

Interview Log

Interviewee: Elizabeth Dunleavy **Tape #:** 011113

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Mott

BEGIN SIDE A

L.D.: -- the plant closed because we went into frozen seafood. So they went out of fresh seafood business all together.

K.F.: Okay.

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

K.F.: Well let me just start by having you say your name. And then we'll make sure that this is going to record. Okay.

L.D.: I'm Elizabeth Dunleavy.

K.F.: Okay. And do you prefer to be called Elizabeth or --

L.D.: No, they call me Lib. Everybody calls me Lib.

K.F.: All right. Now where were you born, Lib?

L.D.: I was born in Queen Anne County in Grasonville.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Then I moved back here when I was about 10.

K.F.: Were you parents from Tilghman?

L.D.: My father was.

K.F.: Okay. And what was his occupation?

L.D.: He was a waterman.

KR: Okay. And what did your mom do?

L.D.: Mother was just a housewife.

K.F.: Okay. She didn't pick crabs or anything like that?

L.D.: No. She was never very well, so she never worked out of the house.

K.F.: Okay. Can I ask what year you were born in?

L.D.: Oh, let's see. 1916.

K.F.: Okay. All right. And what other picking houses did you work at? I know you worked at Tilghman.

L.D.: Never worked anywhere. Only at Tilghman Packing Company. That's the only place I ever worked until it closed, and then I went in the restaurant business.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And how long did you work at Tilghman?

L.D.: That was many, many, many years. It was better than 30 years, I'm sure.

K.F.: Wow.

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

K.F.: Were you there from when it started?

L.D.: No, no, no. They used to -- they had seasonal work at that time. Of course, crab picking was seasonal work. Because they didn't use to pick crabs then in the wintertime. They just picked in the summer.

K.F.: Okay. What did they do in the wintertime?

L.D.: In the wintertime, there wasn't much of anything there, other than the oyster shucking. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And I never did that.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: That wasn't my cup of tea. I couldn't do anything with that. And then at onetime they did shuck some clams, and I never did that.

K.F.: Okay. And what did you do at Tilghman Packing Company?

L.D.: Well when I first started there, I picked crabs.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And then when the canning season come on and the corn season, I used to work in that, in the skinning tomatoes, and cutting the corn. We had huskers, and we also had corn cutters.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: And we did that. And then there was a time that we worked in some tuna fish. The tuna was brought in here, and we steamed and we worked in those. But in the summertime, until they went out of fresh seafood business, we just picked crabs.

K.F.: Okay. And let me ask you how many of the crab pickers would switch over like that and do the produce and the corn and that kind of stuff?

L.D.: Well the majority of `em would.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Yes.

K.F.: So that way, you stayed employed year-round.

L.D.: So that way, they came -- they had employment almost the year round. Maybe a few months when it was frozen up so that you couldn't get out to get anything, that we wouldn't be able to do nothing.

K.F.: Okay. And what's your earliest memory of working in the picking house?

L.D.: Well I worked there in -- I think the first time I ever picked crabs, I think, was in about -- it must've been `31 or `32. Because at that time, it was during the depression.

And they often laugh around here when I tell them that we picked crabs for 3 cents a pound at that time. And the youngsters around here, they can't realize that.

K.F.: Right. And they can't realize just how much money that was then either.

L.D.: At that time. Because that, to us, meant a lot. But that's what it was. We picked crabs for 3 cents a pound. Then, of course, as the years went on, it increased. But it never got anything like it was to where it is today.

K.F.: Right, like \$2 a pound or something.

L.D.: \$2 a pound, nothing. Nothing like that. No. Because like I say, they went out of the seafood business all together, and then they went into the frozen food business. And by that time, I was hiring the help for that department. And was still working on the floor as an overseer or forelady, whatever.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you how you learned to pick crabs.

L.D.: Well it seemed like to me everybody here did it. So then I did it too, and I learned it right at the plant.

K.F.: Oh, you did?

L.D.: Yes.

K.F.: By watching or --

L.D.: Just by watching. And then it was several of us girls that worked together, and that's how we taught ourselves.

K.F.: Oh. Do you remember the girls' names?

L.D.: Oh, yes. Agnes Haddaway was with me at the time. And there was another lady by the name of Sadie Haddaway, and Margaret Rowe. Oh, my. It would be an enormous amount because it was about anywhere from 100 to 150 pickers in the plant.

K.F.: Okay. Can you describe the table that you worked at?

L.D.: What we worked on was a metal table, and it had been covered with metal. And we worked on that and we took chairs, we had chairs that we sit in. And then we used to pick in an aluminum pan. And then we graduated from that to picking in the pound cans. We would have them on a tray, and we would pick in the pound cans.

K.F.: Okay. And were the cans --

L.D.: That was to keep bacteria down.

K.F.: -- metal at that time?

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

K.F.: They were metal?

L.D.: They were metal.

K.F.: With the three holes in the bottom?

L.D.: Yeah, Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. And I know some people have told me that everybody preferred to sit in a certain space every day.

L.D.: Every day. You had your same place that you sat every day, and you sat with your same group every day.

K.F.: Now what was it like working with a group of people like that every day?

L.D.: Well it was a lot of fun because somebody -- you didn't have much money at that time to go out and do a lot of things like we do today. So we made our own good times. And a lot of times, we would laugh and talk about the things that we had done the night before. We used to play a lot of cards.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: And do things of that nature because you didn't have, everybody didn't have television, see, or anything. So you made your own good time. And it seemed like we always had something to talk about as far as a recipe was concerned or something that had gone on in the community, and the kids going to school. Things of those nature.

K.F.: Right. Now the women who sat with you at your table, did you rely on them, you know, if somebody got sick, everybody helped each other outside of the plant or something? I mean --

L.D.: Yes, yes.

K.F.: -- were they people you really relied on outside of the plant?

L.D.: We were very -- everybody was very helpful to one another. If they were sick and we could carry `em to a doctor or do anything for it, we always did it. And several times, some of my friends I stayed with even at night when they were sick. And but I've done that all my life.

K.F.: Right, right. Okay. Let me ask you about the cards, I'm kind of curious. I come from a card-playing family myself. And I'm sort of curious what cards you played.

L.D.: We played 500 a lot.

K.F.: What's that?

L.D.: We played 500. It's -- you can play four head. Or you can play, I think I've got a six-handed deck here that I've still got. But you play with bowers. The Jacks are the right hand and the left hand bowers, and you bid in spades, clubs, diamonds, hearts and no trump.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And then we played a lot of pitch.

K.F.: How do you play that?

