

Interview Log

Interviewee: Tim Howard Tape #: CBMM.OH.118

ONO S3AO'H'N

interviewer: Kelly Feltault # of Tapes: 1 of 1

Date: 1/28/99 # of Sides: 2

Location: Crisfield MD; Maryland Crabmeat Co.

Topic: crab industry, worker's culture, family business

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Italics indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; language following a participant's initials represents a direct quote unless otherwise noted.

The interview took place in the office of Maryland Crabmeat Co. with the picking room just beyond the door to my left. On several occasions loud hoots and laughter erupted from the picking room which stopped the interview and are audible on the tape. This log only explains pauses in the tape, extraneous noises and theoretical considerations. Please see the transcription for contents.

BEGIN SIDE A

[speed problems at beginning, similar to tape with Rhonda Aaron for Delmarva Project. Seems to be the tape and not the recorder]

at new location since 1969
Milborne Oyster Co. originally
His father split off to create MD crabmeat
Tim started in 1978

Season used to start in early April, by 1979 it started in late april then early may then late may but always ran through Oct. working 5 days a week, full days and making enough for everyone to live on for the winter. Now picking only 6 weeks a year, blue crabs.

Also labor began to decline at same time; die off and others went for other work; loss in production; no younger people coming in; can't say they don't want to work because not enough to pick; minimum wages;

Soft crabs: did few but then when Tim got out of school he started running the soft crabs; began buying them the whole season and not just in the spring; buy direct from watermen; watermen shed them; they do buy some peelers and shed them

but 75% comes from watermen; \$8-\$22 per dozen; market increased for these; demand increasing and leveling off now; price so high now and that's the limit;

Milbourne's had a place in SC and FL picking crabs in winter; used to pick here too in winter; dredge crabs but long gone; SC plant closed in 70s;

Equipment: most comes from tomato canning, crab cooker and can sealing machines; used equipment dealers; thriving business now; but now all stainless steel; place in Cambridge or Trappe; place called Harrison & Jarboe selling equipment

Owners can tell who picked the lump meat by the way it is extracted from the crab and how it looks; can't tell by the flake; families will all pick the same way
[hoots and laughter from picking room]

[speed problem is fixed]

other traditions pickers create for selves: hymn singing, done in original building, Lord's Prayer done but not in new building;

own chairs: "They have anywhere from one to ten chairs that the health department hates." [phone rings, answers it, pause]

"they have these cushions that they would bring from home, and we'll cover them in plastic to try to keep them clean, but the health department hates them because it's fabric. They have to have them four underneath one in the back, one here and one there [sides] and it's got to be just right. It has to be."

Why is that?

"Because they want it that way. Just to be comfortable, just a certain way they have to sit. And then they have things called footboards, little wooden blocks that would sit on the floor so that they could prop their feet on that instead of the floor. I don't know why but it's another one of those things that the health department hated."

What about the knives, I know that some pickers are wrapping their knives in paper

"Yeah, yeah they do, though you shouldn't really be saying that. They wrap them in paper and rubber bands. Though

it's acceptable if they change the paper on a regular basis.
But I guess to get a little better grip or more to hold on to."

"now when you buy a crab picking knife, I'll show you." [gets up to get a knife] "this is the new shiny edition. This is the tourist retail edition. But they were made at Carvel hall for 70 years or 100 years. No self respecting crab picker would use this shiny one. Because this is the new tourist edition, the other is a flat piece that is matte. And they never will use it this wide [the blade]. The blade is always cut down. I do that, they yell, 'Hey Tim, fix this knife for me.' Actually that would all be cut away. So it's not much more than a toothpick." [draws new dimensions with a sharp pen]

what do you use to cut that

"Oh just a grinding wheel. Then it's just like a little toothpick and it just slithers goes in and pulls out the little skinny pieces. And, you know, every once in a while they'll lose a knife or need a new one and they say, get me a new knife and cut it down. If you talk to any crab picker anywhere they know about cutting down a knife. They don't use them wide."

Carvel hall does make some like this but pickers don't like them; "once again, they do it their way, the way they've done it for 50 years."

Hymn singing: recalls a smithsonian guy coming around and recording; leave the recorder turned on and leave then come back the next day.

Gender: men do not pick crabs; both shuck; "probably three men who pick crabs around here and they're all gay. They are perceived as gay men, seriously. Men just do not do it. Maybe it's an affront to their masculinity, I don't know."

But somehow shucking is not

"right. I was surprised to see women shucking the first time. And crab pickers look down on oyster shuckers, women who do that. It's just a little dirtier and nastier job. Soft crab workers look down on crab picking, it's the pecking order."

Soft crabs mixed black and white and men;

Snow crab business: new process; similar to blue crab picking: labor intensive, dirty job, tough to find workers, produced overseas so cheap product out there. Availability is the saving grace. Available year round; there is a season; starts Jan 15, set quota like 800,000 lbs and its cooked and frozen; nobody's ever picked blue crabs that were frozen.

DID NOT PICK A SINGLE CHES. BAY BLUE CRAB LAST SUMMER; did soft crabs all summer then started with the snow crabs in Sept. or Oct.; pickers found other picking houses;

Getting women to pick snows; black women won't pick these or work in the winter. Got the soft crab workers to pick snows; season ends in sept. said they wanted to work in winter.

"Since there is this stigma about picking crabs that only black females do it and that's it, and that labor is just not out there anymore. So I had to try to make it look a little different. So we just, got rid of a lot of the things [traditions]; we don't sit down we don't sit on cushions, or wooden chairs-that was a headache anyway keeping those things clean. And just tried to change it as much as possible. We don't even call it crab picking anymore. We tell them that they are gourmet seafood processors. Just to try to pick up other people than blacks, to increase the labor pool. Because it didn't work the other way, just didn't."

use same knives; didn't want to but had to; using a saw that they use for the claws; blue crabs are brittle, but snow crabs are more flexible and so use a hack saw for claws, more time consuming.

Not able to pick as many pounds with these snows, pay on hourly wage now; reg. Blue pickers could do 20-50 lbs a day; now only doing this 3-4 months so not fast; doing 10-12 lbs a day; NO LONGER PIECE WORK and won't change even if pounds get up, more complicated that way.

All had to learn to pick; Tim showed them and had to make a few changes in picking styles; can cut away blue crab body and bone but not with these snows; can't cut these, ' legs are totally diff too; picking them too; on blues legs are crab trash;

Will run snows through soft crabs; but when that settles down in July will try to do both

Hispanic workers: needed help; needed people who could come

at 7:30 and stay until 12 then return at 12:30 and stay until 2 or 3; hard to find people; got to match foreign produced meat; need cheap labor

[tape stopped to discuss hispanic workers]

crab trash: used to go to the dehydrating plant; paid you for it, came and got it; used for poultry feed; slowly died out; dehydrating plant owned by former partner from Milbourne's; feds closed down; then took to landfill when it was cheap; then tried composting it themselves with other packers now give it to organic nursery guy who composts it

get snow crab from soft crab customer that they worked with for years in Alabama. Seafood distributor for entire country. [need name]

first memory of crab house:

hated it, wanted to do anything but this; worked every summer in crab house as kid; did jobs nobody wanted to do-dipping cans in sanitizer, 1000s of cans; icing up everyone, giving out paper towels; carrying the meat up and bringing it back to pickers; did for years and years.

