

Interview Log

Interviewee: Nellie Flowers **Tape #:** OR 120.2

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this is part 2 of 120.2.

BEGIN SIDE A

NF: I just do little things around, sometimes it's quarter past two when I get up. But then I just do a few things around here that I didn't do before I went to bed. That I should've done before I went to bed. [Laughter] And then uh, I mostly get my coffee over there. I just get my cup of coffee and we break around six-thirty. Then we carry [?] crackers, maybe half a sandwich, because last year I was having trouble with my mouth breaking out and the doctor and the dentist both told me to lay off of the peanut butter. But whether that's what was doing it or not I don't know because it hasn't done it this winter. And I mostly lay off of peanut butter. I do, I do eat it once in a while. But I used to eat it all the time.

KF: On crackers at your break?

NF: Um-hmmm. Either that or just like a sandwich, half a sandwich with peanut butter and jelly on it. I always took something with me that was, that I didn't have to reheat or anything. Because we do have a microwave there in the office.

KF: Is the break room where you have your coffee in the picking room.

NF: Well our coffee is right back not too far from where I'm setting. We're allowed to have a coffee in there, that's where they make it at. Um, but we're not supposed to go drink it inside. We're supposed to pay [?] for it outside. Because we don't have a room that we sit down in. But we, we have picnic tables on the outside and in the summer we can go out there.

KF: And that's where you took your break?

NF: Um-hmmm. We take our break outside. Now I have seen a few stand up around and eat but you're really not allowed to do it. But it's more or less the older ones that doesn't, that really don't feel like walking. Now with me, it never did bother me to walk. Even though I have arthritis. But we just go out on the wharf and **[unintelligible phrase]** right next to the water and stand out there and eat. When we get finished we come on back in and start work again.

KF: Is your break fifteen minutes?

NF: Um, I think it's usually around ten to fifteen. But a lot of them goes back to work before that. They just don't, you know, just want to eat and go right on back to work. We had one girl when she started working there, that she always had to have that whole sandwich. She had to eat that sandwich. Well by the time she eat that sandwich in a half an hour, she was used to getting you know, having this half an hour to forty-five minutes. Well we never did do that. So now she's got used to the same thing we do. She wants her brownie in the morning and a cup of coffee and then she's back to work by the time we are. She used to stand there you know, she just had to eat that sandwich. Now um, when the doctor told me to lay off of peanut butter, um, then I just went ahead and did like a scrambled egg sandwich. And took that with me. Because I knew that would be ok. Because we were only working from three or around three and a half hours so. And I knew it would be fine in my lunch bucket. But I always liked to just like take something that I could just stick in my bucket and not have to go out and warm it up.

KF: Or something you need to stick in the refrigerator.

NF: Right, Of course we've got the coolers there that we, sometimes if I'm take with that I have to eat milk with or like the orange juice or something like that I'll take that out there and put it in there. But I don't do that very often. Because it takes up good time you know, well if you're in a hurry. And uh, I have seen them to stay there and just linger on and wait, I never could do it. I just had to rush on through. I guess I figure it, if I didn't take too much time off, you know, there, then I could get home sooner.

KF: You worked from six-thirty then until...?

NF: We worked from six-thirty then until twelve, one.

KF: Straight.

NF: Um-hmmm. Or if we want, if we need any of us, if we need to take another break, we can always take our crackers, you know just pick up some crackers and go ahead out and eat them and...

KF: And that's ok.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: It just takes out of your time.

NF: Um-hmmm. Yeah, I mean it's just their [?] time, it doesn't bother us. Like I said if I wanted, if I really wanted to take off a half an hour and come home, I'm not marked down for it.

KF: Right.

NF: I'm only, well, because I pick, I pick enough to cover my hours.

KF: Um-hmmm.

NF: And if, if it was somebody that was very slow at picking, then I could see if they did that

KF: Um-hmmm. Right, right.

NF: But they don't, they don't usually cut you, hours.

KF: Right, right.

NF: And I've always been able to, to do that, that's the reason why I go out in the mornings, sometimes in the mornings and set in the car for about five, ten minutes. Because I'm able to take care, you know, my hours time. Pick enough for them. But, I mean he still would say nothing. He's just a, he's just a nice boss. And in the winter time he takes us to Harrington.

KF: Oh, to the State Fair?

NF: To the slots.

KF: To the slots. Oh. [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] We went Friday night. It's, it's mostly my sister and her husband and me, because the rest of them don't want to have to go, but we like to go every once in a while. Of course and when they go, he just picks us up. He calls and says, "We ready?" I say, "Ready for what?" He says, "We're going to the slots tomorrow." So uh, he'll just pick us up and take us on over there. Of course you know me, I lost. One time I won a hundred and forty dollars, the last time I was over there, and this time when I went I lost about eighty. So hopefully next time I'll pick up more. But he is good to us. Very good.

KF: Well are there any um, any traditions surrounding the start of crab season here on the island?

[Apparently some form of non-verbal communications takes place]

KF: It just starts and everybody starts working.

NF: Yeah, whenever he says, they call and say we're picking in the morning, we're always ready to go.

KF: Now how do you get ready for crab season to start?

NF: Just make sure I got my lunch bucket and uh, and my clothes set out. I mean I've got them in one special place that I just go pick my clothes up. Like right now they're upstairs in a box. Some of them I throw away, I'll get some more again. But if it's anything, it's nothing really special that you do, I just have my lunch bucket ready. Make sure I've got a cup in there. And my knives.

KF: What about crabs as food here in the community, are there special dishes the community makes or people make with crab?

NF: NF: Well just, some of them makes crab imperials, crab cakes. Some of them eats them like they are with vinegar and seasoning.

KF: Vinegar?

NF: Um-hmmm. You put vinegar and seasoning in a bowl and eat them that way.

KF: Hmmm, ok. Just the whole steamed crab?

NF: Well, sometimes you, they'll pick the meat out and put it in the bowl and then eat it and sometimes they eat, pick it out and dip it and eat it. It just all depends on how you want to eat it.

KF: Ok, and what's the seasoning?

NF: Uh, they have a special, it's like a Old Bay seasoning. And we get that, they have that at the factory. And like we can get it from the factory, you know pretty, if we want crabs at home. But I very seldom

KF: [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] Like I say if I'm going to eat crabs I just want that one little section. Then I don't want no more of the crab, I mean I eat it, if I'm going to eat crabs, but that's not my favorite. I'd rather have shrimp than have crabs. Of course that's something else, he gets us, if we want them, uh, shrimp, he'll order some for us. A certain time during the year, and they're shipped up on the truck. And we get like fifty pound if we want it or if we want ten pound we can get them.

KF: Wow. And he only gives them to the employees.

NF: We get them for the same price he gets them for. He doesn't charge us anymore, we

just get them at cost.