L.D.: And that was high-low Jack.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We played that. And, of course, we didn't have much money then, so they -- if we played any penny-ante, or anything like that, we played with matches.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

(OFF RECORD -- TELEPHONE.)

K.F.: Okay, well let me ask you, you started off by picking the claws. Right?

L.D.: No. We used to top-shell the crab, and we would leave our claws for last to do. And a lot of times, we had young boys that could work then. And the younger children used to do a lot of the claw whacking,

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: So most of the time, we didn't have to do too much claw whacking.

K.F.: Okay. Did you ever -- were you ever one of the young children that had to do the claw whacking?

L.D.: No. I couldn't do the claws very well. I still today can't do them very well. I have a little claw-whacking dohicky that I do 'em with.

K.F.: Okay.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: No. I could pick the crabs, but I couldn't do much with whacking the claws.

K.F.: Well describe to me how you picked the crab.

L.D.: Well what we did, we would take the top shell off, and then we would take the fins off and the back. But we didn't take the back off all the time. We took the fins off and what they call the dead men fingers, and then clean the inside of that crab off. And then we would slice that crab down the one side, and pick the lump out and the regular in separate pans.

K.F.: Right, okay.

L.D.: And that's how we did that.

K.F.: Okay. And what tools were you all using to pick?

L.D.: We used what they used to use, and then they were outlawed. But when we first started picking back then, we used what they call Barlow knives.

K.F.: Okay. And was that the people who made them, Barlow?

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

K.F.: Why were those outlawed?

L.D.: Well because they had a wooden handle, on account of bacteria. And then we used a solid steel knife that had no cracks or anything in it so that it wouldn't build up any bacteria.

K.F.: Now in your opinion, which was the better knife?

L.D.: Well the better knife health-wise was the solid knife, the all steel.

K.F.: And for picking a crab?

L.D.: But for picking a crab, I would prefer the old Barlow.

K.F.: And why is that?

L.D.: That was just easier to handle because the stainless steel knife would slip in your hand because you have a moisture from the crab that gets on your hand. So it would sort of twist and turn in your hand.

K.F.: Didn't that slow you down at all?

L.D.: It would slow you down at times.

K.F.: Okay. Was there anybody else in your family that picked crabs as well?

L.D.: No. No, my mother never picked. And I don't think my aunt -- I don't remember her ever picking, just my cousin, Agnes, she picked, but nobody else because we're a very small family.

K.F.: Right, okay.

L.D.: Just two of us children.

K.F.: Okay. We're trying to find out if there were families --

L.D.: If it was a family. No. No, it was not.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you, after you picked the crabs, at what time did you become the forewoman or forelady?

L.D.: Well that was a good many -- I picked crabs, I guess, I don't remember what year it was we started in produce and food. But that's when I used to get the girls together.

Now they still picked crabs when we first started in frozen food.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: But I came out of the picking crabs and went into the frozen food.

K.F.: Okay. And then some of the pickers --

L.D.: Some of the other girls were still picking crabs at that time.

K.F.: Okay. And let me ask you to kind of take me on a little tour of the picking room in Tilghman Packing Company. If we were walking through it, can you describe to me what I would see?

L.D.: Yes. As we were walking, we would come in from the front of the building, and that's what we called the packing room. That's where we took the crab meat to weigh it. So we would walk through there, and we would walk into the picking room, and that's where you would have maybe 20, 25 tables. And it would be people sitting on each side of the table. Because the crabs would be brought in, and dumped on the table. And then you would just start to pick the crabs. But that's how it was. The whole room was nothing but tables, and chairs and trash cans. That was about the extent of it. And then they would have a window that you would go to when it was time to weigh your meat. And they would weigh your meat, and then they would give you your pan back, and you would have to wash your pan and chlorine it and then go back to work.

K.F.: Okay. And what did the picking room sound like?

L.D.: Very noisy. 'Cause it was always everybody was talking at one time, and it was a lot of whacking going on, or trimming going on and pans banging, so it was kind of noisy. But yet, it was an environment where everybody seemed to laugh and enjoy themselves.

K.F.: Now was there any hymn singing or anything like that going on?

L.D.: Well yes, yes. We had a couple sisters there that were very good at singing. And they were always singing.

K.F.: Okay. Do you remember who that was?

L.D.: That was, wait a minute now. Can't think of her last name. Miss Ida Pritchett. And it was Birdy Miller, they used to sing. They both had lovely voices. And it was several others that sang with `em. But it was always something going on.

K.F.: Okay. And what did the picking room smell like at the time?

L.D.: Well when you went in in the morning, you knew you were going into a crab house.

K.F.: What does that mean?

L.D.: Because you could get the smell of the crab from the day before, even though it had been hosed down and cleaned. You still knew that you were going into a crab house. And in the hot weather, it wasn't very nice because you would have the smell, you know, of the crabs. But they did, I will say that, they did keep it clean. And they hauled their pickings away. So there wasn't a lot of pickings laying around that were stinking, `cause that's what used to make it so bad. But they had a truck that they used to wheel those pickings up on a truck.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And then what did they do with them?

L.D.: And they would haul them away. But they would wheel the pickings up on a truck. Now I'm sure many years before I ever started to pick crabs, that maybe they didn't do it that way, but that was the way we did t here.

K.F.: Okay. I've been asking people that question because sometimes they think about the smell and it makes `em --

L.D.: It does, it was terrible.

K.F.: -- remember things.

L.D.: God. I know it used to be when you rode -- I'm not going to say that while we're on tape.

K.F.: Okay.

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: What did you wear to work? Was there a uniform or just --

L.D.: No. No uniform. You just wore a cotton dress, and then you had your aprons that you wore.

K.F.: And was the apron --

L.D.: Just a cloth apron.

K.F.: Just brought it from home?

L.D.: They furnished nothing. Only the pans that you picked in.

K.F.: Okay. And how many people, how many women in the picking room were African American, and how many were --

L.D.: Well it was, I'd say almost half and half. Because it was a lot of the black people that come from Sherwood, and Wittman, but everybody got along well, there was no problem in that department at all. They all laughed and talked. Of course, they were sort of all on one side and we were on the other, but not because they had to be. You know what I mean.

K.F.: Right. Okay. And I know there were men that worked at the picking house. What were their jobs?

L.D.: Well there were some that brought crabs in, and there were some that took the pickings out. And then there was men that steamed the crabs. And there was men in the packing room that weighed your crabmeat, and there was men in the packing room that

packed your crabmeat up like the special and the claw and the regular was all packed in different cans.

K.F.: Why do you think men didn't want to pick crabs or didn't pick crabs?