Then worked in soft crabs for summers in high school and college; ran the operation and then worked in picking room with father. After college got a job surveying, did for 3-4 years and wanted to come back.

"We also had a picking house in George Island. You know where Stockton MD is? You got to Pocomoke and then you turn there toward the ocean, just above Va line actually. There's a little town called Stockton and then if you keep going down to Parker Bay-and you can see the ocean from there-we bought oysters and planted oysters and actually picked crabs there.

"That was another one of my jobs when I got my license [driving] I would drive there everyday to take ice and bring back crab meat each day. But when I went in there as a little kid the first time I walked in, my dad took me in, and my mouth fell open. Because the room was filled with [pause] white people. I hate the way that sounds, but the crab pickers there might have been two or three black crab pickers and there was half a dozen or 15 white. And I had never seen that, I was 7 or 8 years old and I had spent half of my life in a crab picking room walking around playing and all of sudden it was completely different. It was brighter-it was, honestly. It was amazing, I'll never forget it. All women though, still all women. The men cooked the crabs, black men cooked the crabs and put the

crabs on the tables and helped clean up. And weighed the crab meat and packed the orders and things like that."

"I remember walking in and all the ladies were up because they were finishing for the day. We had showed up to pick up crabmeat and they were up washing off their tables, and washing out their trash cans and things. And here it just wasn't done. When the ladies finished picking the last crab they stood up and the walked out. You had another couple of guys come in to clean up and wipe down everything and wash up. And these ladies did it themselves. And I was just amazed, at here these were white females standing up and cleaning up, I had never seen that before. They just sat there and picked, here in Crisfield, and then they left."

[goes to check on wokkers]

father still around, still comes in; mom and pop operation; mother was always the secretary and still does the pay roll

family business: great but frustrating; can't hire and fire too much; but really reassuring to have them here; and they don't get upset at anything; no big deal to them;

after WWII seafood business was it in Crisfield; everything else prospered around it and dad and uncle looking for work.

[phone rings]

foreign crabmeat is what is really killing the industry; cheaper, distributed by Sysco; and 1/3 of the price. Labor costs are cheaper. That one leaves the bitter taste in our mouth; how foreign meat doesn't have any taste but most people think crabmeat tastes like old bay anyway.

Tim cooks at Waterman's Inn on Fridays; foreign crabmeat has no shell; that meticulous and if they aren't there's someone to replace them,

"there's no one here to replace the workers that we have. For the last 4-5 years your pickers come in when they want, they leave when they want, they make their own hours entirely, 100%. And they can do as they please, you just didn't get rid of them. Because you always had a half full house and always needed people so you couldn't let anyone go for poor workmanship, just couldn't do it."

Watermen calling already to borrow money to get ready for soft crab season; local season doesn't start until June [where get soft crabs from before then?] "Crisfield didn't

produce any crabmeat until July, and there was a glut of crabmeat and we didn't produce hardly any of it. All foreign. NC is going to get into the same thing. The further south you go the cheaper you can do things, raising chickens, anything. Feeling same pinch in NC now."

Picking families and knowing them all; most have passed away;

(tape paused for Tim to explain situation with younger black workers, see FN]

draw day: everyplace had a diff draw day; theirs was Tuesday; could come in and borrow against what you had earned the week before; Metompkin has draw day everyday; limit of \$25; draw day was always interesting; get paid weekly, some paid on Thursday afternoons, "we always paid on Friday noon, consequently we never worked Friday afternoon-never. The it got that you couldn't get anything done on Mondays; and they got old [the pickers]. And several years ago you had people clamoring for meat and you couldn't get it produced. And it was just the people were old, no young ones.

Legendary families: Horsey and Torny in their plant;

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

Torney: Pa Joe and little Joe and Pa Joe's wife; Pa Joe had 4 sisters and they all had kids; and the whole family worked there at Milbournes.

When opened MD crabmeat co. they split them up and brought some over here to work; Horsey: Edith "Reni" had 3 daughters who worked here; went to high school with one daughter when integrated h.s. grew up with Edith and one of the Torney's Owen; but had never been in school with them;

"they were the mainstay and backbone of our labor force for ever, those two families."

Now he knows where they all are; Owen drives a dump truck and still around; Horsey's one works at the Rubberset Plant; Lee Lee is a teacher's aid in Marion and Edith, better known as "Pete" is in DC.

[looks up phone number for one]
Don and Luvethia (Lee Lee) 410-623-8495

Cheryl

Luvenia always led the songs; doesn't know where she is;
Nicey and Luvenia go to the same church and Luvenia sings in
a choir that travels around.

END TAPE

W. Peak's transcription begins here:

Begin Side A

KF: If you'll say your name we'll make sure this...[unintelligible phrase].

TH: Tim Howard.

KF: And um, [unintelligible phrase] ...where were you born.

TH: Crisfield, Maryland.

KF: Ok, can I ask what year?

TH: 1953.

KF: Um, and how long has your family owned um [unintelligible phrase]?

TH: Since, I guess since its inception, they've been here at this location since nineteen sixty-nine.

KF: Ok, and did they have a [unintelligible phrase]?

TH: Exactly. Norbert [?] Oyster Company was the original, um, then um, with my uncle, my father and a third partner. Then they spun off and build this. And my dad came up with [unintelligible phrase].

KF: Ok. And um when did you sort of start in the business?

TH: Wait a minute. Probably around seventy-eight. [Unintelligible statement.]

KF: What was the crab industry like in [unintelligible phrase] when you started?

TH: A lot better than it is now. You could pick crabs, pick hardshell blue crabs from, from April through October. Steady production. Full days, five days a week, pretty much full days. You could get enough production that you could survive through the winter, much without working.

KF: And um, when did that start to...?

TH: Well it declined a little, he lost a little bit of labor, and each year your crabs would [unintelligible word... "start"?], meaning that you would get them later, instead of getting them in April you'd get them

the last of April. Then it would be the first of May, then the last of May. You tend to always go through October, it didn't end earlier, it just started later. So you lost labor because people, a lot died off, and some, some would have to leave for other work. So that you lost production and your season was shortening. So all those factors together.

KF: And, speaking of labor, have you seen change with older people dying off, are there younger people coming in?

TH: No. No, very few, very few come in. It's um, you can say they don't want to work but, bottom-line, there's, you can only give them three or four months work anyhow. So um, and you know, minimal wages, and uh, not much, not much during the year.