KF: Those come up from North Carolina?

NF: Um-hmmm. Sometimes, it all depends on the time of year that the, you know, that they have them, if they have a lot of them then, you can get them like five, six dollars pound. Sometimes it's less than that.

KF: Do you do that often?

NF: We, he only does it one time a year.

KF: One time a year, and then do you usually buy ten pounds and freeze it or do you just get a pound or two that's fresh.

NF: I, I use it, no I usually get um, about twenty-five pound of them.

KF: And freeze it.

NF: And freeze them.

KF: And that'll last you for a good long time.

NF: Oh yeah, um-hmmm. One year I got the fifty pound because they were smaller shrimp and, and they were just as good as any. They were only four dollars and something pound.

KF: Wow.

NF: So, and it's easier for me in the summer time to get that and put it away for the winter. Like if I'm going to freeze any crab meat or anything I usually uh, I usually pick out, well he lets us have crabs over there in the fall, and um I just pick a bushel out and put them in plastic containers and put them in the freezer.

KF: Now how do you defrost your crabmeat?

NF: Urn, just, sometimes put it in the microwave and let it defrost and then sometimes I just leave it in the refrigerator but I always turn mine upside down in something that will hold the water. And all the water will come right out of it. I do that sometimes. It all depends on whether I'm going to use it quick or not. You know if I make a decision that I want it early at one time. And sometimes if I know I'm going to use it next day, then I put it in refrigerator.

KF: Ok. Well how some of the um, hurricanes and big storms have come through this area affected the....?

NF: Well that's when all the crabbers has to take their pots up if they don't want to lose

them. And they're like twenty-five dollars apiece now. And of course they're rushing to try to get them up, and, the bosses are trying to get as many crabs as they can brought in and steamed so we can still pick.

KF: Before the storm,

NF: Before the storm, um-hmmm. And I have been over there when the tide come up and everything washed away here, I, one morning we went over there and there weren't no tide at all. When these storms, and we knew a storm was coming. And we, he brought us home in the van and all of my little timber things out there had washed, they were all going right up the road hard [?] as ever they could go. And of course you had to wade almost to your knees to get anywheres. But it's very seldom we have tide that high. But, sometimes it does.

KF: Has it ever damaged the factory?

NF: It has come up in there, but hasn't really damaged it that much. We have had it in there. Of course every time that the, used to every time a tide come up it would come in the office first. [Chuckle]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: So last year they decided to build on to the, to take that one office off and build on a bigger one and higher. [Laughter]

KF: Um-hmmm. [Laughter]

NF: So now then, from the factory we step up a step for to go to the office.

KF: Ok. It doesn't flood anymore.

NF: But it used to that we stepped down. And it was like, this much of a step. And it was right on the ground. And that was the first place the tide got to was that office.

MM: Do you remember Hurricane Agnes and whether or not the crab harvest here was damaged? Did you work that year afterwards, do you remember? That was seventy-two.

NF: Um, I don't think it was damaged that much. I think that we um, as I think back, we might have been out of work a couple days. Because, Pm going to tell you the reason why. It's because when they, when they find out that a storm is on its way, they take their pots up. And a lot of times they don't put them back until they clean them.

KF: So there aren't any crabs for a little while.

NF: Right.

MM: Do all of the watermen around here sell the crabs to Ruark and to Phillips.

NF: No, a lot of them takes them to Cambridge and sells them, to Cool Ice [?]. They take them there.

MM: Did your husband sell his crabs to Ruark?

NF: Uh-huh. Yeah he sold them there all the time, ever since I can remember.

MM: Is that, do other pickers' husbands, was that the way that a lot of the pickers' husbands did too, that worked in the water business.

NF: Um-hmmm. They sold their crabs to the packer, and most of times the pickers, them and their wives and all would go to that same factory and pick. And he sold his crabs over to W. T. Ruark's and that's where I, that's the reason I guess I mainly picked there. But um, I don't go to the other factories and pick. I just stick to that one. Now I have been to other places, like A.E. Phillip's down in Jay's [?], he used to, when he first started, he picked uh, at night, late in the afternoon. Well that give us time in which we could do it then. But it got, the laws got stricter. Well we used to go down there and pick too.

MM: In the afternoon?

NF: Uh-huh.

MM: After you quit...?

NF: Yeah. Well we used to pick over here to Billy's and then come home and rest up and about three o'clock, we went on down there and picked till about eight. And which I enjoyed that.

MM: And the law says, the law being a worker hourly law that you can't work more than eight hours a day? Or they can't pick at night?

NF: Well they can't pick no more, we can't, I can't, myself, can't pick no more than eight hours at the factory. Now I just still don't understand whether I could go to another factory, but they mostly all pick at the same hours.

MM: Ok, so they stopped the hour ... the nightly picking too, at the same time.

NF: Um-hmmm, yeah. Now the onliest places I know that would pick late in the afternoon is urn, my nephew has a home-picking place and they don't pick in the morning. Now they pick there late in the afternoon and like at eight o'clock at night.

MM: Ok, is that because um, I guess the crabs are coming in in the afternoon and then they're picking?

NF: No, the, his wife doesn't like to pick, don't like to get up early hours and pick. She'd rather wait until after noon, and uh, I have picked up there some, in the afternoon, my

sister-in-law next door, it's just like, you know, family. And uh, I have picked up there some.

MM: Well I was going to ask you about the home-pickers. I mean is that, if you're not picking in a factory then are you picking at home?

NF: Well, no. It's just some of them that has uh, little factories. And that's what you call home-picking. It's a factory, but it's, it's only like for five or six people.

MM: Oh, ok. Are they still, do they get inspected like you guys do?

NF: Um-hmmm. Yeah they still have to be inspected.

MM: How would a stranger that was driving down the road be able to see a home-picking place, do they have a sign out the way that W.T. Ruark does?

NF: No. You actually wouldn't ...

MM: You wouldn't know.

NF: You wouldn't know.

MM: Do they pick in the house or is there another building outside?

NF: No, they have another building.

MM: So it could look like a little shed out there.

NF: It could be like a, like a garage.

MM: Ok.

NF: But it's fixed up just the same way as the big factories. They have to have a certain steamer, and they have to have their stainless steel tables and sinks and all like that.

MM: Right. And they get their crabs from the local watermen too?

NF: Well uh, they mostly catch them their ownself

MM: Oh, ok.

NF: Yeah a lot of them catches their own crabs.

MM: I wonder if, you remember those two little ... G. W. Hall [?] was one of them. Now that was home picking?

NF: Yes, Now he used to have only just about eight pickers. Then he built on, now I

don't know whether he's considered, it was supposed to be home-picking, but I don't know whether he's considered a big business now or not because he has a lot of people there that works. Because see now he was one of them when he first started would work in the afternoon, because he didn't interfere with the rest of the factories. And he would work in the afternoon and I could work, go up there and work till about eight o'clock. Which, I liked to work.