L.D.: I don't know other than maybe they never had to because they had plenty female help is the only thing I can account for. Because I don't remember ever seeing -- I've seen men whack claws.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: But I had never seen `em pick crabs. Now they could pick crabs, all those men, I'm sure.

K.F.: Oh, they could?

L.D.: I'm sure they could. My, God, when you live around this country, anybody almost can pick a crab.

K.F.: Right. True.

L.D.: Because they were used to having crab feasts at home, you know, and things like that. And I know my grandchildren, they know what to do with a crab just as easily as I would. Because they have seen us all through life when we have crab feasts and things, how we pick them and do them.

K.F.: That was going to be another question of mine was how often did you all eat crabs at home and -- I mean you work in a crab house, so --

L.D.: It never bothered, it never bothered me. I'm a seafood lover.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: And I could eat `em three times a week. And I'm the same way with oysters or fish because I am a seafood lover.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: And there are so many ways that you can fix `em, you know.

K.F.: And what's your favorite way?

L.D.: Well I like the crab cake. And I like crab imperial. And crab au gratin. So many things. And we make crab molds at Christmas time.

K.F.: Oh, you do?

L.D.: For dips. Yes.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And things of that -- it's so many things out there that you can do with an oyster or a crab.

K.F.: Now I heard that Tilghman Packing Company had a crab cake named after you, is that right?

L.D.: That's right. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Now how did that happen?

L.D.: Well it was just my crab recipe. And so Mr. Harrison said -- I got no royalty from it or anything like that. But Mr. Harrison said we're going to make a label. Can we use Miss Lib's crab cake? And I said sure. It was all right with me `cause I had worked there for years.

K.F.: Right, right.

L.D.: And we made the crab cake, and we sold `em in -- mostly in the two pound box.

K.F.: Okay. I think I've seen photos of people making the crab cake.

L.D.: Yes. I'm sure you have because we used to make `em, and fry `em. And then they would go down a belt where the girls would pack `em.

K.F.: Okay. Now was that area all part of the same building as --

L.D.: That was the same building when we started. And then after a while when the crab picking stopped all together, then the whole building was thrown into frozen food. But we used to do the crab cakes on the machines, and we had fryers to fry `em with.

K.F.: Now what was so special about your crab cake?

L.D.: Well I don't know, other than it was just an old recipe, you know. It was nothing

K.F.: It was a family recipe?

L.D.: Yeah, it was nothing out of the ordinary as far as I'm concerned.

K.F.: Okay. I know a few people I've talked to in Dorchester County, every county seems to have a different way.

L.D.: Different way of making the crab cakes. That's very true.

K.F.: Now what would be the typical Talbot County or Tilghman Island way of making a crab cake?

L.D.: Well we would be -- crab cake, bread crumb, and egg, and I used Old Bay Seasoning in mine. And I liked a little bit of lemon juice. And, of course, we used mayonnaise and mustard. Some people don't use mayonnaise.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Some people like to use all mustard or all mayonnaise, but we used to mix it. And we put a little parsley in `em.

K.F.: Okay. Now I want one.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: Yeah. So that was what we did with -- that's how come my name came to be on the label. `Cause I had worked, as I told `em one time, I said I have done everything here but fire the boiler, and I'm wondering when I'm going to be asked to do that.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: We laughed about that because the boiler was really up at the canning house. And I used to go there and help `em do things there too.

K.F.: Right. So you were kind of --

L.D.: Jack of all trades.

K.F.: Jack of all trades. That was what I was going to say.

L.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). I worked in practically everything because in the spring, we did herring here. We did that for Vita Foods.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: And how many -- I know crab pickers were mostly women, but for the canning, and for the Vita Foods, was that also mostly women?

L.D.: Well it was mostly women that did the skinning of the fish.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: The men did the cutting of the fish and preparing them that way. And the pickling and all was done by men, but the women used to skin the fish. And they would have one big room where they would have all these women, and I used to keep tally, they called it then.

K.F.: And what was that?
L.D.: That was keeping count of the pounds of the buckets of fish.
K.F.: Oh, okay. And was that part of the job of being the forelady?
L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).
K.F.: Okay. And let me -- we're trying to understand how the income --
L.D.: The crabs?
K.F.: Well the money women earned, and how that helped their families. So let me ask you, what did your income go to when you came home with a paycheck or something?
L.D.: Gosh, it's been so long ago. We'll say -- I don't know hardly what to tell you. It was very little. But at that time, it was very good.
K.F.: Right.
L.D.: But we could pick, I guess, of course some of `em picked 100 pound a day, you know. But I never did. I never was that fast.
K.F.: Okay.
L.D.: But there was a couple ladies there that would pick 100 pounds.
K.F.: Oh, do you remember their names?
L.D.: All day. Yes, it was Miss Lottie Brummell. I can't remember who the other one was. But they were fast, fast crab -- she was a very fast crab picker.
K.F.: Was she considered like the local legend?
L.D.: Yes. She could really handle a crab. She really could.
K.F.: And where was she from?
L.D.: She was from here.
K.F.: Here on Tilghman?
L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).
K.F.: And how does somebody get to be known as the fastest crab picker? Do you know how --
L.D.: By their poundage.
K.F.: By their poundage. Just being checked in every --
L.D.: Just being checked in. Uh-huh (Affirmative).
K.F.: Are there any honors or anything that goes with that?
L.D.: No. Not at that time. Could be now, but it wasn't back in that time.
K.F.: So the company didn't reward the fastest picker or anything like that?
L.D.: No. No.
K.F.: Okay. Did they provide like socials, or Christmas parties, or picnics or anything like that for pickers?
L.D.: We did that after we got into frozen food. We didn't do any of that just in the crab picking. When we got into the frozen food, then we included the people that were picking the crabs at that time.
K.F.: Oh, okay.
L.D.: But see they didn't stay into that business long afterward. But, yeah, we have -- I have pictures where they used to have these big parties, you know, and all the people would participate. And what we would do, they'd have a big Christmas party. And everybody that came would bring a covered dish.
K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And the company would furnish whether we were going to have turkey or what we were going to have in that respect. And everybody else participated in getting it together. And it was quite an affair.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And when you would go to work and then you would have to come home, you then had homework to do as far as housework?

L.D.: Sure, sure. And you'd have to take care of your home, and your washing, and your ironing and everything just the same as any other individual would keep a house. But you learned to do it around your work.

K.F.: Okay. And --

L.D.: And they furnished the transportation to and from work. They had a school bus to pick us up.

K.F.: Okay. And was that all the workers, the ones that lived in Sherwood and all that?

L.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Yeah, they had transportation. 'Cause there wasn't cars around then either like there is now.