KF: And um, when your family started this business, were you doing **[unintelligible phrase]** work?

TH: I very few, just a small amount. During the big run, as we call it, which would be in May, when there's just a deluge of soft crabs, we would do a few then. It was generally when you had that first run of soft crabs in May, there usually aren't any hard crabs around, for a couple, three weeks, so we would do a few soft crabs then. But that was all. But then when I got out of school, I started working on the soft crab end of it, largely because there wasn't much to do here, my dad had to stick me somewhere so that's what happened.

KF: All right, and uh, what did you do with the soft crabs when you started here?

TH: Well just started buying them um during the whole season, not just during the big part. Not during just the big run of crabs.

KF: **[Unintelligible statement.]** And do you find **[unintelligible phrase]**?

TH: Yes.

KF: Ok. And how does that work, are they shedding them or are you guys...?

TH: They shed them, that's where probably seventy percent, seventy-five percent come from is from watermen who shed them themselves. We do buy some peelers. The crabs that are going to shed, we buy some of those and shed them ourselves.

KF: And how much does a waterman usually get for a bushel of crabs?

TH: Soft crabs?

KF: Um-hmmm.

TH: They can run anywhere from nine, eight, about eight dollars for the smallest mediums, up to twenty dollars, and twenty-one, twenty-two, for the biggest. That's dollars per dozen.

KF: Per dozen. And those are sold by the dozen then?

TH: Um-hmmm. Yep.

KF: And that's how they're picked too, isn't it?

TH: Yep. Dozens.

KF: And, have you seen the [unintelligible phrase... "market increase" something or other?].

TH: Yeah, crabs are the [unintelligible word]. It really has, the demand is, I think, the demand just keeps increasing. It may be levelling off a little bit now. I think the demand might level off, but the price has gotten so high that I think we've reached the point that we know how high we can go.

KF: Ok. And how high is that may I ask?

TH: Well we're paying twenty-two.... Twenty-six, twenty-seven for the jumbo size. Now that's per dozen. That's, I don't even know, that might be too high.

KF: Right. And then you turn around and sell them for... ?

TH: That would be a rough sales price.

KF: And what was Maryland Crabbing Company before this *building*?

TH: Um, you know where the Captain's Gallery is, all the way down?

KF: Yes.

TH: Right beside that. There's a row of buildings, you can see, right at the very point, there's a row of buildings right at the front, it was probably the second or third *building* there, originally. I don't know how many years it was there, and then they came over here and built this place. That's back when there was lots of money in seafood and they built new buildings. In fact the Milburns which [unintelligible phrase] had a place in South Caroline, McClellanville [sp?], South Carolina, and, somewhere in Florida. Cedar Key, Florida. So they picked crabs down there in the winter time. I'm not quite sure what they did in South Carolina, I guess maybe in between seasons, I'm not sure.

KF: And were you picking crabs here in the winter too at any point?

TH: Yeah. Yeah, when you'd be able to buy dredge crabs and pick in January and February. But that's long gone.

KF: Right, right. And when did the South Carolina plant close.

TH: I, I honestly don't know. Way, way back, um, it might, they might have had that in the seventies. Possibly.

KF: And when I was here before, you gave me a little tour and we were talking about some of the technology, and I was wondering if you could um, sort of tell me again about the steamers and where they came from and...?

TH: Yeah, they were um, most of the equipment, or a lot of the equipment that is used comes from tomato canning factories, because tomato canning was around before crabs, so they just borrowed some of the equipment, the crab cooker, the retort, and uh, the *canning* machines for sealing metal cans for pasteurizing, were all from tomato canning factories.

KF: Ok. And whose job was it to kind of, get the pieces of equipment, kind of, just someone sort of scouring the Shore for...?

TH: No, there's dealers. There's used equipment dealers. And they're still around. Oh that's a thriving business, used food equipment. Except now used food equipment is big fields of stainless steel,

conveyors and things to automate. Whereas these were the old iron pieces, I guess they rusted out. Yeah there's still a market.

KF: Is that something you can get locally here or do you have to go to Baltimore?

TH: No I can get it, pretty much anything you need in a place in, I think, I don't know if it's Cambridge or Trappe. It's somewhere in that area, it's a place called Harrison-Jarboe, I think. But he used to have cookers and steamers, you know, bits and pieces, because none of its been made new.

KF: Ok. There was a um, crab packing house called Harrison and Jarboe in St. Michaels.

TH: Probably. Probably the same family.

KF: Um, and, we'd also talked about the crab pickers and how the owners can really tell who's picked ... And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about that.

TH: By the way that, not so much in the flake or the special meat, but in the lump. By the way the lump is extracted from the crab, the way it's cut, you can look at it and tell that it was done by this lady or another lady. And chances are when their daughter comes in and picks, she's going to do it the same way. And her three daughters and their kids will all do it the same way.

[Sounds of celebration in the background]

KF: [Laughter] They're weren't this rambunctious the last time I was here!

TH: No, I don't know what's going on. I don't know, we're almost finished out there. [Chuckles]

KF: Ok, um, and what other traditions have you seen the crab pickers sort of create for themselves? Things they have to do every day or um

TH: You didn't ask me this before.

KF: [Laughter] Now the questions get a little harder.

TH: What other traditions? Well...

KF: Obviously the way they pick as a family...

TH: Right it's a family trait but, in this particular place and in others they would sing hymns throughout the day and, I don't think they ever did it in this one, but in the original Milburn's building at I believe eight-thirty or nine o'clock they would all stop and recite the Lord's Prayer together.

KF: Now are those things still being done or ...?

TH: Very...very little. Very little here and there.

KF: And uh, I talked with a crab picker yesterday who, as you had mentioned, said that everybody has their own chair, but he also described how a lot of the ladies sort of fixed their chair, they kind of. ..

TH: They did, you're right, they had, they had their own chair, they

have, anywhere from one to ten cushions um that the health department hates. They would have these cushions that they bring from home, and we'll cover them in plastic, try to keep them clean, the health department hates them because it's fabric, but they have to have them, four underneath, one in the back, one here and one here, and it's gotta be just ... right. It has to be.

KF: Ok. And why is that so?

TH: Because, they want it that way. Because, just to be comfortable. Just a certain way they have to sit. And then they have things called "foot boards", little wooden blocks that would sit on the floor so they could prop their feet on that instead of on the floor. I don't know why, but it's another one of those things the health department hated.

KF: Ok, ok. What about um, the knives, I know some uh, pickers are wrapping their knives in paper and ...

TH: Yeah, you shouldn't even be saying that, but yes they do, they wrap them in paper, they put rubber bands on them, yeah um.... Although that's, that's acceptable if they change the paper on a regular basis. But I guess just to get a little bit better grip or to make the handle a little larger to hold onto.