MM: Tell us the difference between home-picking and a factory.

NF: Well most of the bigger factories always start early in the morning.

MM: Ok, so the hours are different.

NF: Uh-huh. Now um, with G. W. Hall up here now, they start same time we do. So that doesn't give you, give any of the rest of us that would like to pick extra time. It doesn't give us no time to do it.

MM: Now who are his pickers?

NF: Well he has Mexicans now comes in. And he has just different ones that wanted to pick there.

MM: Do um, is part of the um meaning of home-picking a no more than a certain number of pickers?

NF: Um-hmmm.

MM: What is that number? Once you get more than a certain number of pickers ... ?

NF: Well uh, when you say home-picking, you can set it up for no more than a certain amount, it's uh like um, about seven pickers or something like that. It could be less than that. Be six or seven pickers, that's what usually they start off with. And that's considered home-picking. Now uh Ronnie Jones, the three Anns, are over to the Creek, that was set up for home-picking, but he has got all Mexicans in there now, he's got about thirty-five pickers that comes every year. Of course he's got his own place, his own uh homes to um, for his pickers.

MM: Are the pickers different in the factories than they are in the home-picking?

NF: No.

MM: They're the same?

NF: They're the same. The same way. We all, I mean, I could quit over to the factory, go work in, up to, well my nephew's, Booth, I could go up there and go ahead and pick but I'd only be picking in the afternoon. But I like to get up early in the morning. And work, whatever I'm going to do, I like to do early. Then when I come home, if I'm needed, you

know, up there, he can give me a call, if he has too many crabs, he can give me a call, and then I'll go help him.

MM: And he knows he can call you?

NF: Um-hmmm. Yeah he knows he can call me and I'll go ahead up and help.

MM: What's the difference between these home-pickers and say a lady who is maybe just picking in her kitchen or something? Are there any of those kind of pickers?

NF: I don't think so.

MM: Oh, ok.

NF: Yeah I really don't think so anymore, could have been some before but um, as it, as the state says set up a home-picking and you have to have same regulations as the big factories.

KF: Hmmm. No one's ever told us about the small home pickers before. It's kind of interesting.

NF: Yeah we had, we have them, we had several of them down here, we've got uh, Janet uh Ruark from down the Island, she, hers was set up for it, um, another one was Tony Rippons's, his was, he was set up for it, Ronnie Jones's was, like I say they got a lot of pickers now so I don't know what his is considered. Um, then we had uh, G. W. Hall's was another one, was set up for home-picking. Um, and of course my nephew Booth, his was set up like it.

KF: What's his business's name?

NF: Um, Nancy. Nancy's Home-Picked Crab Meat.

KF: I think I've seen it.

MM: I have too.

NF: Um-hmmm. And of course we've got a lot of them from around the other side of the river. Paul's Pride was another one. And of course if you got into it at that time, you were all right. Of course it still cost you approximately ten thousand dollars if not more to set up. And a lot of, a lot of us couldn't *afford* that anyhow.

KF: For the equipment?

NF: Um-hmmm.

MM: And that was in the mid-seventies that that started.

NF: Yeah, right.

MM: Ok.

KF: What's uh Janet Ruark's, does she still have her business?

NF: She has her business, but I don't know what that's under. I don't know what her business is under.

MM: Is there um, does your boss, you know there were articles in the papers within the last, I don't know, ten years, interviewing the owners saying we can't get enough workers and that was when they started going to bring in the Mexicans.

NF: Right.

MM: Is, are these small houses in competition for workers with the big owners, and if they are, who gets the workers? How do they compete for workers?

NF: Well, most of the home-pick ones is the wives.

MM: Ok.

NF: The wives and the immediate family, like if they've got children.

MM: Ok, so they're really not, your boss wouldn't feel like those home-picking places were taking workers away from him.

NF: No, unh-uh.

MM: Because those are people who would be picking...

NF: I would say they wouldn't be taking them away because some, some of these has small children and they couldn't go out and work anyhow.

MM: Ok, because they can't take their kids to the picking house.

NF: Right. Right. So I think that's the reason why these small places, small businesses, come, coming about. Now, but now then a lot of the children are bigger now, I know up here to my nephew's, they've got a very small child's only about three or four years old. So, she's either got to do that or not work at all. And of course it's right next to the, she can walk right out of her house and walk right straight, well it's, her house and the garage it's no farther than from, from my door there cross to here. She can walk right out of her house and go to the picking house and, and of course and the child is then, then in the house, it's another one in there with it. Another child can take care of it. And then she can always you know, run across there and see how they're doing. Whereas if she had to drive, she couldn't do that.

MM: Right, right, or would have to pay someone to watch the kid.

NF: Um-hmmm. Yep. So that's where the home-picking come from. And of course now I think a lot of them really wanted to pick but they didn't, but they couldn't pick in their homes see. When now at Smith Island they're still picking in their homes. Smith Island, what, Tangier, down that way. They're still picking out of their homes.

KF: Yeah, that's why I asked that other question because we know there's quote illegal pickers...

NF: Right.

KF:... in that area.

NF: But it's not illegal for them to do it.

KF: Um-hmmm.

NF: And it's not, it's really not fair. I mean if you're going to pay for something it's really not fair. For to let one lot do it and, you know, the other lot, now we have had, I remember one lot that got picked up on down here, but they were just picking out of their own home but they were just picking the crabs that they caught. But, but they don't do that anymore. I mean, as far as I know is nobody does it. One boy said **[unintelligible phrase..."he's got a legal on it"?]** so, that was it. Of course my husband never did catch enough crabs for, you know, for doing anything.

MM: Are younger women um, you said that um, that your daughter by the time that she graduated from high school knew that she wanted to, that she didn't want to pick crabs. Is she the standard? Are their any new young women from this area coming into Ruark's to work?

NF: Urn, we've got uh, onliest one younger one.

MM: Ok.

NF: And rest of us are in our sixties and seventies. And we've got one young one. She's about Rhonda's age.

MM: Is she?

NF: Um-hmmm.

MM: Have you ever talked to her about why she decided to do it?

NF: No, uh, well, she had two children. Now she went to work at the doctor's office, but she said by the time she went in and Cambridge and uh, and had to pay for lunch and everything that it weren't worth it. So she came back down here, and of course she's got a

child thirteen, and then the other one graduates this year. Which they would be fine but you, at the age of twelve and thirteen you don't leave your children, I mean I wouldn't, just to run around. But they did go with their father, on the boat.

MM: Ok.

NF: It's just like my children. And my niece, and my nephew, they all went out on the boat with my husband. They just, one picked it up right after the other.

