

Interview Log

Interviewee: Jay Newcomb **Tape #:** OH126

Interviewer: Kelly Feltaulj-& Melissa McLoud **# of Tapes:** 1

Date: 04/14/99 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Phillips Crab House

Topic: Crab Picking

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: 0H126.doc' See fieldnotes FN041499. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information or an aside by the fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription unless otherwise noted."

Beginning of tape starts mid-conversation about what appears to be an off-the-record topic about the price of renting boats for tours. This snippet of conversation is not included here. Phonetic spellings: HGB Program, Three N Seafood, Dobby, Charles Shockley, Mary Revis, Mama Charlie

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Now, Jay, you were saying you've been here for 12 years.

J.N.: Yes, I came here 8/12 of eighty, what, seven? Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Now let me ask you what made you decide to come here.

J.N.: Well I'd always been -- I worked for George C. Parks, Junior and Son, he had seafood hauling. I worked for the city, then I've done it evenings and weekends, hauling crabs to Baltimore. - And I really grew up in Golden Hill, but I've always come down this area, knew everybody, and I just like dealing with the seafood. And then the guy that worked here just did not like it. And he --well his father had done it for years, and he retired, and he passed it onto his son. And he wanted -- well it got on his nerves, especially when you've got crabs and no pickers. And, really, he just couldn't take it. When I came here, we probably had maybe 12 pickers, something like that, 15. And then we got to the point we also -- I started a second shift. So then I would- get some of the other ones that work one plant and come here in the afternoon, I even had a bus coming from Cambridge. And it got to the point they would do it when it was high quota, when they had to make their amount, their quota for base their unemployment. Then when they got after that, when we really had the crabs in the fall, nobody wanted to work. You

know, they made their quota 'cause that's how their unemployment's based on those three months when they really bust their butts to get their figures up. Makes their big check in the winter. Then when it comes to third and fourth quarter,, which we have plenty crabs, fat crabs, nobody wanted to work.

And like I say, then the other plants were fussing because said I was taking their workers at night, they were all tired when they went to work the next day, so they would give me hell because their workers come to work tired the next day. So but I thought, you know -- back to work when they wanted. And then it got down to one day I come here and I had probably about 200 bushels of crabs, and I had three pickers. And I just couldn't take it. I mean the restaurants, we needed the crab meat, and had the crabs, the crabbers couldn't sell their crabs, and I just, that's not the way to do business. So I took the step of checking into the migrant labor through the HGB program, non-agricultural workers, and filled out the paperwork and got approved. And I caught a' lot of flack. I still have some people give me a lot of flack over it. But I think right now, nobody has the workers, and they've had a job to sell crabs just this spring. So if we had the workers, you know, we had no way to -- according to the media, everybody said no crabs, no crabs, so we done got the workers early., And then come to find, out, we've had great many crabs, which that's going to drop off. Now they're going to catch what. was there.

But then it got to the point a lot of the other businesses around here said they would close up before they got the migrant workers, and they've all got 'em now. It's over 200 here on the island now.

K.F.: So what year was it that you first --

J.N.: Ninety -- I was trying to. think this morning, it's '90 or '91. I can't remember which it is.

K.F.: And how did you hear about the HGB Program?

J.N.: I don't even remember how it come out. Oh, we started in Washington. We went to the Flagship restaurant in Washington, talking about all the unemployment in Washington. We were willing, went up there had a -- run ads, done the interview process, we interviewed probably 100 people, and one show up, actually come down here. So and then check with the government, any other way to try to-find some. Guy told me about this program. It's through your unemployment office, and it goes from there onto Department of Labor, from Department of Labor onto Immigration. And we usually recruited, actually recruits the workers for us.. But now, I've had the workers so many now, I mean they call and they're ready to come.

And they've gotten their friends or sisters and. all that, so I don't know. why we really need a recruiter any more, but we still do... The girls know all the ropes to it now, what to do. But all legal, I mean we pay unemployment, federal taxes, state taxes, like everybody else. There's no -- a lot of people feel as though it's advantage for us getting 'em 'cause, you, know, you're doing all the bad stuff. You're taking advantage of the workers. And there is -- some has happened. There has been some abuse case. I think they got two going on in Virginia right now., . They. worked 'em overtime and didn't pay 'em and all that. But we do not.. We have been audited. I mean the wage and hour auditors, we were okay. Couple of 'em had little bit of problem. The way the law used to be, piece work, you could work many hours you want, you worked on piecework. But it doesn't work that way now. You work 40 hours at one pay scale. You can still work,

but then you got to kick. into overtime. So this \$2 a pound, automatically you're going to \$3 a pound anything over 40 hours. And that's not the way it used to be. So it really caught us up with a couple things.