K.F.: Okay. And can you tell me what it was like to go to work at the picking house and then come home and have to make dinner and take care of your children?

L.D.: Well I was very fortunate because a lot of the time, my mother was living with me. And she would have my dinner ready in the evening when I came home. So I was very fortunate in that respect. But still she wasn't always well. So then I would have to take care of the housework, but she would have dinner ready almost every evening when we got home from work.

K.F.: Okay. Now what did your husband do?

L.D.: My husband worked at Tilghman Packing Company too.

K.F.: Oh, he did?

L.D.: Yes.

K.F.: What did he do?

L.D.: Well when he first started there, he was carrying the crabs into the ladies. And he was carrying crabs in to about 100 pickers a day. And they would have a stainless steel cart. It was a wooden cart covered with stainless steel. And they would take 'em in in baskets. And they would dump 'em on the table. So that was what he did when he first started there. Then he wasn't there long before they moved him from there into the packing room.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And he more or less ran the packing room. He weighed the crab meat and helped pack the crab meat and all.

K.F.: Okay. Is that where you met him, at the Tilghman --

L.D.: No. I had met him -- well, I moved here. I knew him before we moved back here. And then we -- of course we're all young, we used to go to dances. And I met up and down with him again. And then I was living here when I married him.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And then he come on down hereto live. And then he went to work down there.

K.F.: Okay. I haven't heard too many people mention dances in the area.

L.D.: Oh, yes. We used to go, it used to be a place at Larston. We used to go, that was down around Bozman and Nevitt. And then we used to, everybody would pool their money, and we used to go to Queenstown. They had the big bands there.

K.F.: Oh, they did?

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

K.F.: Do you remember any of the bands that would be --

L.D.: No, I couldn't say now.

K.F.: Do you remember the place that -- the big dance hall or whatever was called?

L.D.: It was a big dance hall there was all I could tell you. Been many, many years ago.

K.F.: And that was the big social occasion?

L.D.: That was the social event. And that's where we got together again.

K.F.: Let's see what I might've forgotten here. We're sort of curious. It seems that after talking with several owners and crab pickers that crab pickers never seem to really retire. And how does a crab picker retire?

L.D.: I don't really know because like I say, I worked in the crab picking. Then when that ceased at Tilghman Packing Company, I went on into the frozen food. And then when they closed Tilghman Packing Company all together, then I went to work in the restaurant business. I left Tilghman Packing Company, and I run the kitchen at The Bridge Restaurant for Mr. Cole for five years.

K.F.: Is that the one that's now The Osprey?

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: That's the same place?

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And then I left there, and I went to Martingham. And I ran that kitchen for Mr. Bidorf. And then when he sold it, I ran it for Mr. Stock. I ran the kitchen for Mr. Stock. And then I, of course, Mr. Stock had -- well he had Marriott come in there. And he had the Hyatt Regency come in there. And I still stayed with all of them, you know what I mean. But I left the kitchen and went into the dining room there.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: So I worked 'til I was 75, and I thought that was long enough.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: And you decided to retire.

L.D.: So I retired myself Yes.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Yes, I worked 'til I was 75, and I thought that was enough. I thought it was time then to come home and sit on the porch a while.

K.F.: Okay. Now did you want to work when you started working at Tilghman, or did you have to work to help support your family?

L.D.: Well it was necessary to go to work to help support in the time of the depression, because we had very little money for anything else.

K.F.: Right. And did you enjoy working?

L.D.: Loved it.

K.F.: What did you like about it?

L.D.: I loved everything about it. I loved people, I love to work with people, and I love to learn new things, and I love a challenge.

K.F.: Okay. What was your biggest challenge at Tilghman Packing Company?

L.D.: My biggest challenge at Tilghman Packing Company was trying to keep all the help happy.

K.F.: All right.

L.D.: But that is your biggest challenge when you're working with people. Because it's always maybe a little thing that you didn't do that they think you did for somebody else that you didn't do for them. So that is the biggest challenge I have found all my life in working is to keep the help happy, and to hope that they will like you.

K.F.: Right. Now what techniques have you found to keep everybody happy?

L.D.: To be very truthful with them, I have found that that is the most important thing in the world on a job. Don't promise anybody anything unless you know you can keep it because it'll come back to haunt you.

K.F.: All right. I'll remember those words.

L.D.: Yes.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: That's always been my policy, to be truthful and not show any partiality. Do the very best you can to make everybody happy. It's a job in itself.

K.F.: It is. It is. Now can you remember a story or something that comes to mind when you think about Tilghman Packing Company or picking crabmeat there?

L.D.: No. Only as I say, we all seem to be -- nobody had much money. So we all seem to be satisfied and happy with what we had. And we made the best of what we had. And like I say, it was always a joke about something going on.

K.F.: Do you remember what any of those jokes were about?

L.D.: Well a lot of times, if -- if somebody was fast, and they'd say they didn't get any bone in the crab meat, well that's almost impossible, and when you'd go to weigh your meat, a lot of times they would examine your meat for bone. And sometimes they would send you back with your meat to bone it because you'd have bones in it. So this one girl kept telling us about not getting any bones. And we had a big laugh when she had to bring her meat back and bone it because she did have bones in her crab meat. Things of that nature, you know.

K.F.: Okay, right.

L.D.: And, of course, we always had a good time because when we'd go to get on the bus, somebody would always be trying to play a joke on somebody else.

K.F.: Oh, like what?

L.D.: Well you'd hide something that they had, or would be looking for, and you would have it and wait until they get right on the bus and then tell them where it was. So it would be things of that nature, you know, that they would do.

K.F.: Okay. And were there any jokes that involved the owners or anything like that?

L.D.: Not really. Yet, Mr. Harrison was awfully good to all of us, you know, and we were all friendly with them.

K.F.: Right.

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

K.F.: We're sort of interested in that every day, you know, what it was like.

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: Well actually, if you had to describe what it was like to somebody from Idaho to work in the crab picking plant every day, what would you tell them?

L.D.: Well it's hard work. And you have -- like I say, you make the best of what you have. That is the only thing I could tell you.

K.F.: Okay. What was the most physically demanding part of the job?

L.D.: It was really, the main thing was to be very clean. And it was just hard work. The cleanliness had a lot to do with picking crabs.

K.F.: Okay. Well how did that affect your actions in the crab house? I mean --

L.D.: Well you were always keeping your hands washed. And keeping your pans washed and cleaned. You know what I mean.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: Cleanliness has a lot to do in a place like that where you're handling food.

K.F.: Okay. Now I know if you're cleaning things out with bleach and stuff, that can be pretty rough on your skin, right?