MM: Are any of the Mexican pickers, the ones that you said the home-picking, that I think his name is Jimmy now has thirty-five Mexican pickers, are the Mexican pickers still just...

NF: Ronnie Jones.

MM: Ronnie Jones, that's right. Are those thirty-five pickers and the pickers who come to work at Ruark every summer, they come in July and they go back home, are any of them living here now year-round?

NF: No.

MM: Everybody is still being...

NF: They've gone so now they come in um, sometime in May. We get them in May. But they, their visas are up the last of December.

MM: Ok, so they go back home.

NF: They go back home.

MM: And do you all pick until, through October? When do ...?

NF: We, we um, we're picking through till middle of November. But ours goes back the middle of November every year. But we mostly get them um, get them now for Mother's Day. They're here the week before Mother's Day.

MM: Ok. And do all of the peo ... you know um, you said that Mrs. Ruark goes and picks them up in a van, is that the way all of the big factories have a pla ... a house for their pickers and they go get them in the morning.

NF: Um-hmmm.

MM: Is that the way most of them....

NF: They go, get them in the morning and take them back. Now some of them has their houses right around theirs, like uh Ronnie Jones, his pickers, they're....

MM: They're right there.

NF: They're right there. He's got enough homes for them, right there in that one section. That he can uh, just um, they can walk right from their house. Across. But Dot and Billy Gast [?] go up the road and gets, get theirs every morning, bring them down, then take them back. If they decide to go back they would rather, you know sometimes they walk, they need, say they need to exercise so they walk.

MM: How do they get groceries and that kind of thing? Do they have um...?

NF: Dot and, Dot takes them every week.

MM: To get groceries.

NF: To, they take them every week to get their groceries.

MM: Where is the closest grocery store?

NF: Well, we have a Island Pride, but they mostly go to Cambridge. To like urn Food City or some of the other ones. Mainly Food City is where they get most of their groceries. But, but she takes them one time a week. It's usually on Saturday morning because we don't pick on Saturday.

MM: And that's the day they go to the grocery store?

NF: Um-hmmm.

MM: What about soft crabs, does Ruark do soft crabs?

NF: No, he doesn't shed soft crabs.

MM: 4k.

NF: Now he buys them sometimes. But um, I don't know whether he even does that anymore. But, he may buy some boxes for to carry on, you know, away.

KF: Right.

NF: But it's for somebody that other than him that sheds them.

KF: Yeah, ok.

NF: Now Harry Phillips down here, he sheds his own soft crabs. He has a soft crab business too.

KF: Harry Phillips, is he...? Is he's not with, one of the bigger...?

NF: Um-hmmm, he's a big fa ... big worker. He's just bought into the factory I'll say, six

or seven years ago. And now he owns the factory.

KF: Is that Phillips?

NF: Harry Phillips.

KF: Which factory does he own?

NF: It's down to the end of the road here.

KF: Oh. Which one is down there?

NF: Russell Hall.

KF: Russell Hall.

NF: Russell Hall, but that's the one, he just bought it this year.

KF: Ok.

NF: Or he bought it in, last fall.

KF: What other does W. T. Ruark process? Do they, do they process oysters?

NF: Unh-uh.

KF: Have they, since you've been working there, did they ever do oysters?

NF: They did them couple years I think.

KF: And it didn't....?

NF: Um, they just **[I think this must be one of those Eastern Shore implied negatives because that is clearly the meaning of her statement though, listening to the tape again and again, she clearly does not say the missing "don't" here]** have enough people to shuck oysters. Because you've got to be strong to do that.

KF: Um-hmmm. So they really specialize in crab meat.

NF: Um-hmmm, yeah. Now I could shuck oysters but I'm, I mean I have done it, but only for home use. Just enough to eat. It's very hard. Because you've got to have a strong wrist.

KF: Well and usually there's some male shuckers too.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: I mean, you need some male labor.

NF: But they's some of the places you shuck all of the time, all winter. But we never did have it over here.

MM: If we wanted to interview the fastest picker you ever worked with, the best picker you ever worked with, or if, do you remember stories of the best picker you ever saw?

NF: Um no. [Laughter]

MM: [Laughter]

NF: Even though I know it's a lot faster than, than what I am.

MM: Um-hmmm.

NF: But I don't think they'd want in for no interview I'll tell you.

MM: [Laughter] Well do you remember a picker that was just incredible? Not that we'd interview them, but was there a picker in your fifty years that you just couldn't believe what a skilled picker she was or he was?

NF: Nope.

MM: Ok.

NF: I don't remember none of them.

MM: Are there, what are the main families of pickers at Ruark? Obviously there's a Flowers family.

NF: Oh, Flowers and ... we have some Tighley's [sp?]. I don't know, there's just scattered around, just, I mean it's not just families, I mean it's just, just different one, just picked up and went there.

MM: Um, well I guess, is there anybody you can recommend that we should go and talk with other than yourself?

NF: Lot of them won't talk to nobody. Like my sister.

KF: Yes I did call Edith and uh, she said she wasn't interested.

NF: No. She's not like me, I was the Guinea pig. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter] What are you going to tell her, that it was awful? [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] No, she probably, oh I'm, if we start talking about it I'll tell her it was nice.

KF: We didn't bite. [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] No.

KF: Well we were going to talk with several of the owners in the area but we're trying to talk with more actual pickers than owners. So maybe we'll just have to see if anybody else is going to be as welcoming as you have been.

NF: But I, right off hand I couldn't tell you.

KF: Um-hmmm. Ok.

NF: Because I've heard a lot of them say, don't come to me. I don't want to be interviewed. Or if, if somebody happens to walk in the factory, oh my Lord, why did they bring them up here. I didn't want them watching me pick. You know you hear that all the time so, right off the hand, I couldn't tell you anything.

KF: Ok. So people don't like to have strangers in the picking room.

NF: Um-hmmm. A lot of them would say well I wished they'd stayed that section instead of coming up here. Why did they pick this factory? And, just different little things, you know little nit-picking things. It doesn't mean to anything, you know. And if I'm picking, I don't care who comes and watches me because I'm not going to do no more, I'm not doing nothing special, when they're there I'm going to do the same thing I've always done.

KF: You've always done. And what other kind of visitors do you get in the picking room? I mean what strangers come in there, other than us two nosy people from the museum?

NF: It used to be right many people come in to watch. But, it isn't really anybody anymore.

KF: Were they tourists or, the people who came in to watch, were they tourists or ...?

NF: Uh, sometimes. Yeah sometimes they were. But, and sometimes just friends would come in. And instead of watching one person pick, they'd go walk over and watch somebody else. And they'd see one if they'd be a little bit faster, you know, than others. And they would stand and watch them. But like I say, I mean I'm just a normal person when I'm picking, I'm not going to pick no different when they're standing there, than I am when I'm doing it for myself.