I know one of `em, they pay their own rent. They cannot pay rent if it puts `em below minimum wage. But you can for a domestic worker. So that's, that's one of those fine laws. I mean a U.S. worker, if they only make, what's it, 5.15 an hour times 40 hours, 200 and some dollars, they can still pay rent. But a migrant worker come in here, if only makes that, don't have to pay rent. And so it's one of those laws that. don't sound right, but they caught a couple of the plants on that. I mean nobody done it intentionally, but they had to reimburse some of their rent back to `em. So we rephrased it now that they pay rent per season so that offsets it instead of per week or whatever. `Cause one week you make a lot of overtime, you know, so we just left it as per season for the rent.

K.F.: How much is the rent?

J.N.: It- based roughly around \$25 a week for the rent. That includes everything, their beds, their linens, their electric, their. -- well some have air condition, we haul `em to Cambridge, we have to take `em to the doctor sometimes. I mean we do everything for `em which is not technically part of it to be, we're not obligated, but we do do it.

K.F.: And that's all part of this?

J.N.: Right. Technically, we do not have to find housing for `em. The law --

K.F.: Oh; really?

J.N.: We do not have to, no. They are obligated for their own houses - they have the right to go live somewhere else if they want. But we try to find something for `em. It's a little bit hard to come down if we do not.

K.F.: Okay. I didn't know that. -Do you all provide all the housing; does Phillips own all the houses?

IM: No. ~ We have one upstairs. We have apartments upstairs for 12.

K.F.: Twelve?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: So the other women find their own --

J.N.: We have another house. We try to find somebody that will rent a house to `em. We're really not in connection with it. You know, the girls hand me the money, and I had it to her. It don't even go through us. Just hand it to `em. But, technically, we're not obligated. But we -- it works out good for the girls. I mean especially when you first come here, and nobody knew `em, you know, where are they going to go find a house? You know.

K.F.: Tell us about that first summer.

J.N.: ' It was a nightmare that first summer. We had the old factory. We first got the girls, they didn't know none how to pick. ' And they're just like any other workers. They come from -- we go now -- we got these workers come just over the border.. So they were almost half-way Americanized. They got here, they knew everything. A lot of `em could speak English. They just expected so much. I guess they had heard a dream of, you know, coming to the United States. They weren't really appreciative as what these other girls are. We could not find housing. The girls got here, we could not find housing. That's what made me really try to find -- that's why we pushed to get the dormitory upstairs.. We had to put `em in a hotel in Cambridge. And I was in town 4:00 in the

morning, picking `em up, bringing `em in here to work at five. Take `em back. We had to -- had to eat their meals out because, you know, couldn't cook at-a hotel, just put. `em back in a hotel. It was new workers, this nice little quiet town,; bringing all this foreign labor in here, didn't know how to pick. Watermen were fussing, you know, it was just a nightmare.

K.F.: What were the watermen fussing about?

J.N.: 'Just a change. These people down here just don't want to change. Now I think they realize -- matter of fact, some of the guys fishing have tried to get `em to put on the boat to help 'cause they can't get nobody to help work: on the boats with `em. So nobody wanted to make that change. That was the bottom line. And like I say, there's like three over here do the work, they said they'd close up first. They made that statement, Said I'll put a lock_ on the damn door first. They all got 'em.

K.F.: Within two or three years?