KF: What about people sort of uh, **[unintelligible phrase]** adapting their knives and putting plastic on them.

TH: I never saw that, I never saw that. It's just a single solid piece of stainless Now when you buy... I'll show you. When you buy a crab picking knife, when you buy a crab picking knife, this is the new shiny edition. This is the retail, this is the tourist retail edition. But they were made at Carboe-Hall for I don't know, seventy years, a hundred years or whatever, and uh, no self-respecting crab picker would use this shiny one. It just, because this is the new tourist edition. It's just a flat piece of matt and they never will use it with it this wide, the blade is always cut down.

KF: Oh, and how do they manage to do that?

TH: I do that. They yell, "Hey Tim! Fix this knife for me." But, actually that's, that would all be cut away, so it's not much more than a toothpick.

KF: What do you use to cut that?

TH: Just a grinding wheel. So, then it's just like a little toothpick, and it just slithers, goes in and pulls out the little skinny pieces. But they always say they want you to ... You know if every once in a while they'll lose a knife or they'll need a new one, they say get me a new knife and cut it down. I mean if you talk to any crab picker anywhere they know about cutting down a knife. And that's what that is. They don't use them wide.

KF: Now why hasn't Carboe-Hall figured out that they need to make them that way?

TH: They do make some like that, but once again, they do it their way, the way they've done it for fifty years.

KF: And were you around when they were singing hymns?

TH: Yeah. Um-hmmm.

KF: Do you remember some of the hymns they sang?

TH: I remember there was some, some guy came in here from the Smithsonian and recorded it a few times.

KF: Oh, ok.

TH: I'm pretty sure it was the Smithsonian, that just came out. But I really do think it was, and that's been years. He would just leave a recorder and go, come back the next day. But he did record it.

KF: And we were talking about the predominance of women, and um, I guess if you can speculate on why it is only women who pick crabs and men and women who shuck?

TH: Right. You have men and women side by side shucking oysters but men do not pick crabs. They don't. I'm not quite sure why. Um, there's probably, now this is a fact, there's probably three guys, three men that pick crabs, and they're all gay. And, that's fine. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

TB: [Laughter] As far as I felt. Not that there's anything....

KF: Right.

TH: But it's, it is a fact and they are perceived as, as gay men, and ... seriously, they, men just, they just don't do it. I guess it might be a affront to their masculinity, I, I don't know, but they don't.

KF: But somehow shucking oysters is not.

TH: Right. I was surprised when I saw women shucking oysters, back when I was a little kid running around, it was surprising to see it. But yeah, women will, and crab pickers look down upon oyster shuckers, they're a little lower on the social...

KF: Why is that, has anybody ever said or mentioned...?

TH: It's just a little dirtier nastier job I suppose.
so [unintelligible phrase], the soft crab workers will tend to look down a little bit on crab picking and then down on oyster shucking.
It's sort of a pecking order.

KF: Now I was going to ask you, the people who work with soft crabs, do they tend to be African-American women as well?

TB: No. It's all mixed. All mixed.

KF: But women I guess.

TH: No, men too.

KF: Hmmm. Ok. And um, your uh snow crab business, when did you start that?

TB: October. Last October.

KF: And um, how is that going? Is that...?

TH: It's going fairly well, it's a whole new process for us and we're getting production up just a bit. It's terribly similar though to picking blue crab. It's labor-intensive, it's a dirty job, it's tough to find people to work for those wages, and it's produced overseas also, which means there's cheap product out there. The one thing that's, the

saving grace that keeps us going is the availability of the crab, I mean we're right here on the Chesapeake Bay. Right there, just a yard away, and we can get crabs out of the Gulf of Alaska, just pick up the phone. And I couldn't beg, borrow, or steal a crab out of the Bay right now. So, it's just availability, so you know you're going to get the production, you'll have the number of days that it's available, it's available year-round.

KF: There's no **(unintelligible word... sounds like "crebbess")**?

TH: Um-hmmm.

KF: Huh, so there's no sort of season like there is for....

TH: There is a season, but it's a season, I think it starts January fifteenth, they set a quota before they ever go out, and it might take two, three, or four weeks to catch it, the entire quota, but it's ... I can't remember numbers, but it might be like eight hundred thousand pounds or something like, it's an enormous amount. And it's cooked and frozen and goes right in the freezers. No one's ever picked blue crabs that were frozen. And I'm sure a few people have tried, said why can't I freeze these and... But um, that will extend you, make it, but blue crabs are so expensive. It's so difficult to get, you can't get enough to pick in the, in the summer time, much less enough surplus to run you in the winter.

KF: Ok, what was your summer time like last year.

TH: We didn't pick one Chesapeake Bay blue crab.

KF: Not a one.

TH: Not one, first time in forty years. Yeah probably **[it sounds as if he says "four" instead of "forty" here]** years, easily.

KF: What did you pick?

TH: Uh we did soft crabs. And then October first we started on snow crabs. We could have picked blue crab in October, we could have picked a little bit in September, but I had to make the decision whether to go with the snow crab or go with the blue crab, and I knew I could pick blue crab for a month but I knew snow crab would go all winter so, it was a tough decision.

KF: Um-hmmm. How did you feel making that decision?

TH: Real tough, it was difficult. It really wasn't much of a choice. I had to do it.

KF: Now, what happened to your pickers this summer that you usually have here?

TH: A few of them found other places, went here and there, other picking houses.

KF: And um, you had told me a little bit of how you got women in here to pick the snow crab, and I'm wondering if you can, sort of explain that, that process?

TH: Well we started with the people that worked in soft crabs with us, and the season winds down in September and they were, **[unintelligible word or phrase]** how they'd like to have something to do, during the winter. So we brought those in but it wasn't enough and I wanted to make it, since there's this stigma about picking crabs that black

females do it and that's it, and that labor is just now out there anymore, it's just not available. So we had, I had to try to make it look a little different. So we just, we got rid of a lot of the things ... we don't sit down, we don't sit on cushions, we don't sit on wooden chairs. It was a headache anyway, keeping those things clean, and uh, just tried to change it around as much as possible, we don't even call it crab picking now.

KF: What do you call it?

TH: We all tell them, they're seafood, gourmet seafood processors.

KF: Ok. [Laughter]

TH: So [chuckles] but just tried to remove that, to try to pick up people other than blacks, try to, you know, go to (unintelligible word) and just try to increase the labor force. Because it didn't work the other way. It just didn't.

KF: All nighty, and what about um, the tools that you have to use for this kind of crab.

TH: Still use the same knives. I didn't want to use knives but you've got to extract it somehow. And that works well. So we use the same knives.

KF: And um, you had described uh, a song or something that they...

TH: That's right, the claws, with the blue crab, they can crack the claw, they just whack the claw with the knife, and it'll break it. But these snow crabs, they're larger and they're more flexible, they're not as hard and brittle. So they have to take, in essence, a hacksaw and cut them in a couple of places before they'll, before they'll break. It takes a little more time.