KF: There aren't any uh sayings or uh little songs that pickers say or sing while they're working?

NF: Just the boss's wife, when she was picking.

KF: She sings? What does she do?

NF: Sings "Take This Job and Shove It."

KF: [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] She says "I ain't workin' here no more" so she got an office job!
[Laughter]

KF: [Laughter] So she picked before she worked in the office?

NF: Yes, she used to pick. And we had another secretary there. Until he died. He had cancer. And then she got the office job.

KF: Do you all sing, do you all listen to the radio?

NF: No, it, I've never used to listen to the radio. I'd rather set in pick and do my own thing, and like that, like now, I mean I don't, when I'm here, television very seldom goes on. Or the radio. It's got to be something special for me to turn it on. I'd rather be cleaning or sewing or, even at night, I just do, do those kind of things, I don't watch TV. If I'm, if it's anything special on, I'll just walk around and listen at it. Or stand and look at it, because I don't like to sit down and watch just one special thing. But I sew a lot at night, either that or go to the bingo, we have bingo on Tuesday nights at church **[unintelligible word]**.

KF: Oh, yeah, we saw the sign.

NF: We have that there, and I've, in the winter time, now in the summer time I don't do any of that. Because when I get up at two o'clock in the morning or quarter past two, it's no time for it. But we have some of them that's in the factory that she goes to bingo every Tuesday night, she goes three or four other nights during the week. And then next morning she's nearly dead. But even if I don't go to bed early, I still don't feel like that I can go set and play bingo and get up the next morning. Because I'm not relaxed. But if I'm here, I can just relax, even though I don't go to bed till about ten o'clock. But a lot of, but we go one of them in there that that's all she does is play bingo every night, like three or four nights a week. Now my bingos is in, in the winter time. But in the summer time I just, just don't do it.

KF: And what other sewing do you do beside your curtains?

NF: This week I've been working, making stuff for Rhonda for the au ... they've got a little auction. And I've been making some thing for her this week.

KF: Like what?

NF: I'll show you. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: Like pillows.

KF: Oh how cute. Oh...

NF: I've made little bedroom slippers for her.

KF: Is this for the auction at the outdoor show?

NF: No, this is the auction for St. John's Church.

KF: Um-hmmm.

NF: They're having a watch-ya-call-it.

KF: Wow!

MM: That's so cute!

NF: I know.

KF: Oh, my goodness.

NF: Then I've been making bread basket covers. I made her

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

MM: Well she's glad that she has you as a mom.

NF: Well I do a lot.

MM: I know aren't they cute.

NF: But she had gotten this stuff for *me* to do. So I told her, well I was going to be here.

KF: [Laughter]

NF: So this is the kind of things that she likes for me to do. Then she told *me* that she thought I should do a cake. Because last year it was like uh, one man bought it for seventy dollars, and then he give it back and sold it again, this is how they done, because it was, well it really wasn't that special because it was a Valentine's, you know, heart-shaped?

KF: Right.

NF: But I had the coconut I had put on it, I had dyed it reddish color, you know like a red and white. And so it was pretty so they decided to give it back and sell it again. I said I don't want to be the center of attraction this year so I ain't going to bake a cake.
[Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: Now we went to a service over to, to the restaurant, and it was a Mexican, it was a, a service for the Mexican people you know, a church service. And this is the flowers that they make.

KF: Oh wow!

NF: They make some of the most beautiful ones that you've ever seen.

KF: Which restaurant was this?

NF: Over to the, Old Salty's.

KF: So they're having a church service...?

NF: They had a church service, uh-huh. And they had a luncheon there afterwards, they brought their own food, and had a luncheon. But they gave every one of us, it was only, it wasn't too many of us Americans that went. But everyone of us that went, we, they gave us a **(uniatelligible word or phrase)** of flower.

KF: Pretty colors!

NF: And some of them were so much pret..., you know some of them were like a gold car.

KF: Beautiful.

NF: But they do things, they do things for us as well as we do for them. But I had did Rhonda some breadbasket covers too for the church.

KF: Yeah she said you were pretty active in that church. And always doing something. She pointed you out as you were scurrying around at the muskrat dinner doing stuff.

NF: Yes, yeah I have two places that I...well I work a lot in the winter, you know just uh, volunteer work. Like I do over there and help them with their soup days. And then when I come over here at our church, we have soup days. And um, I always volunteer for all of that. Cooking stuff, and back cakes, and then of course we have the fire-house.

MM: You have an auction there twice a year, once a year?

NF: We have a auction up here to the fire-house once.

MM: I remember, I came last year.

NF: Oh did you?

MM: It was wonderful! There were some beautiful quilts I remember.

NF: Yeah, well I now I was at the cake table, that was my job.

MM: My husband visited the cake table.

NF: Oh... [Laughter]

MM: [Laughter]

NF: Yeah, I do the cake table at our artisan fair every year. And then we have like uh, we're going to have four dinners at the fire-house this year. We have one in January and we have one the last Sunday of this month, which the out-door show is Friday and Saturday, and then I've got to go up here and work on Sunday. Which 1, on a Friday we usually do the potato salad up here, we peel potatoes and do all of our chicken, and Saturday morning we go back up and we work until twelve, one, two o'clock and we always have a hundred pies. We bake a hundred pies up there.

MM: I'm going to have to come to this fire-house dinner I think. [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] Then Sunday I go back up, about ten o'clock, and work until five. I wait on tables up there.

MM: And the four dinners are to benefit the volunteer fire department?

NF: Um-hmmm. Yeah the four dinners will be for them. Usually we have three because January, um, it has Super Bowl on, and usually that falls on the same Sunday that our dinner would be. But this year it didn't. Now Super Bowl Sunday, he and, my boss, always invites a lot of people, anybody, actually anybody that wants to come. Because he cooked um, he ordered a hundred and twenty-five steaks.

KF: Wow.

NF: Now he pays for that himself. But he had ordered this man to cut him a hundred and twenty-five steaks, when they have, everybody gets a steak, baked potato, salad, all kinds of desserts.

KF: And you went this year, did you go this year?

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: And then everybody stays and watches the Super Bowl?

NF: Watches the Super Bowl. The football games, he uh, well they've got ... one, two, three, four ... five, six, seven ... eight televisions. They got almost one in every room.

KF: That's what I was going to ask you was how did you get that many people around one television.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: But you didn't. Eight.

NF: He's got about eight. At least eight televisions in there. So we set and watch that, when it's over, we just go right on home.

KF: That sounds like a good community night.