J.N.: I done it the first year.. Let's see, I think it was the second or third year Charles H. Parks was the next one got on board. Then the next year, it was like three of `em jumped in. And then the next [year. it](#) was Ronnie.. Matter of, fact, I had. a crabber that crabbed for me at the time. And he come in here and sat down and he got upset. ' Him and -his wife both were very upset that I was bringing these workers here.- And he was catching. I mean one day he had 200 bushel of crabs. Hard to sell at that time. I mean well you could sell it, but you had to get it picked. And within two years, he got off the water and leased another picking house, and brought Mexicans the first year as soon as he got into the picking business: So that's what, that kind of stuffs hard to take. Everybody says they won't do something. You never should say you're: not going to do it. And now they brag on `em. I don't know what we'd .do without 'em-and all this, that and the other. And Ronnie Jones, you know, he would close up first. And Ronnie Jones is 100 percent. Mexican. He has no American left, Only. his wife and daughter. Even the guys working' in the plant, he has all Mexicans. No Americans at all period.

M.M.: And you grew up here, and everyone in town knows you. What [was. it](#) like those first couple years? Did people not speak to you? Did they --

J.N.: A lot of `em didn't, yeah.

M.M.: Didn't that first year?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative)

M.M.: What did you do? Did you try to --

J.N.: It don't bother me.

M.M.: No, you just didn't --

J.N.: Business is business, friends is friends, and business is business.. And II just knew it was a challenge we had to try.. I mean what you gonna do? I-mean when you walked in and a lot of pickers I had, you know; they wouldn't work. They're the ones that were bitching and complaining about bringing.the workers here, and they would sit home and not work.

K.F.... Did they come back to work after a while?

J.N.: Some of `em d did, ,and some of `em went.somewheres else They just like to keep jumping around a lot of times_too, workers. They think it's better on the other side of the fence. Then you go and want to come back. But I don't, myself, I don't go out and beg . `em to come out. A lot of people try to .find -all the workers,,you know, local workers. I

mean I'm not turning nobody down. Don't get me wrong. But I don't go out, 'cause I mean I've been through all that. You know, -when you really need 'em, they're not dependable.

M.M.: Tell us what you' were doing for the five years before you decided --

J.N.: Uh=huh (Affirmative).

M.M.: Tell us a little about the efforts that you had to that you made to get pickers here before you decided that the Mexican workers were the answer. -

J.N.: Well, I mean, it was only so many -- especially down here, we're a limited area, there's only so many pickers to go around. And if you were talking to someone at church or the firehouse; some other. plant says well he's. trying to get my picker. You know, when you only got so many to go around, and that's all you had resources of You only got 100 workers, and you got divided up six ways. And another major thing was they changed the law too that went to the mini picking houses.: And that hurt this plant more than anywhere. Because Palace, -and Three N's, there was another one opened up, And most of -- most of the workers come from this plant. So when you only got 20 and you got three more plants open up, then they took 'em away. And see most of them were family. There's like Three N Seafood. It was his --let's. see, ^{when} he first opened up, was his mother, his aunt, his wife, and two more of his cousins worked here, when he opened up. Naturally, they're all going to go there. So that took that, many away from here one crack.

And I've had a problem with the many plants ever since they started-because all it was was a stepping stone for 'em to get into the business. Once they -got started and make picking the crabs; then they grew, and they grew, aid they're up to a full-grown plant. I mean like Ronnie Jones, when the plant first started -- I mean his wife's my cousin too. I'm not talking about him 'cause I'm mad with him. Don-'t take me that wrong. I give him hell all the.time; he gives me hell, but he -- and I told him same thing. You know, when he opened up, it was not right: And he started with- it had to be less than five pickers, and they had' to be all family. They did not have to have a bathroom.: They could go'in their house and use the bathroom. Itt was all family, They could -move, they could put a bathroom in, and now-Ronnie has 28 workers, and they're all foreign labor.

K.F. - And that's considered main picking, jobs or --

J.N.: Once they let him --he's expanded two or three times, and. now he put. a bathroom in, and that was the only change, you know. It was just like they'd get their foot in the door. And one of the biggest problems we had years ago was they were picking all the undersized crabs 'cause they were all :family, you know. They caught their own,, they're virtually all watermen: They caught their own crabs,.they picked -the smaller crabs.

K.F.: Now did that replace women .sort of picking their husbands' crabs in the back yard?

J.N.: Somewhat, yes. That's why the: health department,.see they were going to go along with it because it would take some from picking in the back yard. Black market crab meat.

K.F.: Well you. said the first year it was fairly difficult because the women didn't know, how to pick the crabs. - How did-you teach them?

