

Interview Log

Interviewee: Joseph Keene **Tape #:** OR 116

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

Date: 1/27/99 **# of sides:** 2

Location: Golden Hill MD

Topic: crab picking, knives, portrait paintings, movement,

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: File name: oh 116.doc. See fieldnotes FNO1.27.99. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information or an aside by the fieldworker]; language following a participant's initials represents a direct quote unless otherwise noted.

Mr. Keene works at Meredith and Meredith Seafood, and Calvert Tolley owns one of his paintings. Mr. Keene is a community scholar who has documented through photos many of the African American community's landmarks, traditions and people. He paints the portraits of oyster shuckers and crab pickers in the south Dorchester area.

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KF: And, um, where did you pick crabs?

JK: At uh, I started at, urn, Urban [?] Cannon's [?] when I was about, maybe, nine years old, crackin' claws.

KF: Ok.

JK: That's at, uh, Crapo, Md.

KF: Ok.

JK: Crapo.

KF: And ... is that building still there or is it ...?

JK: Yeah it's still there, they're still working.

KF: Oh, it's still operating?

JK: Yes, it's still operating.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Yeah, by his son. By Mr. Cannon's son.

KF: Oh.

JK: Urban [?] Juner, Junior, and then I think his son has it now.

KF: Oh, ok

JK: Um-hmmm

KF: And is it just cans ... seafood packing? Or, ummm...?

JK: What was that?

KF: What's the name of the business?

JK: Urban [?] Cannon... and Son.

KF: Ok...and Son. Ok.

JK: So I started there um ... with my great aunt, my great aunt worked there.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Uh...

KF: And is she the one who taught you how to ... urn... pick crabs?

JK: Crack claws.

KF: Ok.

JK: She taught ...

KF: Ok, ok. What was your great aunt's name?

JK: Edith Foster.

KF: Ok. Now ...uh.... How did ... um ... How did your aunt teach you how to crack claws?
Was there a

JK: Well it was mostly just from watching

KF: ... process ...?

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: They would just, you know, show you ... put the claw on the ... It was like a metal... little metal thing, metal block.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: And ... what was the process for doing it?

JK: Just hold the claw and ... [sound of two taps) tap it ... lightly with the ... I don't have a claw knife, this is a knife that I made ... to try to improve on, you know, cracking.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: But you hold the knife and then just, just hit the claw. Wait a minute... Claws in here.
[Sounds of movement, walking around]

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. [Sound of something hitting something]

KF: All right. And is that their ... their spot, specific spot you need to hit to really make a dent [']?

JK: Yeah... yeah to make it, do that...

KF: So is it just below this joint here where ... they ... the claws connect... so like, right, in there?

JK: Yeah, uh-hmm.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: And the same thing for this side. You... Hit it there. Like that.

KF: So just ab... above the.... Is there a name for these spots? [Laughter]

JK: No? No, they have no name. [Laughter]

KD: 'Cause I know when someone listens to this tape they're going to go, "Where exactly did he hit that thing?" Ok, so then ... the next part is just....

JK: Right there, at that joint...

KF: At the next joint ...

JK: Right at the joint, um-hmmm. And the first one, the first ... point, is right ... um, directly near the uh, claws, where the claws, the joint of the claws.

KF: Ok. And then uh...

JK: The pincer part, I would call it maybe the pincers.

KF: Pincers? Ok, that's good, then we'll know where it is. [Laughter]

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Urn, and how long did you crack claws there?

JK: Uh...I don't know how to ... uh that was just ...uh.... summer, and, umm, I don't know how long I worked there, maybe till, about, uh, twelve or thirteen.

KF: Ok, ok.

JK: Twelve or thirteen.

KF: And going to school then during the fall...

JK: Yeah fall, yeah fall... fall I'd go to school.

KF: Ok, and then, urn, what happened after you turned twelve or thirteen?

JK: Um, I ran away from home at, uh, fifteen. [Laughter]

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: To do what?

JK: Uh, I joined the military.

KF: Ok.

JK: Went over seas during the Korean War.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: All right. And, um, did you come back to this area after....

JK: Uh, no, I tray... I moved around, the country, I was a little unsettled and moved around from New York to Baltimore and stuff like that.

KF: Ok. Ok. And, um, when did you come back to this area?

JK: I, uh, came back, uh, I think around nineteen sixty ... three or four ...uh....

KF: Ok, and did you return to picking crabs or...?

JK: Uh not, not right away, my aunt and uncle were, uh, old, and I stayed here, around home, and took care of them.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: I took care of them until they died.

KF: Ok.

JK: And I think, I think before they died I had started back in the uh, with the uh crabs,

cracking claws, and, I did that seventy-three, so I don't know what year I started down there.

KF: Ok.

JK: That's seventy-three...

KF: And this was done at ... at which....

JK: Murdeth [?] and Murdeth [?], this was Murdeth [?] and Murdeth [?].

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh, because I didn't, uh, I didn't go back to Urban [?] Cannon's [?].

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I went to umm...I think it was called Todd's, umm... I don't know the, I don't recall the name of the factory, it was for Bernie Murphy.

KF: Ok.

JK: And I started cracking claws again.

KF: Ok. And uh, did you move from cracking claws into picking the lump meat?

JK: Um ...I was in a auto accident and, um, I had to stop cracking claws because of the, you know, the jar to my head.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: So I had to learn how to pick crabs.

KF: Ok.

JK: But I don't know what year that was.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: I don't know what year.

KF: Ok. And uh, we're trying to understand the process of learning how to do this...

JK: Ok, uh-huh....

KF: How did you learn how...?

JK: Just watching, just watching the other pickers, and um, uh, then one of my cousins, she lives around the corner, she showed me how to improve on my style ... picking.

KF: Oh. How, how was that? What did she show you to do?

JK: Urn, she showed me how to... Just a moment.... [Sound of movement] This is my study crab. [chuckle]

KF: Ok. [Laughter] Is that for painting purposes or....? [Laughter]

JK: Yeah, yeah drawing, uh-huh, and [chuckle].

KF: Ok.

JK: Yeah it's a male crab...

KF: Ok.

JK: I saved from the summer.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. She showed me how to um, go [Sounds of movement] This is a special knife, um, I did the handle...

KF: Oh, ok. So you made your own tool really....

JK: I made my ... yes, uh-huh, because the, um, the regular, um, claw, uh, crab knife, is too small for my hand.

KF: Great....

JK: And I would lose it, I would drop it...

KF: 'Cause usually the handle is all...

JK: Yeah, I would drop it.

KF: Ok.

JK: So....

KF: Now, um, just to interrupt this story about improvement, um, does this meet the inspectors' regulations? Are they ok with that, or do you care? [Laughter]

JK: I...I think as ... I think as long as, it's sanitary.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: 'Cause you can wash it, right?

JK: Yeah, can wash it, and keep bacteria off of it.

KF: Now how did you make this?

JK: Um, I did it in a... um... mold... a... um... press mold and plastic.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: I had to make a mold. What I did is I waited, um, usually, during the day, you're putting paper around your knives...

KF: Ok.

JK: To make it, you know, so you can hold it.

KF: Ok.

JK: And, at the end of the day, that's the form that my paper...

KF: Had...

JK: Would had, have, uh-huh.

KF: Ah-hah....

JK: Ok, so I'm, I uh, did a mold, made a mold, of that...

KF: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

JK: And um, put uh, melted plastic and put it in the mold...

KF: Ok.

JK: With the knife. Pressed, a press mold.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Wow that's rea.... 'Cause I noticed there's like, you know, your finger grooves are in there...

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Wow, 'cause that's something I have heard the other pickers complain about, especially the ones who picked when they could use their own knives that they brought from home.

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Urn, and then had to switch over to the all-stainless...

JK: Yeah...

KF:...ones. They said they're really slippery and they...

JK: They're slippery.

KF: They lose 'em.

JK: Uh-huh. You do.

KF: Yeah, huh, ok, ok.

JK: So we....

KF: So you made your own knife....

JK: Yes ... yes, uh-huh. Urn, I can't think of the, urn, coating that I can put on here, to keep, you know, the crevices out where the meat won't go, and...

KF: Right.

JK: Deteriorate.

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh. Ok, well she showed me how to go into the back of the crab like that.

KF: Ok.

JK: In the back and, and push the shell off instead of pulling the shell off..

KF: All right.

JK: You....

KF: Huh....

JK: Um-hmm.... She goes in, she pushes the... and when she does this, she also takes the, uh, the fat, all this in this area...

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: All that comes out also, so you don't have to bother, you know, scooping that out....

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Now do the dead man's fingers come off at that time too or do you....

JK: Uh, no, no she gets the dead man fingers when she turns over like this, or, and, when you trim like this. It takes the dead man fingers and everything off.

KF: Ok.

JK: But she... What she showed me, urn, helped me speed up, 'cause I wasn't doing, very *good* at it.

KF: Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm.

JK: So...

KF: Now is that way of picking, urn, a way that's just in your family or do the other pickers, uh, where you worked, did they *do* it this way....

JK: I've seen some of. ... some people use it. But not everyone, not everyone does that.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: Because I was talking about it and some other, some others, when they saw it they started doing it too, trying to do it, also....