KF: And are people able to kind of pick as many pounds?

TH: No. Not even close. Um, regular blue crab pickers could do easily twenty, thirty, and forty pounds a day, some even fifty pounds a day. Here with people that had been doing it for three and four months now, um, maybe ten, twelve pounds a day. That's it.

KF: And are you paying them by the pound or do you have to pay them the minimum?

TH: No. We're paying them the minimum. That's different too, before it was always piece work. With the other picking, but this is strictly a straight wages.

KF: Ok. Would that change if they get their pounds up to uh...?

TH: I don't, probably not. Um, we've thought about going that route, but that entails giving everyone, keeping it um, keeping records and keeping track, that gets a little complicated. And I really feel that one point seven, point eight, pounds per person per hour is it. You might find someone that might do two, for an hour, in the picking contest or something, but I just don't think they really can go much faster than that.

KF: Right, ok. And how did you train these ladies to pick if they'd been working soft crabs?

TH: Just picked up a crab and started pulling the meat out. And eventually, if you, you know, through repetition, you find the best way

of, break it here, twist it there and, just by picking up and doing it.

KF: Ok, now how is it different the way that they have to um, pick the actual body of the crab? Versus the blue crab?

TH: With the blue crab, you could cut the body, you could cut away the bone, the cartilage from on top of the meat. It's hard to explain, and pick it out. But this you can't cut, it seems to be less brittle, a little more pliable, and tougher. It doesn't cut, so you just have to tear little pieces away and pull it out. Plus the legs are completely different. Don't just, cut open.

KF: And are you guys picking the legs?

TH: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Hmmm, ok, so that's different too. Because weren't the legs trash, crab trash, on the blue crab?

TH: Yeah, right. Um-hmmm. But you know a blue crab leg is, is really paper-thin almost, you couldn't extract, unless you're doing it mechanically, you could extract that. But on these legs that's the biggest part.

KF: Ok, ok. Now do you see staying with the snow crab all year-round or are you going to try to do...?

TH: I'll run snow crab right up until soft crab season. Um, then we'll go into soft crabs depending how busy we are, if we have room in the plant. There's a few weeks of soft crabs we won't do anything else but that, but when that settles down in July, we may try to do a little bit of soft, uh snow crab along with the soft crab. Two different spe...two different locations,

KF: Hmmm, ok. And I noticed you had a few Hispanic pickers in here now.

TH: Yeah, um-hmmm.

KF: Um, what made you decide to...?

TH: I needed help, I needed people. And, needed people that could come at seven-thirty and stay till twelve and then come back at twelve-thirty. It's tough to find those people. You know I'm a business owner, you're going to hear the same old crying about the work ethic, blah, blah, blah, and I know it's a tough job and it's very low wages. But to compete, to stay in business, to have a chance, you've got to match foreign-produced meat, out of Mexico, China, um, so you've got to have cheap meat. So you just, you have to do that.

KF: Um-hmmm. Now has there been any reaction to having the Hispanic pickers....?

TH: They're great. There's been no problem. Well none here. The people that I have, they've gotten along great.

KF: And um, I'll ask this and if you want me to turn the [unintelligible word] off, we can. Are these pickers here under the same federal regulations that the summer pickers come in under, the urn, there's an immigrant labor regulation that if you cannot find the labor here in the U.S., you can legally import the labor from Mexico, or wherever.

TH: I don't know anything about that.

KF: Ok.

TH: Uh.... Turn that off. [Sound of tape being cut off, then back on.)
We took it to the landfi...uh years and years ago, many, many years ago, there was a dehydrating plant, just outside of town and they would take all of the crabs, they would come get your crab scrap and pay you for it. Take it up there, uh, hammer, mill it, and dehydrate it, bag it and sell it at, I think it was two-thirds the price of soybean meal. It would go in poultry feed, and things like that. Well, then, then they said well we can't pay you but we'll still come get it. And then a few years later they said well we can't come get it but if you bring it, we'll take it. And, the plant was very, very, in fact the plant, the dehydrating plant was owned by a fellow who was a partner with us, in **(unintelligible word...."Milburds ?)**, and he got old, the equipment got old, um, some branch of the federal government came in and closed him down, I'm not sure which one it was. Particulate matter coming out of the stack. And to, to put it up to code where it needed to be would have been too much money, so he just closed it down. So um, we haul it to the landfill, for a while, when landfill prices were twelve dollars a ton or fifteen, now they're forty. We tried composting ourselves, a couple of packers went together, and we, we did ok, but this, then we ran in, or fell into this deal with this guy somehow, and he's in the business of composting it himself, so it works well.

KF: Right, ok. And what about the contact in Alaska, how did you make that?

TH: The snow crab is a deal with a soft *crab* customer that we've had for years. A big, he's a big seafood distributor. He does not just softshells and crab meat but oysters, shrimp, everything, he distributes all over the country.

KF: Ok, ok, is he based in Alaska or is he....?

TH: No, he's in Alabama.

KF: Oh, ok. All right, well I'm wondering if you can tell me about um, your first memory of coming into your family crab house? And what you thought of it when you, when you first came in?

TH: Well I, I hated it. I wanted to do anything other than this. When I was a kid, I would work every summer, not in this building because it wasn't here, but over at the other building, doing all those little things that no one else wanted to do. And I did that every summer, for years. It was always my summer job.

KF: What were those little things nobody wanted to do?

TH: Oh, um, all your cans had to be, all the cans for the day had to be dipped in a sanitizer. So I'd be given a stack of a thousand cans and dip every one of them. Turn them upside *down*, count them out in lotsof a hundred, things like that, just little tasks like that. And uh, making sure everyone had ice in their bin, and made sure everyone had paper towels, and carrying the meat up and bringing it back to the pickers. And things like that, so I did that for years and years. Then my dad was over here, at this building, and I worked here in soft crabs in the summer, but I, in high school, the last couple years of high school when I got in college, I'd come here and run the soft crab operation which was maybe a month was all and then just work in here with him. And uh, I finally got finished at college, I got a job surveying, I did that for three or four years and **then I** realized it was just, time to come back. So I moved back here and started here.

KF: Ok.

TH: We also had a place, a picking house in George Island. You know where Stockton Maryland is?

KF: No.

TH: You go to Pocomoke and then you turn at Pocomoke toward the ocean, just above the Virginia line actually, there's a little town called Stockton, and then if you keep going, when you get down to Parker Bay, and you can see the ocean from there, um, we bought oysters and planted oysters and actually picked crabs there. So I'm a little kid, and that was another one of my jobs, when I got my license, I would have to drive there every day to take ice, and bring back crab meat each day. But when I went in there as a little kid, the first time I walked in, my dad took me in, and my mouth fell open, because the room was filled with white people.