L.D.: Right. It can.

K.F.: Did you ever have any --

L.D.: No, I never had -- never had any crab poisoning or anything. Now some people would.

K.F.: What is crab poisoning?

L.D.: It would -- their hands would get red, and they would get sore.

K.F.: I've never heard of that.

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: And was that just from having to wash your hands all the time?

L.D.: No, that would be like if a crab, you had cut yourself, and the crab juice would get in your hand or something.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And it was easy to cut yourself with the top shell --

K.F.: Yeah? Was that a common injury?

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: Oh, from the shell and not the knife.

L.D.: From the top shell. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. I guess from the points on the end.

L.D.: The points on the end of `em. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: And would that be the worst injury?

L.D.: That would be about the worst injury, Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Because nine times out of ten, you wouldn't cut yourself with the knife much. It would be either the fins of the crab, or the top shell.

K.F.: Okay. And were you guys saving the top shell for -- were they reselling it for deviled crabs and stuff?

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Then they would take that top shell, you'd clean that top shell out. They would take the top shell, save it, and they would clean it out, and then they would wash it and dry it before you used it for crab imperial. I still do that.

K.F.: Yeah. I know a lot of people now use the plastic ones.

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: And were those top shells packed in with the crabs, or was that something --

L.D.: They were packed separate.

K.F.: Were there any superstitions or anything like that about picking crabs?

L.D.: Not to my knowledge.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Not to my knowledge, there wasn't.

K.F.: And about crab meat or anything like that? Any --

L.D.: Oh, well a lot of them used to say they wouldn't eat crab meat and eat anything sweet.

K.F.: Oh, why is that?

L.D.: Don't ask me. Haven't the faintest idea. That's a superstition that they had. But you didn't eat sweet with crab meat. I did.

K.F.: And who used to say this?

L.D.: The elderly ladies that were older than I was. And right now, I tell `em I'm older than dirt.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: But they never told you why you shouldn't do that?

L.D.: No. The just said you don't eat sweet stuff on crab meat, But that never stopped us. But I've heard my grandmother say it.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Haven't heard that one.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. And what were some of the changes you saw happening? We talked about the tool changes when you were working there.

L.D.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: What were some of the other changes?

L.D.: Well the changes that we saw was mostly in the packing of it. You know what I mean?

K.F.: Yeah.

L.D.: In the cans, and not picking. They used to be like you would have a pan, maybe this big around. You'd pick five pound of crab meat in that. And you would sit that on your lap. And they would -- they stopped that because the temperature of your body could cause bacteria to build up in the crab meat.

K.F.: Really?

L.D.: Through the pans. So then they stopped that, and then they started with putting the individual cans. And you would have it on a tray. Well some of `em used to try that on their lap, but it didn't work. So that's the only thing that I noticed. And, of course, then they went from the can to the plastic.

K.F.: Right. Okay.

L.D.: And things of that nature. But that was the greatest because as far as putting them on the table, and top shelling `em and trimming `em like we used to pick `em, I never seen any difference. If they stopped that, they stopped that after we stopped doing it down here.

K.F.: Okay. Yeah, I think they're still picking them the same way.

L.D.: I think they still do that everywhere. I think they have to have more stainless steel now than they did then.

K.F.: Yes.

L.D.: Back then they didn't have as much -- they would have a lot of wood with some metal over it.

K.F.: Over it, right.

L.D.: But they don't do that I don't think anymore. I think they have to have all -- I know we did, toward the last and in frozen food, everything we had was stainless steel.

K.F.: Well let me have you describe, if you were sitting at your table picking, what would be around you? How would you have it set up?

L.D.: Well what would be around us, when we're sitting there picking, we would have a tray like this with maybe five cans on the tray, and we would be picking our meat into the cans.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And that was all we would have around us. Sometime it would be maybe a roll of paper towels, but they really didn't like that.

K.F.: Oh, why not?

L.D.: Well sometime your inside of your towel would get wet, and if it was leftover from a day, then the next morning, it would be contaminated as far as I was concerned.

K.F.: Okay. And was there a certain way you liked to have your cans around you?

L.D.: Oh, yeah. Because you would pick your lump meat into one can, and your regular into another. And then if you were going to do your claw meat, you'd do that into another can. See.

K.F.: So you had your lump --

L.D.: So you'd have your lump and your regular.

K.F.: And --

L.D.: And then you picked, I guess, maybe around five pound of those. And then you would have to take them up and weigh `em so that they could go ahead and get them packed and get them in ice.

K.F.: Okay. And do you remember what it was like your first day of work?

L.D.: I'm sure it was quite exciting. Not knowing that much about picking crabs, you know. But I can't say that I really remember. Only I know everybody was very nice to me.

K.F.: Okay. And what is the --

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

L.D.: -- that she picked the crab all together different than we did. She took the top shell off and she cleaned the crab like we did. But then she broke the apron, what we call the apron is the back.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: She broke that off, and she broke her crab half in two. And then she would hold onto that, and pick half of that crab at a time.

K.F.: And was she from around Tilghman?

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

K.F.: She was?

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

K.F.: Do you remember what her name was?

L.D.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Sadie Haddaway.

K.F.: Why do you think it was that she picked totally different than everybody else?

L.D.: I don't know, but she had learned that someplace, and it was totally different than the way we picked.

K.F.: Okay. Now what would happen when a new person came into the crab picking room, and maybe hadn't picked?

L.D.: Then everybody there was willing to help show her how she picked -- how we picked.

K.F.: Okay. So everybody was responsible for teaching?

L.D.: For helping her, yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative). We didn't have any one person that went around to teach them how to pick at that time.

K.F.: Right. It was whoever was at the table with them?

L.D.: Right. They would always probably know somebody, you know, that would teach 'em.

K.F.: Okay. Now what would happen when the inspectors would come?

L.D.: Well everybody would be in an uproar.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Okay. And this may sound like a silly question, but why would they be in an uproar?

L.D.: They would be in an uproar because, like I say, maybe somebody was using a Barlow knife that you weren't suppose to use at that time.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Or maybe somebody had a bandaid on your finger that you weren't supposed to have on your hand at that time. And you just wanted everything around you to be right and clean. So that's why I say it was always a little bit of an uproar.

K.F.: And so was there a scramble then to make sure all this --

L.D.: To make sure that all this was taken care of.

K.F.: Okay. And what about the small kids who were cracking claws?

L.D.: Well when it got to the point that they couldn't work only at a certain age, then they used to get those kids out of there in a hurry.

K.F.: Where did the kids go?

L.D.: Outside.