KF: Oh really.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Huh, ok, and the, the tradish... I guess the other way is to sort of rip the top off..

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF:...of the side.

JK: Rip the top off and then I think they get the, fingers off I think. I forget how they do that.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: But....

KF: And how, how much did this speed you up while you, when you learned how to do this?

JK: Uh... I, I was, at the end of this past season--I've been, I've been working part-time...

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: But I was catching up with some of the faster ones.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Um-hmmm

JK: Because it was like, the boss thought it was funny because one girl that did a lot of walking and stuff..

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: When she saw I was getting close to what she was making, well she stopped walking.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: So ... [Chuckle] So it's a little competition there too, on, on this.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Yeah they compete. [Sounds of movement]

KF: Well how does the competition work? Is it kind of....

JK: How many pounds you get a day...

KF: Uh-huh. And they kind of...

JK: It's uh, try to keep close, you know they try to keep close in pounds.

KF: Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm.

JK: So...

KF: And does that sort of help everybody stay together to make, uh, a good wage....

JK: It ... yeah, it keeps'em, it keeps 'em going.

KF: Ok, ok.

JK: So, um, I can't recall, let's see, how many pounds I made. I think I made something like twenty ... three or twenty-four pounds.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: On one good day.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh.

KF: Ok.

JK: And it was close to one of the uh, one of my cousins who's a, a better picker.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: But some of them get like, maybe thirty and forty pounds.

KF: Wow.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Wow. That's a lot of crabs...

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: [Laughter] Ok, can you describe your, uh, work area, the way it is, the way you like to have it set up?

JK: Um. Uh...well it's, uh, we're all, we all sit up just about, you know....

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK:...in a, in a simular way.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I have like.... Let's see.... [Sounds of movement] Oh.

KF: Is it under there and you need me to get it?

1K: I think so.

KF: There you go.

JK: And uh, **[think I have a good]**' shot of the table. But your urn... I think I have one of Twosend **[Towsend?]** Evelyn's daughter, Diane. Urn...

KF: Ok. Ok. So the big, um, silver...

JK: We have ... yeah we usually have three pans...

KF: Plastic buckets, ok.

1K: Uh two pans, we have one pan for um, claws, um, and.... I usually sit with uh, a pan, here in my lap like that, that's my trash.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. And uh, trash, and then, my meat, I have my meat right up, you know, right up in front of me.

KF: Ok.

JK: I usually leave my cans, my, that I put the meat in, right up, in a tray on the table in front of me.

KF: Ok. Ok.

1K: And so I pick like this, over my lap.

'Tape difficult to hear at this point. Think this is what Mr. Keene says, but I can't be certain. WP

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Dropping my trash and everything.

KF: Ok.

JK: And uh.... That's what I mean I taken my trash off, and then I'd go up, over top of the, to the top, to my uh, regular, and then my lump.

KF: Ok, so the regular's on the right-hand side of you?

JK: Yea.... uh yeah my regular's on the left, my regular's on the.... My regular's on the right, uh-huh, and lump here.

KF: And lump.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Ok.

JK: Yeah.

KF: And then, do you get to pick the claws too or are there other people who only pick claws?

JK: Uh, right now I think it's only one claw cracker at the plant where I work.

KF: Ok.

JK: Murdeth [?] and Murdeths [?], that's where I work now.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: Part-time. But it's just one craw, uh, claw cracker.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh, they've all died out.

KF: [Laughter] Ok.

JK: Yeah.

KF: Well in, um, I guess there's not too many young people comin' in to the crab pickin' business...

JK: No, no, unh-unh.

KF:.... to do the claws

JK: Occasionally you, you might have, uh, someone come down, work a day or somethin' like that 'n...

KF: Right.

JK: You might not see 'em again for a couple of weeks or three weeks.

KF: Ok, Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: So you guys have to pick the claws yourselves then?

JK: Uh, I think they ship them....

KF: Oh.

JK: I think they ship 'em...

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Hmmm. Ok.

JK: I think a lot of restrants use ... the claws.

KF: Um-hmmm. That's true. And, um, can you tell me uh, describe for me the process of, um, how the crabs get to you all and, and how the tables are set up.

JK: Uh, yeah, um, well the...

KF: Can you do that?

JK: The tables are ... maybe ...um, twelve feet long, and ... maybe ... four-feet wide, and you know, people are on, both sides. [Sound of movement] And ...you have the uh, guys that bring the crabs to you, they dump... I don't have any photographs of that, of the guys that dump.

KF: Ok.

JK: Crabs on the tables. They put crabs on the tab ...um.... By sh...they bring 'em in by shovels, bring it to the table by shovels, they turn a ... they turn a large tray over, the tray is maybe uh four feet deep, four, four by uh, maybe three, somethin' like that.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: About four feet like that, three like that, and, maybe, four this way. And they dump 'em into a stainless steel, um, bin, half of a bin or something, you know where they can scoop 'em out with the shovels.

KF: Ok.

JK: Ok.

KF: Ok.

JK: And then they scoop 'em, urn, and bring 'em to you, like a shovel-load.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: A shovel's about like that. I can't, I don't know the dimensions of the shovel.

KF: That's ok.

JK: Ok.

KF: Hopefully I'll get to see it.

JK: And they pile 'em on the table, they, they'll give you a shovel...

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: ... on the table in front of you. And usually you have someone working with you, **[unintelligible word here]** a partner in front of you.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Uh, on the other side of the table.

KF: Huh.

JK: That's... And, uh, it's... sometimes, there're some people that like to work alone because they say that urn, maybe you pick over the crabs, maybe you're pickin' the big ones out, or...

KF: [Laughter] Right.

JK: Somethin' like that so that's a big joke too, we might kid somebody about that and some people are sensitive.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: About that. If you say they're pickin' over the crabs, they, they don't like it.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Some of them don't like that.

KF: Huh.

JK: Yeah.

KF: And, and uh, what happens if someone says you're pickin' over the crabs like...?

JK: Well, uh, I was picking in front of my cousin, and we were teasing her, about that. Which we did catch her a couple of times pickin' big crabs.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And, she asked me to move. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter] Ok.

JK: [Laughter] So I moved.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter] I moved to another spot.

KF: Ok. I haven't heard anybody talk about it as, um, picking with a partner like that....

JK: Oh, uh-huh.

KF:...across the table. Um, is that something that you've always done in other crab houses?

JK: Uh...

KF: Or is this just at this one?

JK: At ...I think at, uh, Cannon's, I think they still do that.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Uh, yes, and, uh, I worked part-time at another plant and they do it also, they have....

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Uh, because I created a argument. I didn't... Unin...I didn't do it intentionally but um, I was at a plant where there were Mexicans....

KF: Ok.

JK:...uh, working, and at the end of the day I went down to give the ladies that were still working, I went down to give them a hand by, uh, takin' the back off for dem.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And, I noticed that the urn, the side where I was it was all small crabs and the other side, the lady had pulled all the big crabs over there, and I thought that was funny.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And I started laughing about it.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And I think they got into argument, about that.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: And I was sorry that I said anything. But it was, you know it was funny to me, but they didn't find it funny.

KF: [Laughter] Urn, well which plant was this that, uh, you had worked at that had Hispanic Urn....

JK: Uh, I went down to um, one day I went down to ... onto the island, Hooper's Island.

KF: Ok.

JK: To a place called Lindy's.

KF: Ok.

JK: I went down there...

KF: Ok.

JK: Just for the experience, I was ...I...I heard about the Mexicans, I just wanted to-you know ... see what was going on with the Mexi...with the Mexicans. So I went down there to take some photographs.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Which they didn't come out.

KF: Ok.

JK: Yeah, they didn't....

KF: Huh.

JK:.... didn't come out.

KF: Urn, what did you notice that was different between ... that and ...where you had worked?

JK: Uh, there was no difference ... they're ... they pick ... um, they're good pickers, the Mexicans.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I found them good pickers.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: The, uh, the only difference I've uh, there were a couple of Cambodians there.

KF: Ok.

JK: And uh, they had a n. . another type of knife.

KF: Really?

JK: Uh-huh. Um, it had a pretty good handle on it, the, the handle was nearly the size of that handle...

KF: This one ... this metal one here?

JK: Yes. Yes, uh-huh, but it wasn't stainless steel. It was a, uh, a plastic handle.

KF: Huh.

JK: Uh-huh. It was lightweight, very good knife.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: He let me, you know try it, and, and I liked it, and that gave me the idea to do my own, to make my own handle.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Do they bring those knives with them...?

JK: Urn, they said they order it from ... Alabama someplace.

KF: Oh.

JK: They said they order that.

KF: And um, I'm sort of curious ... does everybody speak English in the, in the ... houses that are mixed like that?

JK: Well um, the guy, he spoke English but his mother didn't.

KF: Ok.

JK: His mother didn't speak English.

KF: Ok.

JK: And uh, the Mexicans um ... they didn't speak English.

KF: Ok. Huh. Yeah, I'm sort of curious because I know a lot of what happens when people are pickin' crabs...

JK: Uh-huh.

KF:...is there's a lot of talkin' goin' on, you know?

