer and us in the car and it hit. And I mean to tell you, she hit. And we went through Stockton. And there was a real big old tree had been sitting there. That was blown over, limbs were blown. Well I'm not too - I didn't let it catch me. I'd been watching it. But, you know, you can begin to know the weather in your area. And go out there, watch it, but the weather people in the weather bureau, most of them don't get out and look. And but there - when they say it's going to, chance of rain, that means in the viewing area. So with Salisbury, you might say from Cape Charles to Wilmington, that's 200 miles. Flying sailplanes, used to pay a little bit more attention to weather than you do, would normally.

K.F.: And how did you learn to file sailplanes?

T.B.: Had a guy, he was from Switzerland, Schwartzburger (phonetic). Oatmar, O-A-T-M-A-R, Schwartzburger. And he was an engineer, and I think he got his degree in Switzerland, and came to this country, and then met - into Texas, and I think he was working what turned out to be one of the space companies - and then it turned into another name. But anyway, he married a girl from Dallas, and then they came up here with a company with the - rocket. And he had, it was all wood, but it was real sleek, sailplane. He needed somebody to help him fly it. And I don't mean to get in there and fly it, but a sailplane takes somebody to put it together. Takes a crew, takes three or four people to put it together, unless you're rigged special, because you take wings off, unplug them, and then you need the ground crew. And then you need, in our case out here, you need somebody to drive the car to tow it in the air 'cause we didn't have a tow plane. So he taught us all to fly. We ended up getting a club, and we bought a two place trainer. Two other guys, myself, bought a single place. All of them made up here in Delmar and New York at the time, Schwitzer. And so one time, there were about 50 members in the club. Most of them were associated with Wallops. But I had Italians, had a whole bunch of Italians. And then we'd go out there after work, the weekends, any time that was fit, sometimes when it wasn't fit. And go out and we towed up the car and 1,200 foot of high propylene rope, 5/16, I think, it may have been 3/8 rope and 1,200 foot, that was stretched a little bit. So on 1,200 foot, we'd get 1,200 foot - and release, and make a pattern and we'd get some lift in there. We'd circle in it and go on up. And that heating plant, I don't know how many tens of thousands of feet of altitude had been gained off of that heating plant there.

K.F.: The heating plant?

T.B.: Yeah, on the base.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

T.B.: See that heats, the way it used to do, and still does somewhat, have big boilers in there and they heat water in that piping to different buildings. And so that has enough heat coming out of the stacks that some days you **can get in there and climb. Stand on the wingtip, it's a tight turn, but** you can go on up. And some days, out there flying, that's the only lift we could get. And you go up 4, 5,000 feet some days. And in a sailplane, altitude is time and distance. So you stay up there for a few minutes before you got to get in there and go on up again. Then there were fields around there where it was good. Then at times, we'd take off and go out to New Castle, Virginia to a private field out there. Used to be a meet at Elmira, New York for Thanksgiving. Go up there, but that was cold. It gets cold up there. So we'd go around different places. Sometimes we'd take the club plane sometimes, just our own. And then I got married, and hadn't decided when we left the house where we were going to go after the wedding. She says where you want to go? I said well we can go either north or south. Which way do you want to go? She says let's go to Elmira. Sounds good to me. And we got up in there, and the 134 had just been certified somebody else could fly it other than the company pilot. And I was, I think I as the first to fly the 134, John Doe, to do it. And I told Paul Schwitzer, I said I'm going to fly it like I'm going to buy it. Wasn't a month I bought one. And serial number nine. And that was all metal, 15 meter wing, and she was redlined at 142, and she had terminal velocity - dive brakes that you could open the dive brakes, put your nose straight down and you wouldn't exceed your redline speed. And sometimes you could even do that in a cloud, some parts of the country. So we, I just really enjoyed it. I think I had one-third owner in a 126 which was smaller, maybe 40 foot wing span. Now she would've just really felt like she was part of you. I mean that 134 felt like we were flying the B-29 by comparison. But to beat the 134 was faster. And the 126, you could get right down and fly with a turkey buzzard. And I did several times, but one time I got in with some black vultures. And just about over where the business center is now, I was on my way in, and I saw them there and I realized that they had some lift, so I got in there with them, and they flew off my wing tip, and we went up **about** 4,500 feet, and then they'd decided they'd gotten high enough. They were going to go, it was in April, and they were heading north. So went up the coast a little bit, and had a ball just flying with them. Right good size, probably about 15 or 20 in the flock. And I turned around and came back home. But that was a lot of fun. We just have hawks come in when they - one time I was in -- to train. And a little hawk, I don't know what it was, little broad-wing hawk came in and got right underneath my wing tip and then he put on his brakes, just like he was backwatering there. And we flew in formation for a good while. And then he'd get as high as he wanted to go, I could go on higher, and he'd take off and go on up the coast. He was going north too.

(END OF TAPE.)