K.F.: Just outside?

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Uh-huh (Affirmative). But I always felt like they were better off inside cracking claws than they were running the roads doing nothing.

K.F.: Right, right.

L.D.: Yes.

K.F.: Okay. Well how did you all know the inspectors were coming?

L.D.: Well you wouldn't --

K.F.: Did they give advance notice?

L.D.: They didn't give you any advance notice. But they'd always hit like in the front of the building first.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Well then it went through the building like wildfire, you know. One person would say we've got inspectors. And it would go down, just keep going from table to table. And everybody knew they were there.

K.F.: Do you remember any funny instances or occurrences that when one of the inspectors came or anything stands out --

L.D.: No, everybody's very serious then.

K.F.: Okay. And we're also trying to understand the importance of crabs and the crab picking industry for communities like Tilghman. Are there any or were there any

community festivals or feasts or anything like that for the crab, or anything that celebrated the crab harvest or anything like that?

L.D.: Not to my knowledge.

K.F.: No?

L.D.: No. Not to my knowledge. Because everybody that worked away from home at that time worked around Tilghman Packing Company. Or, of course, there was another crab house here too, see.

K.F.: Oh, which one?

L.D.: There were two other crab houses here at that time. I never worked in either one of `em. One of `em was Faulkner's Crab House.

K.F.: Faulkner's?

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And then there was another crab house up here by the bridge that was Frye's Crab House. So there was three crab houses on here.

K.F.: Okay. Did anybody ever go from one crab house to the other to work?

L.D.: When one would close, they'd go to the other. Like, you know what I mean, like Mr. Frye -- like Frye's Crab House up here, when he closed it all together, then those women, a lot of `em went to Tilghman packing Company.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And Faulkner closed before Tilghman Packing Company. So the people that were working there came to Tilghman Packing Company.

K.F.: Do you remember the years that those two closed?

L.D.: No, see I can't remember. I don't do much with years.

K.F.: Was it before or after World War II?

L.D.: I don't know. If I'd give you a date, I'd tell you a story, and I won't do that.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Because I don't remember the dates. I'm not good with dates.

K.F.: All right.

L.D.: But I know both of those plants did close, and then the people came.

K.F.: And why did the plants close down here on Tilghman, either --

L.D.: Evidently, I think it just -- I don't really know. I think they just, they were getting older and maybe just didn't want to bother with it anymore, but I know they did close both of `em.

K.F.: Okay. And I know oysters were extremely popular --

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: -- in the 20's and 30's and into the 40's.

L.D.: They were.

K.F.: And were probably a bigger industry than crabs were at that time. I know now that crabs are bigger.

L.D.: They're bigger than the oysters, yeah. But they used to buy those oysters, and they had what they called oyster bins. They would buy the oysters and wheel them into the bins. And then the shuckers would come in and get to their stalls to shuck `em, and they would wheel `em out of these bins to the shuckers.

K.F.: Okay. And --

L.D.: And the crabs, see, the crabs they used to bring in in barrels a lot of times way back then in the 30's.

K.F.: Right. Okay. And I'm kind of curious as to when it switched, when the crabs became bigger industry than the oysters. Do you remember any kind of a feeling that maybe the crab was -- or the oysters were dying out?

L.D.: No because the oyster business -- of course time goes so fast, but the oyster business has failed mostly in the last 10 or 15 years.

K.F.: Okay. So they were really kind of equal then.

L.D.: Yeah, for a while.

K.F.: For a long time.

L.D.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. And a couple of crab pickers in Sommerset County told me that they wouldn't be caught dead shucking oysters, basically.

L.D.: Well I --

K.F.: Was there anything like that among the oyster shuckers and the crab pickers here?

L.D.: I have no idea because none of the crab pickers, other than the colored people shucked oysters, the women, none of `em that I know around here did it. I wouldn't know how to do it. I still don't know how to shuck an oyster.

K.F.: Where did the people come from who were shucking the oysters?

L.D.: Well a lot of `em -- they used to have shanties down here. And that's where the oyster shuckers used to stay.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.D.: Down where it's Tilghman on the Chesapeake now was where they had all those buildings, where the African American people stayed, and they lived there, a lot of `em, year-round. And they picked crabs in the summer and shucked oysters in the winter.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And in the fall, they worked in the tomato factory. And then we had a corn business here, and they went in the field and pulled corn, and they worked in the factory here with that. And in the spring of the year, they worked in the herring, cutting the fish. But no, not many women that I know of I can't call to mind of any of the women that I know that shucked oysters. And like I say, I wouldn't know how to shuck an oyster.

K.F.: Yeah.

L.D.: And I never could do much with shucking clams either. A lot of the girls could.

K.F.: So a lot of `em could do a couple of different seafoods?

L.D.: Yeah. But I never could do anything with them.

K.F.: Okay. What was your favorite part about picking crabs, or favorite thing?

L.D.: I guess the favorite thing was to make a little bit of money to bring home. And it was being with all the people, you know what I mean, you knew everybody. That was the nice part of working, that you knew everybody.

K.F.: Okay. Did it feel like a family at some times?

L.D.: Yes. Yes. It really did. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And I know that the seafood packers union in Crisfield started up in the 30's, I believe, and --

L.D.: They never did get in here.

K.F.: They never got in here at all?

L.D.: Not at all.

K.F.: Did you all know that there was a union?

L.D.: Yes.

K.F.: You did?

L.D.: It tried several items to get in here.

K.F.: Oh, they did. Okay. And what happened?

L.D.: It just didn't make it.

K.F.: Did the workers just not want to do it?

L.D.: The workers didn't want it. We did not want it. And we managed to keep it out. 'Cause even when we were in frozen food, we never had it.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: No, we never had a union the whole time that it was open as far as I know.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: And, of course, we were sold a couple times because -- can't think of his, oh, Dick Nap, he bought it, and then he sold it to Duffy Mott. And then, of course, they had the fire.

K.F.: Oh, right.

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

K.F.: Now how did that affect things? Were you still picking crabs then, or were you in frozen foods?

L.D.: Working in frozen food at that time.

K.F.: Okay. And how did the fire affect --

L.D.: It just stopped everything. Nothing was left. So that's when Duffy Mott was in the process of closing it at that time. They were in the process of closing the plant when we had the fire.

K.F.: Oh, okay. So did you all ever go back to work after the fire or --

L.D.: Not down there. No, I went up to the restaurant and worked.

K.F.: Okay, so that's when you left.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: And what about the 1933 storm?

L.D.: That was a bad one. We just couldn't get out there to work because the wharf was tore up. And until they used to have to take some of `em out by boat. Sometimes they would go up here to the Narrows, they'd catch a boat and take `em down to work.