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: And so I'm curious, like, what happens in those houses where, the pickin' houses where it's kind of this mix of people.

1K: They ...uh-huh. Well um, the lady who was running the house, she could speak a little Spanish.

KF: Ok.

JK: But as far as uh communicating, uh wif dem, there wasn't any communication.

KF: Um-hmmm. Hmmm. Ok. So they had a, the Cambodians had a different plastic knife and you kind of...

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm...

KF: ... decided to uh...

JK: Yeah, it was very interesting to see a... different handle.. .

KF: Uh-huh, now did they pick differently?

JK: No.

KF: No.

JK: No, um-hmmm, no. They were very fast. They...

KF: Yeah....

JK: The Cam ... Cambodian lady, she was very fast.

KF: Hmmm. Ok. Did they say they had picked crabs ... in their own country? Or ... had learned....

JK: Didn't say.

KF: Didn't say.

JK: Didn't say.

KF: Ok. Well that's interesting.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Urn, well let's get back to uh, to you and your picking. Um, can you tell me what the, the picking house sounds like when everybody's in there workin'?

JK: Well it's uh.... Like **[unintelligible word here... "lye-ly"?]** time I think um, there's a lot of kidding and joking and stuff

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: They say it's to make the day, the day go easy when you...

KF: Right.

JK: Telling jokes and lies and stuff

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: [Chuckle]

KF: Lies?

JK: Yeah lot of it's, you know, lies and ... [laughter] ... exaggerations....

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: Exaggerations, yeah... [laughter] that's what... [laughter].

KF: Can you give me an example?

JK: There's some ... well I don't, I don't recall, it's just, just uh, they tell stories about um, things that have happened.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: And uh, then they might add on to it and exaggerate. And uh, yeah I can give you one example, they kid me about uh, a party that I went to in um, in Herlock, I went to a birthday party.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, I was dancing, and over-exerted myself.

KF: Ok.

JK: Dancing. And urn, when I stopped dancing I was out of breath and my heart was, uh, I had arrhythms...

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: My heart was uh, missing beats and stopping and stuff like that.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. And so I asked my cousin to take me to the hospital.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: That I think I was having a heart attack.

KF: Oh no.

JK: Uh-huh. And uh, he thought, he thought it was a joke, that I, you know, nothing wrong with me. So I went to the hospital and the doctor told me uh, that that was normal, he said that your heart will do that when you over-exert yourself.

KF: Ok.

JK: And he said because of my age, it was, you know, it wasn't fatal, but if I'd have been a older person...

KF: Right.

JK: That it, it could have been fatal.

KF: Could have been.

JK: Um-hmmm. And so they uh, kidded me about that. They said that uh, I had danced so hard I thought I was having a heart attack. They didn't, they didn't believe that something was actually happening.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And so ... and they would exaggerate, and tell it, tell it different ways. Every time they tell it, it's, it would be different.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter] And so... [Laughter]

KF: Ok. [Laughter] Now urn, some of the picking houses that I've been in, uh, already, um, are still doing hymn singing. Is that...

JK: Oh yeah.

KF:...going on...?

JK: No.

KF: No.

JK: No it doesn't, no. No. Let's **see** if. ..I'm, I'm trying to recall how many of the older people are there, it's about, let's see.... maybe six ...six or seven older people and you have...

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK:...the younger group are like in their late thirties...

KF: Ok.

JK: But they don't, they don't do any singing or anything like that.

KF: Hmmm. Ok. Ok. But the older folks remember?

JK: Um ... what was that?

KF: Will the older folks remember singing at some

JK: They might, uh-huh.

KF: Ok. Um, well, um, what kind of, what kind of friendships have you made?

JK: There?

KF: Yeah.

JK: Well they're all, all relatives, mostly.

KF: Oh they are.

JK: Yes, uh-huh. And urn, let's see Miss Evelyn, I don't think I knew her before that uh, I think, let's see, yes I did know her before she came to Murdeth's and Murdeth's.

KF: Ok.

JK: Because she worked at the next plant and I used to walk down and talk to Miss Evelyn and her uh, daughter, Diane.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: So I can say that I, that I met them since working down there.

KF: Ok.

JK: At Murdeth's and Murdeth's.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm, that's Miss uh, Evelyn there...

KF: This here?

JK: Yeah....

KF: Ok.

JK: The one on the news... the newspaper article.

KF: Oh.

JK: The newspaper.

KF: This is the same lady?

JK: No.

KF: No.

JK: Unh-uh. Diane, that's...

KF: This one?

JK: That's Miss Evelyn's daughter Diane.

KF: Ok. [Sounds of movement] Ok.

JK: And urn, Miss Alietha **[Spelling?]** she died, she's been dead for years, Miss Alietha. She was a very nice person. And this is brother, he retired. He was a claw cracker. He retired.

KF: Ok. [Sounds of movement] And are these people that urn, you see outside of work as well or ...?

JK: Uh, no. No, unh-uh.

KF: Ok. Ok. Urn and you said some... a lot of your relatives work ... with you?

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Urn, can you tell me how you're related? Are they...?

JK: They're cousins.

KF: Cousins.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. We're sort of interested in these family connections.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: In the picking houses.

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: Urn, and uh, did your cousins all learn from your aunt as well or...?

JK: No, no I think they learned from their parents.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: And my...

KF: And uh, what?

JK: My cousin up the road, Roodel **[spelling?]**, he urn, he weighs the meat.

KF: Oh ok.

JK: Yeah he does the weighing. And um, packing, and the shipping and, he's a truck driver, he drives a truck for the uh, plant.

KF: Oh ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. His brother um, works in, on the floor, putting crabs on the table.

KF: Ok.

JK: Urn, Roodel Molock **[spelling?]**, he's the, he, he weighs, the weigher.

KF: Well it, is he related...

JK: Molock.

KF:...to Bob Molock, Robert Molock...who lives...?

JK: I'm not sure.

KF: Huh, ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: There's a, a trapper that I talked to.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: In August.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Named Robert Molock. Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: And his bro...and his brother...

JK: ... brother Fred, works on the floor.

KF: Ok. What's it like working with uh, all this family around?

JK: Um, I.... it's difficult to say ... I usually have fun, you know, whether I'm there or, um, whatever job, I usually have uh, a great time with the people.

KF: Um-hmmm. Ok.

JK: I think maybe uh, working in the, I don't know whether working in, with my cousins and stuff in the crab house gave me the humor or not, but uh, I, um, I'm retired from Western Publishing and they were, and they were, they said they really missed me, because of the humor.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: So I don't know if that was some of the crab house humor I took on the other job or what.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: Is it uh, is it, crab house humor, how would you kind of describe that if you had to tell somebody who'd ...

JK: Uh...

KF:...never been in one.

JK: I don't know how to describe it, it's just um, everyone has something, not everyone but most people, have something funny to say.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: It's ... you know. Some kind of story.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: It's uh....

KF: Ok. And I know urn.... Well maybe it's different in Dorchester County but so far I've been talking with people in Somerset County...

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: And there aren't very many male pickers...

JK: Right, right. Um-hmmm.

KF:.... crab pickers. Is that true in this area?

JK: It's it's true, uh-huh, it's only one other guy that's picking...

KF: Ok.

JK: And um, when I decided I was going to change over my, one of my older cousins, uh, he told me that, you know, that, not to do it because it was a lady's job. So uh...(small laugh]

KF: Ok.

JK: And so I waited a whole year, I realized I couldn't crack anymore, it was just giving me a serious problem.

KF: Right.

JK: So I just, you know, uh decided I would have to start picking. And they started calling me "Mrs. Keene"..."[Laughter]

~~JK: That's how they kidded me. [Laughter] It was a little embarrassing at first but I said~~
~~I have a little bit of a pickers' [laughter]~~

~~KF: [1. laughter] Right _____~~

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JK: Because some of the other people told me, said no, don't pay any attention to that because they have some men that pick crabs and they're very, you know, very fast, it's ... the men who pick, good pickers, are usually faster than the women.

KF: Really?

JK: That's what, what one of the old timers told me. They said they knew men who were pickers and they were really fast.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Ok. Any guesses as to why?

JK: No I don't, I don't know any....

KF: Ok. So they called you Mrs. Keene.

JK: Yeah, uh-huh.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: But um, some of the other people that are gone now, the younger people, um, they used to kid me about uh, picking crabs. They said that I, they said everything I do, I'm shucking oysters. They said I pick crabs like I'm shucking oysters. Because see you have body rhythm, you have a certain rhythm of the body, and they thought it was funny, they said I was still shucking oysters. [Laughter]

KF: Have you shucked oysters?

JK: Yes, I've shucked oysters.

KF: Ok. [Laughter] Ok. Um, can you describe what the body rhythm ... is that they're talking about or ...um, have you thought about that at all?

JK: Well uh, I don't know if it's, I don't know if it's... Well one guy asked me did I ever did any boxing or anything, the guy, it's uh... oh yeah another male picker.

KF: Ok.

JK: Ok. Urn, he was picking beside me. And he asked me did I ever do any boxing and I told him I did a little bit, and he said that I um, had pretty body movements, just like I was boxing. So he saw a boxer in me. [Chuckle]

KF: Huh, ok.