I hate the sou...the way that sounds, but the crab pickers there might have been two or three black crab pickers and there was a half a dozen or fifteen white, and I had never seen that, I don't know, seven or eight years old, I had looked in, you know I had spent half of my life in a picking room, walking around playing, and all of a sudden it was completely different, It was brighter. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

TH: Honestly. It was, it was just, I'll never forget it was amazing. And um, they did have, at least half of the labor force was, all women though, still all women, the men cooked the crabs, the black men cooked the crabs and put the crabs on the tables, and helped clean up, and weighed the crab meat and packed the orders and things like that, but they didn't pick the crabs. But there were ladies over there that picked.

KF: Huh, ok. And uh, the men here do the same jobs then?

TH: Yes. They do, take in the crabs, they do the cooking, uh, putting them on the tables, emptying the trash, cleaning up, all of the, all of the peripheral jobs that go around.

KF: Now what did that picking house sound like when you walked into it?

TH: I, I, I can't remember, I was just, I was just stunned. No, I just I, I remember walking in, and seeing this, and all the ladies were up, they were finishing for the day, because we had showed to pick up crab meat at the end of the day, and they were up washing off their tables, and washing out their trash cans and things, and here it just wasn't done, when the ladies finished picking their last crab, they stood up and they walked out. You had another crew come in, or another couple of guys to clean up, wipe down everything, and wash up. And these ladies did it themselves. And I was just amazed at, here these were white people [chuckle] I hate the way, standing up instead of sitting down...

KF: So they stood up and picked?

TH: No, but they were standing up, cleaning up and finishing. I mean I had never seen that before, I mean they just sat there and picked, here in Crisfield, and they left. They came in, they sat down and picked, and they left. And this was, different people doing the same jobs, and it just was [Sounds in the background] Let me run out and see....

KF: Sure. [Tape stops, re-starts.] Ok, um, are there other members of your family who are in the seafood industry?

TH: My father. And um, his brother, were at Milburn Oyster Company together, um, but he has since died. My father is still alive. He's

still here pretty much ever day, off and on. Not, not all the time, but he's here at some point during the day, and um, my mom has always been the secretary, it's a mom and pop, so she um, she still does the payroll, that's pretty much all she does now, she does the payroll at home. So, but he's still here every day. In some capacity.

KF: Um, when you, what's it like having a family business?

TH: What's it like having a family business... It's great, you [unintelligible word] pull your hair out.

KF: [Laughter]

TH: I mean a business is one thing but when, you know when one of them's your parent, you, it's, it changes things. We, something's not right you want to come storm in and tell someone about it, then you run into it and it's your dad, so, you know, you can only, you can't hire and fire too much, when it's them. But um ... but it, it makes it, it's a lot of, it's really reassuring. It's very reassuring to have them here because they've done it all their lives, and things that, that would get me upset and worked up, well they've been through a hundred times and, it's no big deal. It's small stuff and they don't sweat it. So uh, but it is, and it's um, it's a, it's a plus. It's definitely an asset.

KF: Now uh, why did your family decide to get into the seafood business? Have they ever told you or...?

TH: No I, I don't, well they lived in Crisfield. And Crisfield was the seafood capital of the world, and uh, back when they, after, I guess after my dad, after World War II, and my uncle also, they moved back to Crisfield and they were looking for something to do and the seafood business was it. It really was, it was the number one driving business, you know everything else prospered around it, all the banks and things like that but [Telephone ringing, tape stops, starts again.]

KF: While we're on that topic, let me ask you what you see is happening, you know the future for the seafood industry here?

TH: The traditional crab picking doesn't look very good. Um, lot of things, you can, you could find the labor, you can go out of the country and get the labor, crabs may come back, I don't know, if they do, but you've still got what is really, as far as I can see, what the nail in the coffin is the foreign crab meat that comes in. There's just literally tons and tons of it comes in, it all seems to find its way right into Baltimore, right into our back yard. And it's all produced in Mexico, and the Phillipines and China, and it's distributed by Sysco, which is, in every restaurant everywhere. And it's, it's half, a third of the price, who knows? There doesn't seem to be any bottom. We may hit twelve dollars in a pound of crab meat, and they can, you know they may pay ten *cents* an hour, I have no idea, but I mean it's nothing like our labor costs, and we just can't compete that way. That's really, that's, I don't know if that's the largest problem, but that was the third one, that was the final one, so that's the one that leaves the bitter taste in our mouths. So... I don't, I don't know, and, and, I hate to say it but, for the most part, the crab meat's ok. It really is. It doesn't have any taste. But most people think crab meat tastes like Old Bay seasoning anyway. That's right yeah, I mean you put Old Bay in it and it's just, I mean I could take snow crab, put Old Bay in it and it's delicious. But there's, what, it's snowy white, there's no shell. That's, there's a restaurant right next door, and I go over there and cook once a week, on Fridays, good friends of mine own it, and, they bought our crab meat for years. No one else's. And they bought, um, since we didn't work this year, they bought uh, Metompin, I can say that. And uh, both of ours, they, they spend forty-five minutes

picking through a pound of crab meat, picking the bits and pieces of shell out of it, cartilage. With the foreign crab meat, five minutes.

KF: Hmmm. Their pickers are just that ... meticulous?

TH: They're that meticulous and if they aren't, they have to move out because someone else is. There's no one here to replace what we had. Our pickers, dear, the last, for the last four or five years, your pickers come in when they want, they leave when they, they make their own hours entirely. One hundred percent. And, they pretty much do as they please, I mean other than, unless they were doing something to sabotage the crab meat, you, you just didn't get rid of them. Because you always had a half-full house. You always needed people. So you couldn't let anyone go for poor workmanship. Just couldn't do it.

KF: I guess uh, you haven't had any watermen pulling up to the back dock there in the last uh year or so?

TH: No they've been calling me for, they've been calling me for the last two weeks wanting to borrow money to get ready for soft crab season. Which doesn't start until June locally. They want to start borrowing already. Um, Crisfield, Crisfield, didn't produce I don't think a pound of crab meat until maybe July, a little bit, but I mean they didn't produce any crab meat around here this summer, hardly any, and there was a glut of crab meat, there was all the crab meat you needed.

KF: And it was all foreign.

TH: It was all foreign. North Carolina is going to hit, is running into the same thing. It seems the further south you go, the cheaper you can do things. Raising chickens, anything, and I'm not quite sure why, labor costs?

KF: Yeah. I lived in North Carolina for four years, and it's much cheaper than....

TH: It is, Virginia...

KF: Living expenses were....

TH: I can go right, I could move twenty miles south of here and pick crabs in Virginia, and do it cheaper than I do it here. But they're feeling the same pinch now in Carolina. And it's just a matter of time. Well, I don't know, something may happen to change it, I don't know what it's going to be. I can't see that far, something might. But uh, it's going to have to be something from left field somewhere.