K.F.: Okay. And I guess -- what did you do at that time when you didn't have that income?

L.D.: Well the men were still working. And then after they got it so that they could, it wasn't too long before they had it so that they could work again. 'Cause see that was in August, wasn't it, of `33.

K.F.: Yes.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: So how long were you out of work at that time?

L.D.: I can't remember of working any at all. I think Patsy, my baby was born in `33. And I don't remember working any more that year.

K.F.: Oh, after the baby was born, you didn't --

L.D.: Not until the next spring, the next summer.

K.F.: Okay. I was going to ask you, you know, what would happen when you were going to have a child or anything like that. Did the company just let you --

L.D.: You just took your time.

K.F.: And there was always a job waiting for you?

L.D.: Always plenty room to go back and go to work. That was the nice part of it.

K.F.: Did you feel like your own boss there, I mean, or --

L.D.: Well you knew that you had certain restrictions to go by, but you sort of went and come to suit yourself, you know. If you were late for work, there was nothing said. Maybe you couldn't come in only for half a day. So you would go in for half a day. Or maybe you would want to leave earlier for some reason, and you would be able to leave.

K.F.: Okay. And what time were you supposed to be in?

L.D.: Well usually, they went to work around 8:00.

K.F.: And got done around --

L.D.: Well you get done -- it would depend on the amount of crabs that we would have that day. Yeah.

K.F.: And what do you think is an important thing for people to know about the crab picking industry or about Tilghman Packing Company?

L.D.: Well I thought that we had one of the cleanest places on the shore. And it was just a nice place to work as far as knowing everybody and everybody helping one another. It was just a friendly place to work.

K.F.: Okay. Now do you still see the women you used to work with from Tilghman?

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

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Of course, a lot of `em are not with us anymore. The majority of `em, I'm very fortunate to be one of those that are still around.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: `Cause my friend and I, the one was just talking to me on the phone, we said we don't know what we're left for, but we must be left for something because there isn't too many of us around.

K.F.: Okay. Well it's just kind of interesting to see the friendships you make --

L.D.: And last, see they last through the years.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: That's the thing of it. When you work in those kind of places, or it was here, I'll say here, I don't know that it's every place, but I know here those friendships last a lifetime.

K.F.: Why do you think that is?

L.D.: I don't know. I think, just like you say, it becomes a family. After you work together year after year, year after year, and first thing, it does come to be almost a family affair. And everybody knows what everybody else is doing.

K.F.: Okay. So you do feel like you've got sets of parents or siblings around.

L.D.: Right. And it just goes on down through the families, you know what I mean, because like the women that I worked, of course it was a lot of younger women that worked in the frozen food because a lot of the elderly ladies were still -- it was easier on them to still pick the crabs until they closed the crab house. That work was easy because in frozen food, we were on our feet all the time.

K.F.: Sitting, right.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So we made a lot of friends that way. Well when you work a place as long as I worked there and my husband worked there, you knew everybody, you knew all the bosses, you were always on first-name basis. And you knew their families.

K.F.: And I guess you socialized outside of work and all that.

L.D.: That's right, yes.

K.F.: And how many people who worked on Tilghman actually lived here on Tilghman too? I mean this is not a big island.

L.D.: The majority of 'em. The majority of the ladies that worked there lived on the island. We had very few that come from off the island. That's why we felt the loss when they said they were going to sell the plant. Everybody was panicked.

K.F.: Oh, yeah. What was --

L.D.: Because our kids coming from school, you know, after school, our kids would go down there, and they would make boxes to pack the goods in that we were going to ship out, you know, and it would give them something to do after school.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: And in the summertime. And when we found out it was going to close, I thought oh, God, what am I going to do? I had never done anything else, I had never worked anywhere else but there. And then Mr. Cole came one day while I was still there, while we were in the process of closing the plant, and he said would you come help me at the restaurant? I said I don't know how to cook in a restaurant. He said do you know how to buy? I said yeah, I can buy. And he said well I'd like for you to come and work for me. Well I was scared to death, because I knew it was a challenge, and I knew I was going to do it, and I knew I was going to do it as well as I possibly could, and I did. And I made out fine.

K.F.: Now what was your first day like there?

L.D.: Scared to death.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: Scared to death. But I had told him that I knew nothing about cooking in a restaurant. So then the first night I went to work there, they had no cook.

K.F.: Oh, no.

L.D.: Well his wife was there, and I said Shirley, I told you I have never cooked. She said I know, but we'll do the best we can. And we made out fine. But then when I had -- I was hiring for the kitchen and I was buying for the kitchen, and planning the meals for the kitchen, so I didn't have time to cook.

K.F.: Right, right.

L.D.: So then that's all I had to do, and make a schedule of who -- of my help just like I had been doing down there. I made a schedule up of who was coming in to work. But I was scared to death. But like I say, I like challenges.

K.F.: Now that must have been, I mean the working hours were probably different for a restaurant. I've worked in restaurants and I know it's night work.

L.D.: Yes. Well by buying and everything, I worked more day work than I did night work. Anything we had going on big, I worked at night, the same way at Martingham. When I left and went to Martingham, I worked there. And if we had a big party coming in

or something was going on, I'd work at night. Otherwise, I would work in the day time and plan the work ahead, and cover the kitchen for the evening work.

K.F.: Right, okay. Now how many women from the crab picking or frozen foods went from Tilghman over to Cole's? Did any?

L.D.: Well it was two or three went into waitressing. And then I had two girls there in the kitchen, they didn't stay long because they didn't like Mr. Cole. I got along fine with him. And then I had three. And then when I went to Martingham, I had four or five of the girls go there with me.

K.F.: Okay.

L.D.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. So that way, you were able to kind of keep working with the same people.

L.D.: The same people. Yeah. We had all become good friends, and as we looked out for one another.

K.F.: Right. Okay. Was this --

L.D.: But a lot of `em went to work in other fields, you know.

K.F.: This wasn't the same group of women you told me earlier, Sadie Haddaway?

L.D.: No. They didn't -- no, they didn't go to work anywhere like that. They were older, you know, and they didn't. No.

K.F.: And what was that like for your family when you changed jobs?

L.D.: Well my father was living with me. My mother had passed away. But we made out fine. We'd just plan our meals. And my husband, of course, was working at Tilghman Packing Company. Well, he retired. And he was home a lot. Of course, I had my father with me, and he had lost both legs to diabetes. I had him for 10 years. But we made out fine. You just have to want to do it and know that you really have to do it, you know. And you make the time.