J.N.: I'm trying to think. My cousin wasn't here the first year. We just took time and -- I've never seen.a group that catches on so fast.

K.F.: Really?

J.N.: We have one little girl, Dobby, she's not here no more. But' she was here and she just, little tiny hands, she couldn't do it. She might -- would try and try, and just like one day she changed. And she just..took-off. But even the Americans will tell you they've just never seen anybody pick it up so fast. Rosetta, she's been picking crabs, I don't know 40 years, 50 I don't know, she's 75: And when she was here, the girls were learning, and she would watch `em, and she was beating `em bad. Then it got to the point, they were gaining on her: Then next year they'd come back, they'd caught her. And then-the next year they passed her. And then she said -to hell with the bitches. She can't get with `em no more. But she was getting older,, and they Were learning more. But she'll tell you. She said to hell with the bitches, I can't keep up. with `em. And they will work. And that's the only thing. You can depend on `em when they're here. I mean if you know -- I know when I. open up, I'm going to have, if I've got 12, I'm going to have 12 workers five days a week you're going to have `em here. I mean they're going to be very, very sick if they don't work.

K.F.: And how many workers do you usually have?

J.N.: Twenty-two,. And that's something -- I was the first one to get `em, and I got the least of anybody. Everybody else gets more than I do. -So. And I done-it just to replace our workforce, to. keep us at the level we were. And-these' other guys were getting more and more. And, you know, putting more meat on the market. Then they fuss about the price .and all that. You know, if you glut the market, it don't help nobody. But they just keep wanting to get bigger.

K.F.: Well one of the issues we've ~been talking with people with foreign traffic coming in. And what has been their (Inaudible):

J.N.: I can't comment on that one. Because we're. into that, Phillips is. And they won't even invite me to the meetings they're having. It's. gotten that bad. I got my. own opinion, but I'm on both sides of the fence. Phillips does have plants in Thailand, Philippines, and Asia. And one of my, I will make one statement. I still feel as though, we keep raising the picking and picking price. up, we pay more for crabs than anybody else, we pay more for picking, and we're putting our own self out of business. There are -plants who don't want to realize that. They thinks it's the foreign crab meat is coming here selling it cheap. But; you know, you. keep putting your prices-up, people 'is going to look to other-sources, and that's part of the thing-that's happened. Excuse me just a second..

(Off the record briefly.)

J.N.: Yeah, I love: figures and all that stuff, and try to help people. If I can help people, it's fine. I: mean I've. always been in Jaycees, outdoor show, youth soccer league, everything trying to help, people. So that's one more chance to' help `cause it's not for the money in it, no. But it's fun. Plus we do have stuff like this. It's a little, a little funny. We had one stupid motion last night about filling out a grant for some more deputies. And I made a motion to go ahead and apply for three, you know, then you can hire up to three. That got the people tied up. `Cause then they made a motion put up for five.- And it tied up again. We saidino, we're not going to go five. And my point is not against five, but never apply for more than you know we're not going to. hire. You know we're not [hiring. no](#) more than three. So why you want to tell the government give- us approval for five? And what's that Sheriff going to say if he gets approved for, five and-you only hire

three? He's, going to be upset.. So apply for what you're going to actually hire. And I'll stand on my ground, that's it. So if they get mad -- but I can come out, that don't bother me. I mean go in there this business, we come out. I'm not mad with him. Everybody's got a right to vote.

M.M.: Is it about 30 percent of your time you spend doing this, or a little more? .

J.N.: It's a little bit right more. Kind of budget time really, really straight with budgets.. But our budget book's about that thick. And we got to cut back 5 million out of it.

M.M.: Oh, you do.

J.N.: Everybody requests for everything, you know.

M.M.: And you've got two weeks to cut that 5 million?

J.N.: Well it goes 'til June 1st.

M.M.: June 1st?