JK: So ...uh-huh.

KF: And...

JK: So...

KF: Go ahead.

JK: But I, but I, I um, felt like it was a waste of energy, it was just a, to me uh, it was like a bad habit because I noticed a lot of pickers they weren't doing, you know, moving their bodies very much, it was just their hands and arms.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And I would be doing like this, my body would be, you know, flowing like that. With, when I grabbed, grab a crab I would, you know, would be doing like that.

KF: Ok. So they were mostly hand movements.

JK: Hand movements...

KF: You were leaning and...

JK: Little, little body uh-huh.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. And so I try to cut down on the body movements, and you know, just reach like that, instead of, you know, leaning over.

KF: Did ... did one feel better than the other one?

JK: Urn, no.

KF: Ok. So they thought the leaning and stuff was kind of...

JK: Might have been unnecessary, yeah.

KF: Ok. Ok. Hmmm, that's interesting, Ok. Urn, well one question I've been asking people is, um, what is the strangest way you've ever seen anybody pick a crab?

JK: I don't, I haven't seen anyone um, pick a, you know...

KF: Ok.

JK:...in the way different from the people at the plant where I work.

KF: Well how do you feel about a lot of the tourists and stuff who and just smash them to death with the hammer....? [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter] I um ... you see I was at a urn, party and I saw some people mangling crabs and I tried to show them that there was an easier way to do it but they, you know, they had their own way of doing it.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And I didn't, make any more comments. I said well if that's the way they...

KF: Right.

JK:...they want to do it, let them go ahead and do it that way.

KF: Ok.

JK: But it doesn't, you know, it doesn't bother me to...

KF: Ok. Some people have strong reactions and some people, are, you know, well that's their way of doing it. [Laughter]

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Ok, um, well what about, uh how much do you guys get paid for crab meat? Now?

JK: It's uh, two dollars and a quarter a pound.

KF: Oh, ok. Ok. And um, we're also trying to learn a little bit more about some of the urn, health issues and stuff.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Involved with picking crabs. And, can you describe to me urn, how you feel physically when you're done? With a day of picking.

JK: Tired. **[said feelingly]**

KF: Ok. What parts of you are tired?

JK: Urn, just exhausted, you know, if I have a hard day, if I've worked really hard, I just feel ... tired, from getting up so early. You have to get up around four o'clock, I, when I'm working down there I get up around four o'clock.

KF: Ok.

JK: We're... and urn, we have to be at work by five-thirty, they start work.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. But I don't go to work urn, that time every day since you know, I'm like in semi-retirement. I might show up at eight o'clock or something like that.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: And, and work till two. And urn, then the mornings that I do go early like that, I may stop at maybe twelve. I don't work the full day. And then some days I might work a full day.

KF: Ok.

JK: It depends upon how I feel. Or what I want to do, whether I want to paint or what.

KF: Right.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Urn, and is there ... any parts of you that ache or anything like that?

JK: Uh my arm sometimes, I have a urn, this arm I injured it unloading crab boats. I stuck the crab spine in my uh, here.

KF: Ok.

JK: And I just thought it was a little small thing, nothing to worry about.

KF: Right.

JK: And that uh, that winter the bones, you know, swelled.

KF: Oh.

JK: And that was years ago, that was back in the seventies. And Fm still having problems with that. It gets stiff and sore sometimes.

KF: Hmmm. Is that caused by something in the crab or is it....?

JK: I don't know...

KF:...you just hit the wrong spot or something?

JK: I think it hit the wrong spot.

KF: Ok.

JK: It hit directly into the bone.

KF: Um-hmmm. Hmmm. Ok.

JK: And this swells. Now, you know, sometimes, like, when, after I pick?

KF: Right.

JK: It's uh, it swells, the bone swells.

KF: Ok. Well, what are some of the health hazards of working in a picking house?

JK: Some people have um, problems with their hands, the um, the hands, the skin ... um, comes ... I can't describe it, but they'll have a rash, maybe a skin rash or something like that. And they say it's not from the crabs but it's from the, the uh, the water, whatever they put in the water to sanitize your hands.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Because we have to dip our knives and uh, and our hands. So they say it's this chemical, whatever it is.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: So what is the process for dipping your hands, like, is it...? yeah can you just describe....

JK: Well um, when we come in in the morning we get our trays and we dip them, we dip the trays.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And the cans.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, dip your hands and knife.

KF: Ok.

JK: In water, and then everytime you go to the restroom you have to wash your hands.

KF: Right.

JK: And I also dip my hands, I wash them and also dip, dip my hands.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: In this uh, solution.

KF: And do you have to dip your hands periodically throughout the day or is it....?

JK: I do.

KF: You do.

JK: I do. Um-hmmm.

KF: Huh. Hmmm. And is that sort of like the worst thing that you can get, is the rash?

JK: The rash. Well I think that maybe they have sensitive skin. Now, now one time I did have a serious problem with my hands. And um, when I was at Irving [?] Cannon's.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: My fingers actually swelled, and uh, and uh they turned very dark and like kind of green.

KF: Oh.

JK: Uh-huh. And urn, but I don't think it was the crabs I found out later what it might have been was urn, we had a wood stove in the kitchen and I was handling this wood without gloves and I think that it was poison ivy.

KF: Oh.

JK: I think that it was poison ivy I had gotten from the wood.

KF: Um-hmmm. Ok.

JK: But I don't ... yes. But that stopped me for a while. You know from the crabs.

KF: Right.

JK: Because I thought it was the crabs. Long time I thought the crabs had done that.

KF: Right.

JK: And, then one day it came to me that I was handling this wood with uh, as a matter of fact, what happened is I did get another irritation.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Without the crabs. And I realized that it was something else.

KF: Right. Ok. Ok. Urn, and you said you're in semi-retirement.

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: We're sort of curious, how does a crab picker retire, I mean is there....? [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter] To me it's a, it's a job where you have freedom.

KF: Ok.

JK: To do what you want to do. Because you don't have to be there. At the crab house. You know, you get what you work for.

KF: Ok.

JK: And so that gives you chances, like, you know like I want to um, to paint or maybe ride to St. Michaels and take some photographs.

KF: Right.

JK: Or whatever I want to do.

KF: Right. Ok.

JK: But even when I was working down there full-time, you, it was, I had like freedom to get up whenever I wanted to get up, if I wanted to watch a sunrise or whatever I'd go on the wharf and stand watch the sunrise.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, I um, I was studying for my G.E.D. so that gave me a chance to go out, in the lunchroom, I'd go in and work for a while....

KF: Right.

JK: And around eight o'clock I'd go out and sit down and study for maybe a hour.

KF: Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm.

JK: See you couldn't do that if you're working nine to five or, or a regular job you couldn't do that.

KF: Right.

JK: So picking crabs gives you a sort of freedom.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Huh. And um, are there people in every crab house who are sort of legends?

JK: Uh, I don't know, I.... Like there we have Miss Evelyn. She's got a lot of history with her.

KF: Ok.

JK: And um, I don't know. I don't know.

KF: Ok. Well why don't you tell me about some of these paintings that you've done? We can start with this oyster shell.

JK: Yeah that's a, that was my cousin's, she passed a couple of years ago.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. Her name was uh.... Urn, huh, can't even think of her name... Mo.... Um. That's really something, I can't think, recall her name. She was uh, Johnson, Momena **[spelling?]** Johnson.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. And uh, I just felt that uh, this was something, like you said, it was passing, and

I wanted to capture some of the people.

KF: Right.

JK: That's what I wanted to do, that's what I was doing with the photography and everything.

KF: Ok.

JK: And I wasn't very happy with some of my pictures. I didn't do a good job, but I got a few good pictures. And uh, actually the pictures are actually a shortcut because I tried sketching, and it was taking so much time, sketching, and I realized I couldn't do but so much sketching.

KF: Right.

JK: So I would have to do some photographs and later work from the photographs.

KF: Ok, so you do the paintings from the photographs?

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: Ok.

JK: Yeah. Now this photo ...I lost a photograph uh, that I worked from for that. Seventy-three I lost that.

KF: Uh what, um what made you decide to put them in, in paint? That's quite an endeavor, to put them in paint.

JK: That's uh, yeah, acrylic, that's acrylic.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Well, because I did draw them, urn, I did mostly drawings. And I started painting, so that I thought that I would put them in the paint because I think it's more enduring than the photographs because like I said the photograph is gone.

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Right. And how about this one up here?

JK: That's Miss Mary Ward. This was her last season. When I took this, she's no longer

picking.

KF: So she retired?

JK: She had heart problems.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. And she couldn't pick any longer. She was driving from Cambridge every uh, every day, to um, to Hooper's Island, she was working at Hooper's Island.

KF: Whoa. Now why would you drive all the way from Cambridge to Hooper's Island?

JK: Well that was her home down there, that was her home.

KF: Oh, oh ok.

JK: And I think she was used to working in that area.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. So I thought I'd ride over and get a photograph of her. And I didn't know that that would be her last uh, season down there, so I'm glad I really did, glad that I got down there and got that photograph.

KF: And how do you Mary?

JK: Um, her daughter and I used to be friends. Close friends. My girlfriend, her daughter was my girlfriend.