NF: Uh-huh, it is. So but anyhow, we, when our dinner is going to be the same weekend or the out-door show, um Friday evening I go up there about four o'clock, three-thirty, four o'clock, and I'm, I've got a lot to do that weekend because I've got, on Thursday night to set the tables up up here to the firehouse, Friday I'm going to have to work up there until I get ready to go up to the out-door show. Then I'm going to work from then until about eleven o'clock that night, Friday night.

KF: That's a late night.

NF: But I'm not going to be able to go help make the pies this time, because I've got to be up to the school up there, to the out-door show at ten o'clock.

KF: Are you entering the muskrat picking competition?

NF: Yeah I guess so.

KF: [Laughter]

NF: I did last year. I haven't only come in the second place either time. I've never been first. But then we'll work from there, from then until I'm going to work from then until the show starts at night, till about six-thirty, seven o'clock, then I'm going to go inside for Saturday night. Because my grandchildren are in, you know muskrat skinning and all. So I'm going to go in there for that. So it's going to be busy.

KF: Busy weekend.

NF: Yes. And then go up there on Sunday morning about ten o'clock and work from then until five.

KF: Is that when the dinner starts at ten o'clock?

NF: Well we go up there and set, you know get everything straightened out, and they get flying chicken, getting all that kind of stuff. But we still have to put, like the potato salad on the table, but the, you start, I mean anybody comes in eleven o'clock, gets served. And we have had a lot of people come in at eleven.

KF: They remember it from the previous year.

NF: Yeah. So they's not many times that we don't have a, sell all the pies. But that will be busy.

KF: When is the auction this year?

NF: That's going to be the first week, the first Saturday in November I think. They told us. I think it's the first Saturday. They had picked it, but I'm just presuming it's going to be first, it'll be the first Saturday of November.

KF: When you brought out the flower you mentioned that the Mexican community when they're here in the summer do things for you guys, and you guys do things for them. What are those things that you all do?

NF: Well, it's like in the um, we used to have them, they used to have us up there to the house. But of course we don't do that now. Um, we just do little things for them, like if um, like if I bake something, I'll take them their cake, or something for them, or, maybe candy. We do candy and everybody gets a piece of candy. Like I say, we do for them, and they do for us. But uh, we uh went to their service, we got a paper on it, and we went to their service over there, to the restaurant.

KF: Do they do that regularly or just...?

NF: No I think they do that just one time during the year when they're here. They have, they have like a Bible study. What time they're here. And I think they have that every week.

KF: Are they Catholic or are they ...?

NF: Mostly Catholic.

KF: Most of them are still Catholic.

NF: Um-hmmm, most of them are Catholic. Um, but I enjoyed it that day I was there. I didn't understand all the words that they were saying, but nevertheless, I just really enjoyed it. Because we got to set with the girls. And we seen the way, you know the things that they done that we, that we don't.

KF: Like what?

NF: Like walk up and, and put the cross, they walk in and go up front set the cross up. Of course they had Jay do that this year. Because he, he goes with one of the little Mexican girls. Jerry Neethum[?]? He goes with one of them, and she had him to walk in with the cross. And uh, and of course they might do that in Catholic church, I don't know.

KF: Yeah, yeah they do.

MM: They do.

KF: That's pretty standard. Usually the boys do it though. It's usually the young, the young boys, altar boys.

NF: Like I say they might do that, because I didn't, I don't go to Catholic church, I go to the Methodist church up here. Of course Jay did it this year and uh, we just see the things that they do, you know, like that.

KF: Now are they making anything besides this pretty flower?

NF: Well they...

KF: Are they doing any embroidery?

NF: Oh honey sakes in, they crochet all the year, all summer! Because one, year before last they brought me for mother's day a great big center piece, with red in it, it was beautiful. Had red and green.

KF: So they bring you things that they sew.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Do they ever bring you things they cook? You know how you bring them cakes.

NF: No. They have it there, and they will ask you if you would like to have some of it, they're really friendly people.

KF: Have you tried any of it yet?

NF: Nnn...well I have up to the house. But their food is too spicy for me.

KF: [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] Because some of the times uh, Dot, our boss's wife, will in the fall of the year, when we're working longer like we have to put in over-time, um, she will cook us a pot of soup, and they go and gets this here hot sauce. And **[guttural sound of amazement]!**

KF: [Laughter]

NF: And I think to myself, my God can you really eat that? But a lot, most of them eat their food like it.

KF: The dinners that they used to have, invite you all to the house, what were those like?

NF: Uh, they used to have like lasagna and uh, but it was like more spicier than what, and um, hot dogs and pork and bean soup. We thought, my sister-in-law was crazy one time when she says, "Oh I messed, mixed the best pot of soup!" And we said, "Well what did you put in it?" And she says, "Hot dogs and pork and beans!" We thought she was crazy. I said, "Frances, you didn't do that!" "Honeys it was delicious," she said. And come to find out they do the same thing. The Mexicans do.

KF: Did they cook dinner for you on Saturday nights during the summer time? Just one time?

NF: No uh, just maybe one or two times a year. In summer. So we would know what their food tasted like. It was all good.

KF: Just a little spicey for you.

NF: Um-hmmm, Little bit spicey.

KF: How come you don't do that anymore?

NF: Uh, I think just over the years we've uh, we've grown to know each other, more so now. Then what we used to when they first come. And of course and Dot would always cook for up, for up the **[someone coughs here over the word Nellie says, it may be "firehouse"]**, she'd cook a big meal. And it's, I think it was more or less to show how the difference in foods. But they like our foods just as well, a lot of them. Because they like um, they like, their main dish is chicken. And they can eat that. I think they could eat chicken every day.

KF: And what about the seafood here?

NF: They don't eat too much seafood. Now one or two of them will. But they don't eat too much seafood. But they like the chicken and they like um, like a cheese-steak sub or a steak sub, they like that. And um...

KR: Have any of them tried muskrat yet?

NF: Uh, I don't know whether they've tried muskrat, most of them like duck. Because if I have any left over, you know from what I have, and my sister has any left over, and Dot, one day she will cook the ducks, and they all love them. They love um, deer meat. She can cook them deer meat, and sometimes when we're working, you know later, she'll cook that one day. We have vegetable beef soup, lima bean soup, chicken soup....

MM: Those are days during late Sept., .late August and early September when they're, you all are just working hard, hard, hard.

NF: Well most of the time it's like urn, the last of September. Until the first week of November. A lot of times we have to work on Saturday then.

MM: And also you don't come home at one o'clock, she cooks you lunch and you stay and eat lunch there and you pick in the afternoon for....?

NF: Uh-huh, yeah, we do the over-time then.

MM: Until three or four in the afternoon?

NF: Well, most of the time it's around two, or three o'clock, something like that.

MM: And you do that for a month?

NF: Uh, approximately a month. And um, then on Saturdays, sometimes we have to pick on Saturdays because they have so many crabs there that they need them picked. And they have a lot of orders going out. We pasteurize too.