KF: Well um, we talked about having a family business, owned and operated by your family, what about um working with workers who've been here for twenty **[unintelligible phrase]**?

TH: Yeah I know, I know them all, I knew this one, I knew their sisters and their daughters and their sons and their grandsons and granddaughters, knew all the families, knew them all. You do, you learn them because they're the people you're with eight, ten hours a day, all day every day. And uh, yeah you do, you got to know them. But most of them have died. They really have. Um, I bet there's not a half a dozen people left living that were here when I came here, adding up all those years. But uh, I mean when I came here as as kid and started working, those people were probably in their forties then. And uh, I don't know what the average age is now. There are young ones still out there that are working, turn it off for a second. [Sound of tape being turned off, then it's turned back on.] ... thing called a "draw day". Draw day, every place had a different draw day, every crab house, ours was

Tuesday. They could come in and borrow money on Tuesday against what they had done the week before. Some places do it differently, I think Metompkin, I.T.'s, I think they'll let you draw every day. Like twenty-five dollars or something, so when Friday comes they don't have any money. But that's why they're you know, they go in, work a little while, get twenty-five bucks and, go get whatever it is they need. But um, draw day was always interesting. Every, every place did it a little differently, did different days.

KF: So when does a crab pickers usually get paid, at the end of the week?

TH: Yes. Friday, some may pay off Thursday afternoon. We always paid off Friday noon. Consequently we never worked Friday after noon, never, the seasonal business with a hundred day season, and you only worked four and a half days a week. And then it got so you couldn't get anything done on Mondays. It got old. I mean I can, it's frustrating to me, because there's cra... you know, seven or eight years ago there were crabs, and there were people clamoring for meat, and I couldn't get it produced. And it's the people, they were old, they had just worn out, and there weren't any young ones, because I couldn't offer them much employment, you know more than four or five months in nasty working conditions. [Sounds of phone ringing, tapes stops, starts again.]

KF: [Laughter] Well I was going to ask you about um, families of pickers. When the workforce was really here. And who were some of the [unintelligible word] legendary families that

TH: The um, um, Horsey [sp?], there was a Horsey and Torney [sp?], in our, in our....

End Side A

Begin Side B

TH: ...Milburns when I was a kid, there was Torneys, there was "Pa Joe" (transcriber not at all, sure he's hearing these names correctly), "Little Joe", and Pa Joe's wife, uh Little Joe never married but they had, Little Joe probably had four sisters and they all had kids and the whole family worked there.

KF: And what was their, they were the Torneys?

TH: Torneys. Yep. And um, then the girls would marry into, what did, what did Georgie, Shrebe (sp?), she ended up being a Shrebes. But um, yeah and then, when my dad came over here, and they opened this place, they brought a few of those people, they sort of split up the workforce, and brought some over here. But then there were Horseys and um, gosh Edith ... Horsey, her name was Rennie, and she had three daughters that worked here, in fact one of the daughters, I went to high school with. They integrated high schools here when I was in the tenth grade, and I was thrown in all of a sudden, I met this girl in high school and, Edith, and I knew her. Because I'd grown up with her. I ac-literally grew up with her and one of the Torneys named Owen, I grew up with them, but I was never in school with them. But I mean ever day of the summer I was with them, and then all of a sudden we were thrown together in the eleventh grade, I think it in was the eleventh grade of high school, I saw them in school for the first time, so I saw them in a completely different way. But I knew these people here, didn't know them at school. But then we were thrown together. Um, they were probably, they were the mainstay, backbone of our laborforce, for ... ever, for years and years and years, those two families.

KF: And their children and grandchildren?

TH: Yes, now um, I can name what every one of them are doing. Owen the Torney guy works, he drives a dump truck, he may work for the County, I'm not sure. Or a, a contractor in Princess Anne. And then the Horseys, there was three girls, one works at Rubberset [sp?], which is the Sherwin-Williams plant, um, Lee-lee [sp?] I think, I don't think she teaches school, I think she's a teacher's assistant in Marian [sp?], and Edith, known as, better known as "Pete", her nickname was Pete.

KF: How did she get that nickname?

TH: I don't know. I grew up knowing Pete, here, when we went to school, I met this girl and they were calling her "Edith" and I didn't know who Edith was and I called her Pete, and all the black kids that knew her were amazed that, here was a white kid calling their friend Pete because no one knew Pete other than the blacks. It was always, it was kind of interesting to see that happen. But I knew Pete. She was in D.C. the last I heard. I don't know what she was doing, somewhere around D.C. But they've all moved on, gotten regular jobs.

KF: Ok. Now would any of these folks be uh, good to talk to for this project? Since they picked for ...you.

TH: Yeah, you could talk to any of those three um, in fact if you want, I can find one of those for you... Maybe not. [Sound of movement of some sort ... a drawer being opened?] Donnela Levietha [sp?], I can give you Lee-lee's number, four-one-zero, six-two-three, eight-four-nine-five. And she can get you up with the other two. Shirleen lop?

KF: Lenietha?

TH: No, uh, Levietha.

KF: Levietha.

TH: Laveenia, was the one that always led the songs.

KF: Yeah, right. Yeah I haven't been able to get up with her, um.

TH: I think she's since moved, her mother died, I see her every once in a while around town. I don't know where she's living. And I don't have anyone out here to tell me anymore. They're all gone. But if you can contact any of those that I told you a month or so ago, they would know where she is.

KF: Yeah, well I did talk to [unintelligible name].

TH: She would know where Laveenia is.

KF: Yeah.

TH: Because they're in the same church.

KF: Ok, ok, yeah, Nicene [sp?] was um, this is something that I've seen among African-American women, that they don't like to give out each other's phone numbers, so she's ... very protective. We had a good conversation but she said, well [unintelligible series of words or phrases]. So [laughter].

TH: Well you wouldn't get [unintelligible phrase].

KF: So uh, I guess I'll have to find Laveenia from uh..

words or phrases **wherever the mike has been laced ~** **seems to be**
turning away from it at the end of many of her statements.,

TH: Douglas, Laveenia Douglas. Heavenly Lights or, I can't remember What is ^d their group? ^{pm} the
can't, she is in a sin i They do have a group that, I
they do tour somewhat. 'g group that goes to different churches, that

KF: Um, and, I guess, what do you see

TH: Your recorder's off.

KF; Yeah, it's on.

TH: Oh, I'm sorry.

KF: It should be. Yeah. It's running.

TH: All right.

KF: Um, since this is a family business, um, what do you see sort of passing on to your kids?