KF: Ok. Um-hmmm.

JK: So she's been something like a mother to me.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. And how about this one here on the?

JK: That's Lavadia **[spelling?]** Hunt. That's the one that asked me to move, that's my cousin.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: I used to pick in front of her. [Laughter] We caught her taking big crabs one day, her

daughter was telling me, said: "Joe, look, look! She's taking crabs from Aunt Lee's **[Lea's?]** pile." And she had reached way out to get these big crabs.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: Uh-huh. So we thought that was funny, we really laughed. I said: "Oh it's really true!" because I was just kidding her, I didn't know that she really was getting the big crabs.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And so, her daughter said: "Yeah, yeah, shell get'em, If you're gone from the table. Her aunt had gotten up, it was her aunt that she got the crabs from.

KF: Um-hmmm. Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Ok.

JK: [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter] So what does um, what's your process for starting these? You start with a photo...?

JK: I have a photo, uh-huh. Let me show you this.... [Sounds of movement] That's Miss **[Mrs?]** Ward.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok.

JK: That's Miss Evelyn.

KF: Oh, right. Hmmm. Wow, that's quite nice. So you start with uh...just this **[unintelligible word or phrase, "sketch"?]** of the base coat?

JK: Yeah I usually, yeah, um-hmmm, yeah. I don't draw much now, um. I used to square every ... do these, you know, grid the square everything...

KF: Ok.

JK: And um, and then, you know, trans.. transpose it from the paper to the canvas, by the squares.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. But I don't do that anymore because it takes so much time.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Doing that, that's exhausting to me.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And so what I use now, I use this projector.

KF: Oh, ok,

JK: And that, that cuts down on the time.

KF: And how did you learn how to paint?

JK: Self-taught.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Well it's really quite nice.

JK: I have a lot of books and stuff on you know on how to, how to draw. But I don't, I use the books, you know, somewhat.

KF: Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm.

JK: And reading about the techniques of other artists, that helps. And I worked at a publishing company, Western, and I saw how the uh printing, printing was done, you know they start with the blues and then add each color.

KF: Ok.

JK: And I, so that's when I started using this blue background, or the blue um, doing the uh, I don't know whether you call it the uh values, or what you might call it, the technical, explanation for that. But um, and sometimes I might use charcoal, and do all of the shading first.

KF: Ok.

JK: In charcoal.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. Then I put a fixative on it to uh, a spray, I spray it so that the charcoal won't bleed.

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Right.

JK: And uh, then I might do an under-painting. And then I go on to do the final putting the colors in.

KF: And how do you decide who's going to get their portrait done?

JK: Uh, it's random. It's random.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I lost a lot of work, I don't have that um, have those, I did a lot of her. I like the colors that she had on that day. It might, might be the colors.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, I liked, she had a red, this is a red sweater and the blue apron, against the background was green, light green.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, it was very colorful. And then her facial expressions.

KF: She has really good ones.

JK: Lot of character in her face, uh-huh. She, and, she's had about thirteen children.

KF: Ok.

JK: So, huh [chuckle]. And uh, and she's not on medication, like for blood pressure and stuff like that, you know, it's amazing that she's in good health, having all those children, and she's overweight. But still in, you know, fairly good health.

KF: Hmmm. Ok.

JK: She's, I think she's sixty five. Sixty-five, sixty-six, I think she's around sixty-six now.

KF: Hmmm. And how long has she been picking crabs?

JK: I'm not sure. I'm not sure how long she's been picking.

KF: And what do you do with these uh, portraits, when you're done?

JK: Uh, this one, I don't know whether I give it to Miss Mary or, or sell it. I have to ask her permission, you know what does she want to do with it.

KF: Um-hmmm. Um-hmmm.

JK: When I told Mrs. Calvert someone was coming down to interview, he said he's willing to sell that if the price is right. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter] Does this hang in his office or something now?

JK: Um, he had it in his den but um, but he moved...

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

JK:...uh my work on exhibit. Is I, I do some carving also, that's one of my decoys. I'm....

KF: Right there, that?

JK: Yeah that's an unfinished decoy that I'm working on.

KF: That's really nice. What kind of wood do you like to use?

JK: Um, I've found that the basswood is best. So far, you know I've only used the bass. I'd gotten some wood out of the, wood like, wood out of the woods behind my house, like holly, and different, I wanted to experiment with different woods.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: But they were very difficult to work with, the other, local woods. Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Yeah, I've had a couple of decoy carvers say they like cedar and stuff locally but um,

the other stuff they find pretty hard to carve.

JK: Yes, yes it is. Because I have cedar.

KF: [Laughter] Dangerous almost.

JK: Yes, uh-huh. I have cedar, I have some cherry wood back there I'm going to try to use.

KF: Ok.

JK: I work, this is uh, paperweight **[sounds of movement]**, decoy, I worked in a um, after I left the crab house I went, moved to Cambridge and started working uh, different jobs up there, I worked in um, I worked for this guy, Skeeze [?] Wright [?], Skeet [?] Wright, I worked for him for about four or five years, and, doing miniature decoys and stuff like that.

KF: Oh, ok. What did he have a little...?

JK: It was a shop, we had a little shop. And, um, you know working in the crabs I felt that sooner or later um, the crabs were going to go.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Because um, after picking or, whatever, after cracking, I would stay down and help them steam crabs.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And I would unload trucks.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. And during the um, spring season, we would get dredge crabs. And they were dredging all these female crabs.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And I said, crabs, they can't last like this, I mean, sooner or later it's going to hurt.

KF: Right.

JK: Now that was I think, maybe, during the seventies, I think, some time during the seventies. That I realized that uh, that the crab industry was going to start hurting.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Because of dredging all of these crabs, I mean tray after tray after fem...you know with female crabs, with the eggs, laden, they'd be egg-laden.

KF: Oh, wow.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: What would you do then, um, I mean are the eggs trash, do you just put them in the trash pile or...?

JK: Uh, no, they went on to the pickers. They just had to, they call them sponge crabs.

KF: Right.

JK: That's what they call them.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um, that was then, but uh, later uh, I don't know whether Mr. Calvert made the machines because he was doing a lot of inventing.

KF: Ok.

JK: But they came up with machines that would clean the crabs, so he has a machine down there that uh, takes the shell off, takes the back off, uh, trim the legs and all of that. So when they get to the uh, get to the people, they're, to the pickers, they're clean.

KF: And all they do is pick then.

JK: And all, well, they have to still trim off certain parts of it.

KF: Right.

JK: But the, but the back is off and um, they're pretty clean, they've been washed because uh, the dredge crabs usually have sand and dirt on a **[unintelligible word, "mud"?)**.

KF: And, were these inventions only for the dredge crabs?

JK: Just for the ... I think just for the dredged.

KF: Hmmm, ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. No, no I'm wrong on that. I think toward the end of the season or when the crabs pick up, when um, when they're fairly abundant they start operating the

machines.

KF: Ok.

JK: The uh, the cleaning machines to back the crabs. And uh, as a matter of fact they um, um, during that time they have a picking machine, so they use the picking machine. Well you can get most of that history from him, he has a lot of history on the machine.

KF: Ok, and he's at, was it Todd Hill's Seafood?

JK: No, he's at Merdeth and Merdeth. He was, he was the proprietor, but his son runs it now.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh, Jennings C. Tolly **[Spelling?]**

KF: Ok.

JK: Runs it, Merdeth and Merdeth now. And his grandson is down the road to, I think it's Toddville [?] Seafoods. So J.C.'s son is also operating a plant now.

KF: Ok. And they're all related to Mr. Calvert?

JK: Yes, he's the father, um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Is he still around?

JK: Yeah, he's still around.

KF: He's still around.

JK: Yeah. He's the one I talked to last night and told him that you might want to talk to him.

KF: Oh, ok. Yeah, yeah if you have his phone number, that would be great.

JK: Ok. Um-hmmm.

KF: Urn, ok. And, let me ask you what, uh, what it means for you to be able to make these paintings?

JK: Well um, I beginning to wonder now ... if I wasted my time.

KF: Really?

JK: Uh, or what, you know. I mean ... because I'm poor... [slight chuckle]. And uh, it's hard selling paintings, very difficult to sell paintings.

KF: Yes.

JK: Uh-huh. Even like if you want to do a portrait of someone, you know like the family or something like that, if you say anything above seventy-five dollars, they, you know, say well that's too much money.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: They say maybe I could sell one for thirty-five, forty dollars or something like that.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And it's just a waste of time for me to, to paint and, you know, just to get thirty-five, forty dollars for a painting.

KF: Right.

JK: It's a waste of time.

KF: Right.

JK: So. But I, right now, I spend most of my time writing.

KF: Oh really.

JK: Yes, um-hmmm, I spend most of my time writing.

KF: Writing what?

JK: I'm doing research in my uh, my epigraphy, I'm studying um, the um, monuments in the Yucatan, chronological monuments, the sculptures that the Maya Indians left.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Yeah.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: So I'm doing research in that area.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: Deciphering some of those inscriptions.

KF: Oh, ok, ok.

JK: So this is a book that I, I've been working from. **[Sounds of movement]**

KF: Hmmm, ok. And what got you interested in this?