KF: The crab meat?

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Where does that happen, in the steam room?

NF: Well uh, they pasteurize it around the Cannons[?], around to Wingate[?]. Or Crapo. They pasteurize around there.

KF: Oh, ok, so that the crab meat leaves Ruark in a truck and they drive it over to Crapo, and to a plant that just does pasteurizing.

NF: Well they do the pasteurizing, they pick too.

KF: Oh they do.

NF: Um-hmmm. But they also pasteurize over there. I don't know whether either one of them does it here or not. But, of course Harry might, I don't know.

MM: Well, we'll find out.

KF: Yeah, I guess we will.

NF: I really don't know whether he does or not, but I, he might do that. But the rest of them takes theirs to Cannon's.

MM: Does it make a difference in the flavor of the meat when it gets pasteurized, you think?

NF: I think a little.

KF: Um-hmmm.

NF: I think it takes away from the regular taste. But, I mean you can still eat it, because you take all those claw fingers, used to call cocktail fingers but I call them claw fingers, which they pasteurize theirs for, like he had it for the Super Bowl and some people wants them. Whereas I, when I do mine, I don't, I just fix mine and put bread'n on them, and if I want them, I'll just put them on the stove with um, in a hot grease. For about two minutes. And, just enough to heat them through. But you can't put them on there too long because they get real tough if you do. But I put mine in there in the freezer, and that's where I **[somebody coughs, making Nellie's comment undecipherable]**.

KF: Well if we wanted to get a hold of Mr. W. T. Ruark, what's the best time of day to go visit him? I wrote him a letter and um, I called, and he wasn't there. Should we go in the mornings right now? If we're trying to get up with him this week...?

NF: Well sometimes I've got hold of him down to the factory, and sometimes I get a hold of him up to the, the house, but most of the time he's not home. He's off on the truck somewheres. And lot of times Dot goes with him. Because he, they have three children but they're in their, like thirties. Now two of them is uh, handicapped. Of course they have a special place, they go on the bus to Cambridge and they work out of DDU [?]. But the other one, the other twin, she's uh, working at the bank. She does real well. But they had two handicapped children. But they can, they can leave them there. I mean when they get off the bus in the afternoons, they stay home.

KF: When they drive the truck, they go over-night, or are they just gone to....?

NF: Day-time.

KF: Day-time.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Ok. And then they're back home that night.

NF: Um-hmmm, yeah. And uh, well, sometimes she's at the factory, but then um, when he's, he usually leaves in the morning and goes to the, away, and he's got more truck drivers too that, that does the same thing. He's got one that stays in North Carolina and he comes up um, maybe two times a week. Rest of the time he stays in North Carolina and buys and meets him halfway.

KF: Ok. And he's not doing that at this time of year, is he?

NF: No, um, but it wouldn't surprise me that he don't start buying crabs. And he might still be buying some.

KF: Now?

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Huh.

NF: He could be buying some now. It's about time.

KF: What's he doing with them now?

NF: Well he brings them here and re-sells them.

KF: Ok, so, ok, whole crabs, ok.

NF: Um-hmmm, but he re-sells them, but we, but they're high see, the high price which we don't pay.

KF: Right, right.

MM: Well it sounds like we might just keep trying by phone and also at the factory by phone and also run by, but the morning might be a better time to catch, get up with him at the factory than the afternoon?

NF: Uh, I would say so.

KF: Ok, yesterday we got there about two o'clock and we think that was too late.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Because they were, there wasn't anybody there so maybe we can hit there at eight in the morning and...

NF: Well I would, I would say try to call him to find out if he, if they're, if, you know, at what time that you could, maybe set up and talk to him.

KF: That's what we'll do,

NF: And like, and yet he maybe might be busy, it's hard to tell, Like I say on Friday when we um, we leave and go to, like if he's going to go to Harrington, he'll call us and on Thursday and say, "Be ready tomorrow afternoon. What time can you leave?" And most of the time it's about three-thirty. That we, you know, meet him and go ahead up.

KF: So that you can lose some more money.

NF: Yeah. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: Sometimes I won about five hundred.

KF: Wow!

MM: Wow!

NF: But um....

KF: That's a good one.

MM: You should have quit.

NF: Well I do at that time. I quit. I watch them when I put back in, I make sure I save the, save that money. But like I say, I'm not going to go everytime to say I'm going to win because sometimes I go and lose, sometimes I break even. Like last night at the bingo, I broke even. I won two games, so I broke even. I mean I don't figure I lost anything. But sometimes I lose it all. Don't win nothing. But I know when to quit. And I don't go to Harrington unless my boss takes me. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: Do you think that's the reason why, I mean I can, I can um, I can go with not, not gambling at all, um, but a lot of people, if it was here in Cambridge, would be there at, half of them would lose their homes. And I, and I know I'm not going to lose mine because I'm not going to gamble that much. I know.... somebody had gambled their house away and I'm telling you it's been a rough time.

MM: I heard yesterday some, the dollar amount of how much work force hours and dollars are lost every year for gambling. Um, problem, in, you know, people who are addicted to it. And it's really....

NF: There's a lot of people that can't afford it, that would actually go and do it. And they do. And like I say, I mean, I don't have no whole lot, but I'm not going to, I'm not going to lose my home and I'm not going to lose all that I've got. Because I know when to stop. Of course we have some that don't do it at all. But it's them few that just can't control theirselves.

KF: Well now I'm wondering if we can take a photograph of you and maybe a photograph of some of those things that you've made as well.

NF: Why I ... I got to get my hair done!

KF: [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter] You know you don't want me looking like this.

KF: Well we uh, you want to take five minutes or...

NF: Can't I give it to you on Friday? I get my hair done on Fridays. [Laughter]

KF: Ok, [Laughter]

NF: No, it doesn't make any difference. I'm prettier on Fridays.

MM: We all are. It's the day before your day off.

KF: We're all prettier on Fridays.

NF: Oh golly.

KF: Yeah we're probably prettier on Friday too, specially around five o'clock.

NF: Where do you live at?

KF: Well I live across the Bay actually, but I spend about twelve or fifteen days out of a month here. Um, so, I sort of live in both places. So, if I could get my husband to move over on this side of the Bay, I would. But uh, it would be a long drive for him to go to work. So ... right now we're kind of... so, but...

NF: How about you?

MM: I live on the Choptank, right as you go, you know where the Dover Bridge is? On the Choptank? Little ... if you, as you're going across the Choptank at Cambridge like you're going to drive to Easton, and you look up to the right, I live right up there.

NF: Oh, ok.

MM: It's really nice, I was telling Kelly though I would much rather live down here, the commute to work is just, it's an hour to get to St. Michael's from here, or I'd live down here. I love it. I eat, I spend a lot of time at Blackwater because I like to look at birds and grass so... But I live on the river.