TH: Nothing. My daughter teaches school in Baltimore. Baltimore County. She still has a certain softness for Crisfield. That's, I go up and visit, see her every once in a while. She has a, almost three year old son, and I go up and visit, and uh, and say, **[unintelligible phrase]**, Do you ever think about getting the heck out of Baltimore? And she, "Well I...", she bolts around the Beltway twice a day, and uh, but she enjoys it right now, or she seems to, she thinks she does, but I mention something about you can always get away from there and, we'd be closer, we could see you more. Because she went to school in Chestertown. I say, "God you could, you don't have to come to Crisfield, I said you can go to Chestertown. Easton's nice, there's a couple of private schools, you'd like to teach there, Montessori schools and, just, I said you can do this and do that and go to these places, I'm just throwing out, and I said Salisbury's a fairly large place now, it's not Baltimore. She says, "No, if I leave Baltimore, I'm coming to Crisfield." Very matter of fact, and I didn't say anything else about it. So um, who knows. But no, she's doing what ever she wants to do I suppose.

KF: Ok. Well there's a, sort of an imagination question we've been asking people, um, if you had to leave this area, and move to a foreign country, and you could only take eight things with you, what would those eight things be.

TH: If I could only ...?

KF: And you weren't coming back.

TH: Something that would remind me ... I'm not very imaginative, I can't really see much further than this. What would I take with me? I don't know if I'd take anything with me, I don't, I might, I'd just take what I've learned, and what's in my head, and, you know my experiences and I think I'd probably just leave it. Material possessions, I don't know of anything I'd take. Take my camera. But I mean I don't think I would, I'd leave it all here. I think I, yeah, I can't think of that, because I've always thought about if I did pick up and move and go somewhere else, I can't do anything, I don't have a marketable skill, outside of this. I mean I can pick crabs and do soft crabs, but that doesn't do me much good in Iowa or California or wherever um, so,

little niche, and putting up a special gourmet cheese or putting up, or organically raised beef, or things like that, little niches to try to stay in business, because there's beef coming from Argentina. There's fruit coming from South America year-round, things like that, that's what happened to the tomato business here, that's why all this equipment's available. Because originally, first they did it here and it was fine, but then they started doing it almost year-round in California. Now California's hurting because they can do it in, almost, in Mexico, literally, cheaper and year-round. So all your, everything that involves any kind of labor is moving away. So I'm sure, there's, this business is in a, a thousand different places all over the country, it's just, just a little bit different product, but it's as interesting and specialized there as this is here.

KF: Ok. And um, what about the uh, I don't know how new this market is but just the whole steamed crabs that are being shipped out here.

TH: Right, that's always been there, but it's really grown in the last, I'd say ten years. It really has grown. That's grown and the supply of crabs has gone down. But, used to be, used to be years ago, the crabber would make a couple of stops at trucks, trucks that were backed up, and then he'd bring ninety percent of his catch here. In big old barrels and we'd weigh it up. Now, it's not like that, the trucks can buy everything. He doesn't need us anymore. He would always come to us because he knew in the fall that market would fall off. And he'd need us then, but it isn't like that anymore. There's trucks from everywhere. And they just follow, the trucks are all in a pile in North Carolina, and then they work their way right on up to New Jersey at the end of the year and then right back down again. They just follow the crabs. And they can buy, they literally can buy them all. The females too. You start be, all they wanted before was um, the big number one males, that's why, everything we've ever picked has been female crabs, but now there's such a demand for female crabs.

KF: And where's that demand coming from?

TH: Well. There's an awesome demand for that in Chinatown, and you know everywhere, everywhere's got a Chinatown, in Los Angeles, New York, and anywhere, that's where they go. And I, because, you know, they don't all go there, but I've got a good friend who is in that trucking business and that's, that's where it goes, the biggest part of his goes, the females go to those groups. Because, it's the same crab, and it's half the price. When you buy number ones like this and they're a hundred dollars a bushel, or I can buy the females for thirty. And when you pick them out, you realize, it's the same, it's the same crab.

KF: Now is there any taste difference?

TH: Yes there is. The females are better. Yeah. Without any shadow of a doubt, they are better. Ten years ago you couldn't give a female crab away in Baltimore, they would laugh at you, you didn't even see them. They are better, they are definitely better flavor. They're much sweeter, it's a much richer sweeter flavor. Now you've got to eat a lot of them, you've got to eat them for a lot of years [chuckles], to realize that. A lot of them! But it is, go right next door to J. C. W. Taws **Cop?**, in Side [?] Street, and ask the owner, Allen Tyler, and he'll tell you. The same thing. They are better. They don't yield as much meat. But they are ...

KF: There not as fat?

TH: There not as large. The piece of lump won't be as big, the claws aren't as big. They're just not as large anywhere. And sometimes they can be a little tougher to cut. Once they get fat, that shell gets

really hard. But uh, they're better, there's no doubt.

KF: Ok, let me back up to the uh interior of the building and can you tell me if there are any nicknames for any of the rooms or any of the equipment, or special names or anything like that?

TH: No. No, I don't know that one. Maybe they have them somewhere else, but I don't know them here.

KF: Yeah, well we're asking that question to a lot of folks. Sometimes there is and sometimes there isn't. And sometimes it's the guys who work like the steamer, have given them other names.

TH: Um-hmmm, no I, um, no if there is I don't know, I've never heard that. There's lots of nicknames for areas in the town and all in, for one another, but I don't know anything specific to the... Now there's names for different kinds of crabs. There's Buckrams and Lemons and Bellys.

KF: I haven't heard of the Lemon.

TH: A Lemon is a, a crab, a female crab with the egg sac. And early on, when that develops, it's a bright yellow, and as it goes along it gets darker, and then it gets real dark. Um, Lemons are early on when it's bright, Bellys are the dark ones. Then there's Bucks and Sooks and Jimmys. But I mean as far as different areas, I've never, I don't remember picking that up.

KF: And I've wanted to ask you, I know the last time I was here you were still going to see if this was working, the snow crabs, and um you weren't quite certain if we could come in and take photos. Um, I wanted to talk to you about that today and see if maybe, if you're going to keep this going in the summer would it be better for us to come back when your pickers have kind of gotten used to the, the work, or....?

TH: Um, I guess maybe so. We'll fine-tune this a little more.

KF: Yeah, ok. Because I didn't want to uh, upset any, you know, anything going on there. Maybe it would be good if we started with talking with some of the soft crabbers while they're actually doing soft crabs, and do that. Ok. But would it be all right if I took some photos today since everybody's gone?

TH: They're finished. They're all gone and they'll just be cleaning up now.

KF: They're finished. Right. I wanted to do the steamer and

TH: Yeah, that's no problem, you can go back there. Yeah, there's probably a fair amount of junk piled up around it now, um, and it always is in the winter time.

KF: Ok, all right. Well is there anything about the crabbing industry that um we should know about but maybe we haven't thought of or ?

TH: No I can't think of anything. Nothing comes to mind. Sort of need to get out there and see what's going on. Now it's quiet, that is scary. (Chuckles)

KF: [Laughter] All right.

TH: Yes, you can certainly go in the back and take your photographs. I'll be right out here, I'll be around.

KF: Ok. Ok.

End Tape