JK: Uh, just curiosity I guess, and...

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Uh-huh. I um started with Stonehenge, I was curious about Stonehenge.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: I did some research on Stonehenge and I went from that to um, the Mexican sun [9] stone. I did some research on that.

KF: Right.

JK: And then, uh, this is my last project. So um...

KF: Hmmm.

JK: I hope to publish some of the things that I've found, some of my research, I like hope I can publish it.

KF: Um-hmmm. Well that sounds very interesting. Sounds like you're not actually retired. [Laughter]

JK: No ... [laughter]. I have more time to do what I wanted to do... since I'm

KF: Right, right.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Well one thing we're trying to um, also ask people about is um, the relationship between African-American workers and uh, the white owners.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: And sometimes I know that's a delicate thing to talk about.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Um, but we're sort of curious what that relationship is.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Um, and I don't know if you want to say anything about that....

JK: Well, well my relationship with them is great, you know,

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Because like last night when I went down to get this, uh he told me to come down anytime.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: So I get along well with the....

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I think, I guess everyone I along well with everyone.

KF: Ok [laughter].

JK: But some of the people have conflict. You know, on the job conflict, stuff like that.

KF: Um-hmmm. How is that resolved?

JK: Um, well um, one of my cousins left the job because she was having conflict there, but uh, the um, the other people, they get along, they get along well with the employer.

KF: Um-hmmm. And if you decide to leave one picking house, I mean, can you go on to another...?

JK: Yeah you can, yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Um-hmmm. And how does that work? Do you just sort of ...?

JK: Um, well when I went over to do this, do the photography, and uh, I just wanted to get the feel of the plant over there, I asked them, could I pick a few crabs. And they told me, sure, go ahead.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And they just watch you to see what, they ask you have you picked before.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And, I told them yeah. And they'll stand and watch, see whether, see if you know what you're doing.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And once they see you know what you're doing, they just, you know, go ahead.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Huh, ok. So you're kind of free then to...

JK: Yes you are.

KF:...to wander to any plant...

JK: Yes, you can go anyplace and get uh, during the summer, and if it's crabs you can go to work there.

KF: Huh, ok. And urn, are there plants that are known for being a little, you know, better paying or nicer to workers or anything like that?

JK: Um, I think it's all the same.

KF: It's all the same, ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Ok, and um, the other thing we're asking people about is urn, a lot of pickers have said they have their seat that they sit in...

JK: Right, they do, um-hmmm.

KF: So I'm sort of wondering...

JK: Or their chairs.

KF: Yeah, what is it about having that seat? And if you could describe who sits where in your plant.

JK: Well um, I think that that, that might be any job, because I remember one job I was working like as a uh, as a porter, cleaning up and stuff.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And uh, I, I just walked in and picked up a mop one day, and this guy says you got my mop. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

JK: And I thought that was funny, you know, because I said [laughter] this guy owns the mop!

KF: [Laughter]

JK: So I gave it to him, so... (laughter). So I guess, you know, when a person gets accustomed to using a certain chair or whatever, it's theirs,

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Or their, well I know, I can understand the position where there, the spot where they sit, I can understand them saying that that's where I work and I like to work there.

KF: Why?

JK: Maybe it's because the chair has a certain, uh, right height, and the table is at the right level for them to work. They feel comfortable at that...

KF: Ok.

JK: Because most of the chairs are, you know like um, the legs are cut according to the person's height or something like that.

KF: Oh they are?

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: And uh, who cuts the legs...?

JK: They'll get the maintenance, the floor workers or someone to cut the chairs, to make some measurements and cut the chairs down.

KF: Oh. Ok, ok. Well I hadn't, no one had told me that before.

JK: Uh-huh. Because at the end of the season, well uh, my cousin um, has to take the chairs and write the names under the bottom, because they're going to paint them.

KF: Oh.

JK: Uh-huh, after everyone leaves for the season, they'll paint, paint the chairs, so he has to mark them so he'll know whose chair...

KF: Ahhh.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: So then when the season starts back up....

JK: Yeah.

KF: You can just look under and find your...

JK: Right, um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Hmmm, ok, all right. And um, are the chairs then always placed in the same place.

JK: Yeah same place, uh-huh.

KF: And can you tell me who sits where at your table?

JK: Uh, my cousin Leona **[spelling?]** sits to my left.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And I guy named Terry sits here.

KF: Ok.

JK: Ok, and then uh, she sits in front of her aunt, not directly in front of her aunt but um, down one spot. She's working by herself, her aunt's working by herself.

KF: Ok [laughter].

JK: [Laughter]. Ok, and so I'm working um, in front of her daughter. When I work, I work in front of her daughter.

KF: Ok.

JK: But you can move. Uh like, say for example uh, they don't want to mess the table up, like one person working one spot and one person here like that, well sometimes someone will say, you know, well come and work with me. And that way, you know, you don't dirty the whole, the whole table.

KF: Ok. Ok. Hmmm.

JK: But getting back to the chairs now uh, when I went down to the plant where she's working they had uh, um, I think, well they were metal chairs,

KF: Oh.

3K: Uh-huh. Because at Murdeth and Murdeth's, the chairs are wooden chairs.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Ok, so down there uh, they have uh like a bolts that you can screw out to adjust the height.

KF: Ok.

JK: Of the uh chairs.

KF: Hmmm....

JK: So they're adjustable.

KF: Ok.

3K: Um-hmmm.

KF: And did you notice did everybody still have their though chair that they wanted to....?

JK: There I didn't notice you know how they ... arranged theirselves.

KF: Ok.

3K: And ok some chairs now you have to make, uh, they would make the seat extra wide. That's for the big ladies.

KF: Ok [laughter].

3K: Uh-huh.

KF: So they really try to customize some of the work.

3K: Yeah they, yeah um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. Ok, and do most people try to ... to fix their knife so it's....? I mean, you've really made...

JK: They wrap with paper.

KF: Ok.

JK: At the wrap.

KF: Um-hmmm. And uh where do you all usually get your knives?

JK: Uh, usually buy it on the job. At the plant.

KF: Ok.

JK: They have knives for sale. Knives, aprons, and stuff.

KF: So the aprons you have to purchase from them as well.

JK: You can, uh-huh.

KF: Ok. Yeah, I was going to ask you what you usually wear to work.

JK: Yeah, it's a plastic apron. I don't know if I have my apron ... hanging.... [Sounds of movement] It's a blue apron. Classic apron [?, **unsure what's being said here, Mr. Keene having stepped away from the microphone**]

KF: Oh, ok. And those are probably easy to hose off and clean.

JK: Yes, they are, um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. And do you have um, a certain set of clothes that you prefer to wear to the crabhouse that you probably don't wear anywhere else?

JK: Yeah, I try to wear the same clothes.

KF: Uh-huh. Yeah, I've been asking people what the crabhouse smells like when they're in there working. Can you describe that?

JK: Just like crab.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: A crabby smell, that's....

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: They uh, they sanitize, you know, the drainage holes and everything, to keep the odor

down.

KF: All right.

JK: But outside it might, you know, get a little bad out there. From the deterioration.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um, the back wharf is rea... They call it the front. I call it back.

KF: Ok.

JK: You know where the boats come in, they call it the front.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. Because to me the front is, you know, you entrance, I call that the front of the building. So uh, out front, to me it has a fishy crabby smell out there.

KF: Right.

JK: And then you have the fresh smell of the water, you know, coming in.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: So, that's why a lot of times I walk out just to get the uh, fresh air, or to look at the sights, because to me it's very beautiful down there. I really enjoy it down there.

KF: Ok.

JK: Especially the sunrises, when the sun is just coming up off of the water, that's really ... beautiful.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Beautiful sight.

KF: Hmmm. Have you seen any uh, interesting things there as you look out onto the marsh some mornings or...?

JK: Hmmm, no I haven't. I used to explore, I used to just take off from work, get in a skiff and uh row down the creek. Row down exploring. Well what happened is uh, one day we went to set up a duck blind, the boss and about four or five of us went with them to ... one of the shores further down the creek to do this duck blind, and um, one of the guys scooped down and picked up something. And I asked him what was it and he said an

arrowhead. And I said you mean you have arrowheads around here. And he said yeah, sure, they wash up. And so from then I started riding down the creek looking for arrowheads. And so I found, I found several.

KF: Huh.

JK: And uh, I went on a place called Sheep Island, they told me it was called Sheep Island. Because I was asking them, did people live there, they told me, yeah, people did live there.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Because I had a theory there was a treasure was buried on this island.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh, and I was exploring. And they told me the people had lived there. I was, um, I was rowing back from one of the other places, and I saw some landmarks that looked unusual, the way the trees were set up. And it looked like it had marked off something. And so I went on the island and I searched and uh, I found the uh hole, where someone had dug something and dropped a beer bottle in there and uh, I think the date on the bottle was nineteen twenty-three.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: So I was late.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: Whatever, was there. But I was telling people about it and they said, yeah, people had lived there, and something evidently had been buried there and somebody knew, you know, knew about it and had gone there, to get it.

KF: Huh.