K.F.: Okay. Are there anybody -- or is there anybody here on Tilghman that's picking crabs off the island anywhere?

L.D.: Not to my knowledge.

K.F.: Okay. Is there anybody else that we need to talk to who used to pick crabs here on the island? Or former owners of crab picking houses?

L.D.: No, I don't think so. Because Carey has just recently died. And I don't know any of `em that are left. I really don't. There might be one or two around here. But I don't hardly know who they'd be.

K.F.: Okay. Yeah, we -- I guess a couple people said well there's nobody left here that picked crabs except for you.

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well that's the truth. I did pick at that time. And like I say, Carey James, but she's just recently died this winter. And it would've been nice to have talked to her because she used to work at Mr. Frye's and then came to Tilghman Packing Company. And but none of the younger girls that I know of. I just don't know of anybody. `Cause Sadie and Margaret, all those girls are gone.

K.F.: Right, right.

L.D.: I tell you, they left us here for some reason.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: And there's just nobody that I know of. I was trying to think the other day. I was trying to go up and down each road, and I couldn't remember anybody.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you, how did you feel when they built that housing community now where Tilghman Packing used to be?

L.D.: It was quite a shock.

K.F.: Was it?

L.D.: To go down there after the fire and then when they did rebuild, well you just couldn't believe it, you know. After knowing what was there and then seeing what is there now, you just couldn't believe it. For a long time, I didn't go down there at all.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

L.D.: For a long time, it just bothered me to even ride down Wharf Road to the end. And I've -- of course, I was working up the road and I had no cause to go that way. So I didn't until after they began to rebuild it. And then when they began to rebuild it, I would ride down there then. And I'm still amazed at what they have done with it, knowing what was there and seeing it now. But it's perfectly beautiful, it really is.

K.F.: Right. But it must be kind of a shock still.

L.D.: It was. I mean when Tilghman Packing Company, you got up in the morning, you were going to Tilghman Packing Company to work. You were coming home from Tilghman Packing in the afternoon, going back the next day. And all that suddenly stopped completely. It was quite a shock.

K.F.: Now how did the rest of the community take it if that was the big employer here on the island?

L.D.: Well I think everybody felt the same way probably that I did. What are we going to do now? Of course, if you don't mind working, and I didn't mind working. I never did mind work. In fact, I miss it.

K.F.: You miss it now?

L.D.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I miss it, but I'm not going to do it anymore.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: But I do miss it. Because they laugh at me now. I don't get up early in the mornings anymore. I said when I quit Martingham, I used to get up in the morning to be up there to open up by 6:00. And when I quit there, they said, Miss Lib, you're not going to quit. I said, oh yeah, I am. This is my last season. I said I made up my mind I wasn't going to work after I was 76. And I told my daughter and all I'm going to come home. Don't bother me before 9:00 in the morning, because I'm not getting up unless I'm going someplace. I'm not getting up any more early in the morning. And I have done that. I don't get up early unless I'm going someplace. I sleep in 'til about 8:30 or 9:00 and enjoy every minute of it. Some of 'em will say I don't know how you lay that long. It is no problem for me at all. I enjoy it. But I'm not a morning person any more. I used to be, but I'm not anymore.

K.F.: Yeah, I think that goes in cycles sometimes.

L.D.: Yes. But there was no retirement from any of those places.

K.F.: Right, right. Now were there any sort of pension or anything like that?

L.D.: No.

K.F.: So you had to save up on your own, then, your own retirement.

L.D.: Sure, had to look after my own self.

K.F.: What about health care and all that stuff?

L.D.: None. Nothing.

K.F.: Even at the restaurants?

L.D.: Even at the restaurants. You know, very few places do you get health insurance these days. Now when I was working at Martingham, they offered me health insurance. But I was on Medicare at that time, on Social Security, you know, and I didn't take it. And they paid me more money by the hour because I didn't take it.

K.F.: Okay. So you got paid by the hour there at Martingham?

L.D.: I did when I first went there.

K.F.: And what about at Cole's, was that by the hour or --

L.D.: No, I got paid by the week there.

K.F.: Okay. Yeah, I'm sort of curious what everybody did for health care because it's --

L.D.: You were on your own.

K.F.: On your own.

L.D.: On your own.

K.F.: Well it seems like, you know, the last couple years it's been an issue, people don't have health care.

L.D.: That's right.

K.F.: But I think people haven't realized that it's been an issue for a long time.

L.D.: For a long time. Because I know my husband and I, we had Blue Cross and Blue Shield all our life.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But you all had to pay for that yourselves.

L.D.: But we had to pay for it.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: And, of course, we got used to it, and we looked out for that. And just like now when we have Care First, although it wasn't going to cost you anything, well the first year, it didn't cost us anything. That was fine. Now it costs us \$75 a month. So you still take care of it if you want hospital insurance.

K.F.: Right.

L.D.: You just cut back somewhere else and pay your insurance.

K.F.: Yeah, that's a hard one.

L.D.: Yeah.

K.F.: Especially when you're working jobs where you could get hurt.

L.D.: That's right.

K.F.: Or jobs where you're on your feet all day, that takes its toll too.

L.D.: You better believe it. Because I have arthritis, and I have no idea, but I always said the reason I had it was working on those cement floors all those years.

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

L.D.: Of course, I'm heavy too. That helps.

(Laughter.)

L.D.: But most of our work was on cement.

K.F.: And then what kind of shoes did you have then?

L.D.: Anything that came along until the later years when we were in frozen food, we all did wear uniforms. And we bought white shoes to wear with those uniforms, you know. We bought good shoes at that time 'cause we were making good money at that time.

K.F.: Okay. Well I can't think of another question to ask you, Miss Dunleavy.

Anything you want to add?

L.D.: No. As I say, I can't go back. I'd like to think of somebody else you could talk to, but I just cannot think of anybody.

K.F.: Okay. Well this tape will be put in the museum's archives. We do have a release form for you to sign for it. And basically the release form, I'll show you, says that you own the rights to the tape, basically, since it's your words. But it will be in an archive. So we have two choices here. The materials are available to other people who may want to listen to them and learn about the history, but they have to get your permission first. Or they're not available to other people and you can choose whichever one you want.

L.D.: That doesn't make any difference to me.

K.F.: I'm just going to --

L.D.: I just give you the best of what it was to my knowledge.

K.F.: That's right.

L.D.: And like I told you, as far as dates, I'm way off on those.

K.F.: That's okay. If I can have, I need you to print your name there and check whichever one you want there, and a signature here, and then your mailing address. And I believe we have your phone number, but if you want to write it on there, that would be great.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)