NF: Well I like it down here, even though, I mean I was born and raised at Golden Hill, but I still like it here, because I spent most of my life here.

KF: Um-hmmm. Right, right.

NF: And we just come and go as we please. Of course I've got family's close on both sides. Of course I'm closer to my sister-in-law than what I am to the ones over there which I don't, I mean I talk to them, but I, I don't really bother them. Because I just let

them do their thing and I do mine, because at one time I was kind of leery to do anything, and of course and, we had um, and the reason why I don't say anything to them over there because we used to have a well drove, we did, when I was first married, over on that property, and the three homes had the well together. And when it was sold, she bought it, the girl bought it, and which was my nephew's wife, she bought it and then that forced, she was going to build on, t, or she was going to do something else and something else, so that forced the woman up there that's almost eighty years old, that forced her to have to drive a well, and it forced me to have to drive one.

MM: And it's expensive.

NF: So we were about four thousand dollars out on that, so I just let her do her thing, I don't even talk to her unless it's necessary. And of course now I knew I had to have a septic system so I had to have a new septic system put in too. So I just got that, finally got that last year. But like I say, I mean she does her things and they come and go as they please and I don't bother them and they don't bother me.

KF: Right. [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter]

KF: Let me ask you, when did electricity come ... out to this area?

NF: Uh, they had electricity here before I was married, and I was married in forty-eight. So they had it, they had it several years before that. But they had um, they had a pear (?) plant up here by the bridge, by Fishing Creek Bridge, there was a pear plant there, that's the reason why they had electricity down here. And Golden Hill didn't get it until, I guess, about the year that I was married. Maybe the year before, maybe forty-seven. But they already had electricity here earlier than we did.

KF: I wonder if that's because of all the businesses...

MM: Packing companies...

KF: Down here...

MM: I do too. I'll bet you. We'll ask.

KF: **[Something]** they'll remember. Because I know people I've talked to in Virginia, in Accomack County and Northampton County, on the Shore, they didn't get current until fifty-six or something.

NF: Um-hmmm. Well we hadn't, we had, Golden Hill had got it just, just before I got married. I got married Christmas day forty-eight.

KF: Um-hmmm. That's a nice day to get married.

NF: [Laughter] No. It's too much going on Christmas day.

MM: I got married on the twenty-seventh so...

NF: You did.

MM: It's too much.

NF: Yes, because we take a anniversary on Christmas day with all the other things that's going on, Christmas presents and ...

KF: Is there a reason you had to get married on Christmas day?

NF: No. Just my husband says, "We want to get married Christmas day." And that was it. I didn't, of course we just had a small wedding. Back then you only had, I mean there weren't too many of us, of them had church weddings. We just got married at the parsonage and, two years later I had my house built. Twenty-four by twenty-four.
[Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: But I was happy. I mean I wasn't, it was nice, I enjoyed it. And it was better when we built on. Because you had more space, now I don't need that much space but I've got it. I have my upstairs junked.

KF: Um-hmmm. [Laughter]

NF: [Laughter]

MM: That's what upstairses are for.

NF: I, well we had everything up there, we could have made a room up there but um, but he never did like an upstairs. So I got pull-down stairs and over the years, I save too much. And this year I said I'm going to clean it, so I've took a lot of stuff down and I took it over to St. John's Church so they can have an auction over there, because they have an auction every year, the last of August. I mean um, the last of October. September, October. I don't know whether they do it in September or October now, they used to do it in October, I believe they do it in September. And um, I'm just getting stuff down from up there and, just taking it right on over there so I won't have to look at it no more. And of course and I started that and then I take on another little job all the way around, then I'm not up there no more. I got uh, I got to start back up there though. Because part of my material was in one spot and part's in another and Christmas decorations and I went up there last, this year and I couldn't find half of them. So I'm...

KF: Time to empty it out.

NF: Oh, yes!

KF: Leaves you more space for more stuff. [Laughter]

NF: Yeah. If I get this down, I'm not going to put anything else up there. But uh, I decided that I was going to get plastic containers, big plastic things to put my Christmas stuff in, then I'd know what I was looking for. Anything else is going to go in those big boxes, you know cardboard boxes. But the Christmas decorations is going in the....

KF: And you can find them.

NF: And I can find them. I've got one box up there that I haven't found yet, I've got a quilt top up there that I haven't found yet either. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: So maybe this year I'll get it, find that stuff. And of course we get ready to go back to work in March.

KF: Right, right, you guys start up in March?

NF: We'll start the last of March.

KF: All right, that's pretty early.

NF: Well we've done this for the last two years.

KF: And you're getting the crabs from North Carolina.

NF: Um-hmmm, yeah, but we start up the last of March for the last two years, and it will just be five or six of you picking?

KF: How many will pick in March?

NF: It won't be no more than eight, ten, picking the first of March, I mean in March. Until the girls gets up there, then we wind up with about thirty, thirty-two pickers.

KF: Are they the same girls for the last five years?

NF: Most of them are.

KF: Ok. Yeah most of them are the same girls.

NF: Now we have gotten a few new ones in, and we've not had much problem with the girls staying after, you know, breaking their visas. We've had a couple of them do that. But we've not, really had that many, some of the other factories is, if they left real early in the year and didn't go back.

KF: Hmmm. Guess they're taking other jobs.

NF: Well they're not supposed to.

KF: Yeah.

NF: I'll put it that way. They're here illegal. But uh, and usually you can't get a job. Now Delaware, I think they hire people that they shouldn't to begin with.

KF: Are these girls in their twenties, are they mostly in their twenties?

NF: Um, we've had them from eighteen up till, I don't, I think some of them is in their forties.

KF: Ok. So some of them are married and have families, that they leave every summer.

NF: Oh, most of them.

KF: Are they really?

NF: Yes.

KF: And their kids are at home.

NF: Um-hmmm.

KF: Wow.

NF: Yeah we has got some has got ten, eleven children.

KF: And I guess they've got to leave them with....

NF: They leave them with family. Well they can do so much better here, than what they can there. But we've got some of them that really, we have some pretty ones. And then we've got some that's not as pretty. But they all, I mean they all try to talk to you. And it's real, it's really interesting. [Laughter]

KF: [Laughter]

NF: Sometimes you know what to say and sometimes you don't.

KF: Did you ever think you would see crab picking houses that would be, you know, half in English and half in Spanish.

NF: No. [Laughter] No, I never thought I'd ever see it. But it's, it's come to the time that we just don't have them around here to pick, to pick that many crabs.

MM: Yeah.

KF: Well let's get a photograph of those sewing items that you made. And uh, and I'm going to go ahead and turn this off

END TAPE