JK: Uh-huh. Because the landmarks were like it was three trees here, on the, I think on the whole island it was three trees here, two trees like that, and when you looked down this like aisleway, you could see one tree, they were focused on this one tree.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And so I went down to that tree and started walking a spiralling circle out and that's when I came on the hole,

KR Huh.

JK: Where somebody had been down and gotten whatever it was.

KF: Huh. Were there many um, stories of treasure in this area of Dorchester County?

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Oh there are?

JK: Yeah, that's why this is called Golden Hill area because of the...

KF: Oh I didn't know that.

JK: Yeah it's called Golden Hill because the pirates, they claim pirates came in and buried gold in this area.

KF: Oh, ok. Ok.

JK: Evidently someone found some gold for them to name it Golden Hill.

KF: Hmmm. Ok. Haven't heard that one. [Laughter]

JK: Yeah, yeah it's.... Yeah.

KF: That's interesting those, those kinds of local...legends like that, stories.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Well um, let me ask you what is your favorite part about picking crabs?

JK: Oh, favorite part. Hmmm... I don't know if I have a favorite part [chuckle] about picking.... It's just a job.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: It's just, you know something to ... keeps the money flowing a little bit. You know a little, a little income. When I was young I used to enjoy eating crabs. The claws mainly.

KF: Right.

JK: But it's different now, uh, from you know like when I first started because then we picked uh, everything, the Jimmys, and everything. And, and, you would have huge trays of Jimmy crabs then. But now they take the Jimmys out and ship them, and you just get the you know, little smaller stuff now to pick.

KF: Right.

JK: Because back then I was, I think the most I made was like thirty-seven pounds. Back

then. That was cracking claws.

KF: Wow.

JK: Uh-huh. And so the crabs were really, really good then.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: But they've changed over the years. In size.

KF: Right. Well and it sounds too like they're shipping the larger one out to....

JK: They are! They, yeah right, yeah, they ship the, number ones they call them.

KF: Ok, ok.

JK: But my favorite part, uh, I don't eat very many crabs now.

KF: Oh, why not?

JK: I think I've eaten so many ... [chuckle] ... crabs. So that used to be my favorite part, going out to the trays, specially when they just come out of the cooker, out of the and it's very delicious.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: When they're just steamed. They're very delicious. Without anything on it, without seasoning or anything. Just uh, as they are.

KF: Hmmm. Ok.

JK: And it's a curious thing that uh, if I ate a um, feet, claws from a female crab it would make me nauseated. I don't know what it was. It was a difference in the flavor.

KF: Oh.

JK: It's a difference. That was to me now that, um, the female had a strong, to me it was like a stronger uh, flavor, I don't know how I could describe it. But the male was a milder, a milder taste. But I attempted eating the female claws and I couldn't do it. It would, uh, cause me to become nauseated. I don't know what it was. In that.

KF: I don't know that I've had a female crab. Hmmm, ok. That's interesting. Um, is there a time of the season that um, crabs seem to be easier to pick?

JK: Nnn...uh yes, duri...at the first part of, at the first of the season the crabs are uh, what

they call poor, they don't have very meat. And um, then later in the season they get better, you know, they're full. They call it fat.

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh. So yeah, that's how they describe it, the crabs are either poor or, or fat. And you can tell, you know when you pick them up, they're light, they're lightweight.

KF: Right.

JK: During the early part of the season. But say, I guess around July, June-July and stuff like that, they're starting to get a little heavy.

KF: Um-hmmm. Ok. So they're a little better to pick then in July?

JK: Yeah, yes, they're better. Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. And um, ok. Uh, we're sort of um, curious, how people prepare for crab season. In the area. It ...I know picking probably ends like in November or October or something.

JK: November, around November.

KF: Yeah. And then how do you sort of get prepared for the start of it again in May?

JK: It's ... nothing to do to prepare. Just, you know, say, oh my, here we go again.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: Ok.

JK: Because you're off drawing unemployment you know and taking it easy and stuff you know then you have to start getting up early again.

KF: Right, right. And um, questions, want to make sure I haven't forgotten any. Uh...um, what did you think of the crab house when you first went into one?

JK: You mean as a child or...?

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: I...I don't recall, um, I don't recall what you know my particular feelings were. It was just, I was going to watch my aunt work and maybe do something myself. To earn a few pennies to buy some candy or something like that. But she had a hard job keeping me uh,

you know, there at the spot because I was attracted to the water. I loved the water. And so I would wander away from, you know out of the, I would work for a while and then I'd go outside and swim and wade in the water, try to find deep water because down there at Irvin Cannon's you could walk it seemed like I'd walk for miles in the water and never could find deep water, it stayed waist deep.

KF: Hmmm,

JK: But what it was, you know, they came in channels, it would be a channel. I never hit a channel.

KF: Right, ok. Huh.

JK: Till uh, I realize now that the old timer lied to me when he told me that sharks came in behind the uh boats, and that kept me out of the water. [Chuckle]

KF: [Laughter]

JK: Because my aunt would come out and call me and argue with me or, you know, fuss, you know how you chastize a kid.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: About being in the water. She was afraid I'd get drowned.

KF: Right.

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Right, ok.

JK: But when the old timer told me that sharks came in behind the boats that finished me for the water, for down there.

KF: And was this a waterman that told you that?

JK: Yeah, it was a waterman.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

JK: So maybe my aunt talked to him and you know told him to tell me something.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: Um, what's it like when the inspectors show up?

JK: Uh, to me it's you know just someone coming in to look to see what you're doing, that everything's going ok.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: So there's nothing uh, out of, you know, extraordinary if an inspector comes in. Nothing extraordinary. Because like I, like I said when I get up I always dip my knife and with this I think I'm going to have to do some work on it because I can see some crevices. And I try to be, you know, as clean as I possibly can. Because I don't want to, you know to treat it light. I treat it um, like, you know, would want my food treated. So that's the way I feel when I'm in there working.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: So I see a couple of things that need some work on this. See I give it uh, acrylic coating.

KF: Right.

JK: Uh-huh. That'll fill in everything because I see the finish is coming off a little bit. So I have to work on it for the next season.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. But, uh, the way that I was doing, I think that it was a little unsanitary, using the paper?

KF: Yeah.

JK: Yeah, unless you change the paper frequently. But I think if you **use** the same paper the whole day I think that bacteria might accumulate.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: So and that uh, that would spoil the meat, if the bacteria gets into the meat, I think it spoils the meat.

KF: Right. Ok. Now do people when the inspector shows up do they toss out the paper that's around the knife?

JK: No.

KF: No?

JK: Unh-uh.

KF: Ok. Ok.

JK: Because they dip them anyway, they dip the paper.

KF: Oh.

JK: They dip the whole thing.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. You see one of the inspectors, because I asked, I asked the inspector what was he getting, he was getting swabs, samples from the table.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And um, I asked him was he looking for physteria [sp?] and he, it was some other - steria, another type that he named.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: That uh, that can accumulate on the table if you're not careful.

KF: Right, hmmm.

JK: So, yeah he takes meat samples, they, when they come out they take samples of your meat. And uh, and samples from the table.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: As far as I could see. They probably take samples from other areas too, I think in the weighing room, I think they also get samples.

KF: Hmmm, ok. Now how long do they stay when they come in?

JK: Hmmm, I'm not, I never pay any attention to the time, but they're there for a while. They're pretty thorough because they go from table to table. They don't, you know, just go to a few people, they go through the whole plant, checking for I guess bacteria or whatever.

KF: Um-hmmm. And what kind of warning do you guys get before they show up?

JK: None. It's not necessary really.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Is there any change in uh, the talk or activities?

JK: No, no. No they keep on going, if it's a man inspector the ladies look at him you know, so...

KF: {Laughter}

JK: Now um, years ago when there used to be a lot of young people working well they would stop working, but now you don't have young people down there in the plants.

KF: Right. Um, is there a memory or a story that stands out for you about working in a

JK: Crab house. No. Uh, no, there is but I wouldn't tell it. [Laughter]

KF: Ok [laughter]. I can turn this off if you want.

JK: [Laughter]. Ok, you can turn it off I'll tell it.

KF: Did people from certain communities work in certain picking houses?

JK: Yeah usually, uh-huh.

KF: Ok, and how does that work down here? Like, you just said that at Irvin Cannon's the Crapo...

JK: That was Crapo and some people from here.

KF: Ok.

JK: That's because Irvin Cannon is down at Crapo.

KF: Right.

JK: And so that, um, even if Crapo people from Cambridge would come down and work there.

KF: Ok. And how about at Murdeth's and Murdeth's?

JK: Murdeth and Murdeth um, they have people from here. And um, from down that way, Tideville [l people. And uh, there's no other community because the other

communities have died out. The people from the other communities are all gone. Crapo's no blacks down there now.

KF: Ok.

JK: At all. And Irvin Cannon's, he had to hire Mexicans because there was nobody to work hardly. You have a few white people down there working. Maybe four or five something like that but it's mostly uh, Mexicans,

KF: Hmmm, ok.

JK: And um, where work at now, um, to me it's a little sad to see the room's empty where you know it used to be full.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And uh, the area where the claw crackers were that's empty, um, then had a section on this side, that's maybe four or five people there and then there's this section there's only about maybe ten people.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: It's not like it used to be, a full house.

KF: How many people would be picking?

JK: Um, maybe had forty or fifty people.

KF: That's a good many.

JK: Um-hmmm. Mr. Calvert can tell you, he can tell you. Yep.

KF: And uh, the Hooper's Island....

JK: Hooper's Island, uh they have mostly Mexicans over there.

KF: Urn-hmmm. And is that the same reason that there aren't any African-Americans over there to pick and....?

JK: Families have died out, moved out. Moved to Cambridge for better jobs. Instead of the seasonal work. They work year-round.

KF: Right.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok, and what about um, people who pick crabs, do they also shuck oysters as well, used to?

JK: Back then we did, uh-huh, we would have the oyster season, crab season. As soon as the crabs were finished we'd start shucking.

KF: So that's good work year-round?

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm. Yes they would re-outfit the uh, room you know for the, prepare for the uh oysters.

KF: How, what do you have to do to prepare for that?

JK: Um, just move the chairs out. Because most of the oyster shuckers stand. Or, you'd have a box, what was called a oyster box.

KF: Ok.

JK: Uh-huh. It was just a arrangement where you were up off of the floor, and this thing had sides. And um, you know the front, that's to keep the oysters hitting and, you know hitting you. Yeah, on that I didn't draw her, yes I did. [Sounds of movement] This ... this is she's standing in this box.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: You can see the outline. Uh-huh, and it was painted gray, gray box.

KF: Ok, right, right.

JK: This is a huge wooden block, everyone had a block or two blocks that they would shuck on, to give the oyster elevation, off of the table.

KF: Ok. And the box made it easier on, your shoulders or just...?

JK: Um, no, it keeps the oysters from you know, hitting you.

KF: Um-hmmrn.

JK: And uh, I had a, I made a little stool. I don't know if you'd call it a stool or not, I took a two-by-four and um, put a cross piece on it, and then um, put a cushion on it. I nailed a piece of foam rubber over it you know and covered it with a plastic cover. And that got me off of my feet, so I wouldn't have to be on my feet all day.

KF: Ok.

JK: And then some of the older shuckers, did sit down and shuck.

KF: Oh.

JK: When it got to the point where they couldn't stand, they would sit and shuck.

KF: I think that would be hard standing all day.

JK: All day, it is. It's uh, it's a hard job, shucking oysters is not a, not a joke.

KF: Is it more difficult than picking crabs?

JK: Yes it is. You exert yourself more um, you, well um first of all you have to use *uh*, force to get into the oysters.

KF: Uh-huh.

JK: Uh-huh. A little more force, to get into the oysters. That was one of the, one of the things that they would laugh about um, is the way that I would call oysters, you know when your table would get down and I would say "Oyst-chers," and to me it sounded, it sounded as though I was saying it, like they were saying it, but they said it's not. And they thought it was funny so they would try to imitate me when I would call for oysters.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: Well *how* did they say it?

JK: Um, to me it sounded like they were saying "Oysters".

KF: So when your pile gets low you call for...

JK: You call, uh-huh, for oysters.

KF:... someone comes and dumps... ok.

JK: Yeah.

KF: Yeah, did you do that in the crab house too, call out...?

JK: One time they did but it, but now um, the guys don't like you to do that. They uh, I mean I did it for a joke one day and they got angry with me because I called for crabs.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter] I did it for a joke. I thought I had one of my cousins putting uh, oysters on the table. [Sounds of movement] [Sound of phone chirruping]

KF: Ok. Where is this photo taken?

JK: That was in, in Murdeth's and Murdeth's.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. These were shanties down at Kent Island. I went down there to try to capture those before they, they were going to be torn down.

KF: Oh ok.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: And these shanties were where seafood workers had lived?

JK: Yes, uh-huh.

KF: Ok. What part of Kent Island is this?

JK: Uh, let's see, it was, oh how can I tell describe that ... when you're going toward the Bay Bridge, it was uh, just before you go on that Kent Narrows bridge. It was to your left.

KF: Ok.

JK: It was to your left, uh-huh. I think they've torn it out and done some building in there now. But I heard they were going to tear those shanties down so I went down and did a, did some photographs. Because I wanted to paint those also.

KF: Um-hmmm. Now it looks like people were still living in these.

JK: Yes, uh, yes there were still people living down there when I went down....

KF: Um, and where were they going to move, these folks, if they were going to tear them down?

JK: Uh, they did a housing project, they built some pretty, you know good uh decent housing.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: And moved them into those ... homes.

KF: Ok. Were there ever shanties like this down...?

JK: Huh?

KF: Were there ever shanties like this in this part of Dorchester?

JK: No, not that I know of.

KF: Oh.

JK: No. [Sounds of movement]

KF: These are nice photographs.

JK: Yeah, thank you.

KF: Do you take a lot of photographs around the shore?

JK: I uh, I did but I don't now.

KF: Ok.

JK: I was taking a lot of photographs.

KF: I noticed a pretty big photo album there.

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm. See this is from the crab house where uh, Murdeth's and Murdeth's, looking out across the uh, marsh.

KF: Oh, that's nice.

JK: Um-hmmm. [Sounds of movement] That was taken at um, as I make a left turn going to the crab house at uh, Stein's boatyard.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: I know where that is.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Yeah, these are very nice. Were you going to paint the, the boats here.

JK: I probably will. I think this scene no longer exists. This is on Cambridge creek before

they tore it down, tore it out, I think this is where they have a marina now. We're getting away from the crab picking. [Laughter]

KF: That's all right [laughter]. It's all good history, Hmmm. This another one here?

JK: Huh?

KF: This middle one?

JK: Yeah, uh-huh, that's **[Unintelligible word]**'s creek.

KF: Ok.

JK: I think the marina is there now, on that spot.

KF: Oh, right.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: Right, because this is J.M. Clayton back there too?

JK: I think so.

KF: I think it is.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: Is this you in the marsh?

JK: Uh-huh. No, that's ...I think his name is Lou Goslin. Muskratter.

KF: Oh, ok.

JK: Um-hmmm, he's out there getting his, tending his traps. And I came by and saw him, thought I'd get a shot of him. Yeah that's a ... that's a oyster she's weighing up.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Weighing the oysters.

KF: Ok.

JK: She's about, I think she's eighty-five now.

KF: Wow.

JK: And this lady is senile now.

KF: Her?

JK: Yeah, you can't see her face. This is my cousin Doris Molock **[spelling?]**.

KF: Ok.

JK: And, is there one or two ladies there?

KF: There's two ladies.

JK: They're ... both of those ladies are dead.

KF: Ok.

JK: I was going to see if this was another shot I did at the same time.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm.

KF: This is great, this is uh, the museum might be interested in, in looking at some of these photos.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: And making copies of them.

JK: Ok.

KF: What I'll do is I'll note that you have a wonderful photo collection.

JK: Ok.

KF: And um, and we might come back and take a few...

JK: Ok.

KF:...to make copies and then give them back to you.

JK: Ok. Now uh...

KF: Are these the steaming barrels?

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm, that's at Todd's... Seafood.

KF: Ok.

JK: Um-hmmm. Yeah I uh, I took this album to the plant so that they could see you know some of the people and the old photos and um, they were talking about this plant, this, the um, the boss's wife was telling someone about it, her son, I think her son lives here now, at this plant? Because they were talking about how it's run down now and nobody...

KF: Right.

JK: Nobody there now.

KF: Yeah.

JK: And so she wanted him to see this, see how it used to look.

KF: Um-hmmm. Yeah these are important photographs for, you know how it used to look before the yacht club got....

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: Well, this area, this is the Tide [?] Seafood, I don't know what's on this side now, what's over here. I haven't been back there, but I think this is developed. I think they have developed this. That's St. Michael's, the Maritime Museum.

KF: Yeah, I think this has changed a little bit too.

JK: Uh-huh.

KF: [Laughter]

JK: [Laughter]

KF: These are great.

JK: They got a, some of the guys I was telling about this spot here, I said I was taking a break, shucking oysters and I took a break. Took a photo of my gloves and my spot. That's the old **[unintelligible word..." Mesicum"?)** house there.

KF: This here?

JK: Yeah, you passed that coming down.

KF: Ok.

JK: On your right. But there's a trailer there now.

KF: Wow, this is amazing.

JK: Can't see what that is....

KF: It looks like crab pots and ...

JK: Oh ok, uh-huh, that's on the wharf down there, the shore line.

KF: Um-hmmm.

JK: Down at Murdeth's and Murdeth's. That's Lou Goslin again.

KF: It looks like a muskrat. [Laughter]

JK: Yeah, um-hmmm, yeah he had just come up out of the marsh. Lou Goslin.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: This lady was shucking clams down at, I think they call it squeezing clams or something down at uh, Kent Island.

KF: Ok.

JK: It didn't come out, that one didn't come out. None of those came out.

KF: There's no um, clam houses down here that...?

JK: No, unh-uh.

KF: Hmmm.

JK: Yeah that's... a snappers.

KF: Ok, well yeah I'll have to tell the museum you have these great photos, they might want to make a couple of copies. Because they are trying to put together a uh, a permanent exhibit of seafood workers.

JK: Oh yeah ...

END TAPE