J.N.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). And we've got to cut it back 'cause we don't have no revenue coming in, and you can't spend more than you got coming in. And like the Sheriff, he asked for eight new deputies. I mean, excuse me, five new deputies, five new cars, and then \$100,000 worth of overtime. So you know if you're going to hire new deputies and more cars, you don't need the 100,000 overtime. If he's [trying to](#) help, I can see one or the other, but not all three. So they do that. And he said -last night he don't fudge his budget. Yeah, right --take two, it don't make no difference. I tell him two, it don't make no difference. I told him --send it right back to him. But anyway, I enjoy it so far. Everybody's been very good, and nobody's called and cussed me out at all yet. Tommy, he don't like talking about voting. And last night was tied up, he wouldn't vote. He said what do we do now? I said Tom, you got to vote.. It's tied up, it was two to two that time. I said you got to vote. And he didn't want to vote. I said well that's your job. He only votes in a tie 'cause he's chairman. Whatever. I get, on him. Anyway, so we're back to -- where did we leave off at?

K.F.: Foreign crab meat.

J.N.: Oh, the foreign crab meat. And like I say, I still think we're putting ourself out of business and the quality. Not because of Phillips, but the quality is so superb. Over there, they get paid by the day, and they don't care about speed. Now here it's paid per pound, so they do a better quality, there's very little if any shell, no shell. And it's clean and it's a very good product. And they are trying to put a tariff on it, yes. They're trying to fight it. And technically why I don't want to comment because they got a meeting tonight. I'm not even invited, they won't even tell me about it. I know about it, but I don't get to go. If I didn't have something else, I'd go anyway. They can't stop, me. I'm a member of the Dorchester County Packers Association, they can't keep me out. if they're having a meeting. But I'm not going to. I got something else to do.

K.F.: So it seems that Phillips has always been a little progressive --

J.N.: Right.

K.F.: --and aggressive about their marketing.

J.N.: Right. Everything. I mean we're the first ones that got into foreign labor. You know, so we try to do things upright. We're: not trying to bring nothing in here illegal. We're trying to do it right. It's a beautiful quality. Everybody will tell you the quality of . meat. And that has been a declining, domestic crab meat, you know, year after year. And if we didn't have the foreign crab meat, that would be a lot -- I mean even Phillips is

probably, four years ago, had put a surcharge on all their menus for crab meat because it was so high, you know. There's just not enough crab meat to go around. And Phillips is not just concentrating in this area. I mean we've got sales people down in California, we got 'em in Chicago, we got 'em in Houston, Texas. So I mean we're spreading it all over. It's not like we're trying to dump it all here and hurt Maryland, we're not. And you see that plant. I mean we will never make enough money back here to pay for this plant. I mean Phillips is always trying to do things up and up. And it's just another thing that we're trying to do right.

M.M.: That doesn't --

J.N.: Right exactly what --

M.M.: Did they tear that down? They tore it down.

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). In two stages, yes. We tore the back off, built the back.

M.M.: You oversaw the building of that --

J.N.: Yes, the contractor, yes.

M.M.: Interesting.

J.N.: Then we tore the front half. We pick crabs in November, and we start it back up in April. We tore it all down, or the front half. I mean from that wall, that wall was in a new phase. The back was done in one year. Then we topped there, and we cut the roof loose and prop it back up. Then we tore all this down, haul it out and bring it up and dove piling all underneath, poured big wide footers, done it all within one year, from November to April, we opened back up. .

M.M.: I interrupted you. You were saying that Phillips tried to do it right, tried to do --

J.N.: Right. I mean we've got the best' -- not 'cause of -- but the best plant in the State of Maryland. It's clean and neat and everything, you know.

M.M.: Has that always been part of the company ethic, do you think?

J.N.: Yes. Always try to do it. Always, has been, yes. Quality and -- it's always been -- the rest of them, but Phillips has always been that way. It's always -- wants to do it right. Up and up. Yeah: Even when it comes to IRS, you know. I mean if he gets audited, you know, it's so much, he does everything he does, does right. Got the accountants; and advertising; promotion, everything's right.

K.F.: Do you know the history of the company? Can you talk to us a little bit about how it got started? Or has anybody -- if you don't know, has anybody done a company history, or are there people that --

J.N.: We probably have some in the corporation. You know, it's on our menu and different things, how the Phillips went about and started. 'Cause they left herein '56, Mr. And Mrs. Phillips. His father had the picking house. And they mostly was shucking oysters years ago.

K.F.: Okay. So from 1917 to '56 they mostly did oysters?

J.N.: Well actually -- he was big in oysters back then. As a matter of fact, the plant was out here in the water. It was out on a pier. And that '33 tide took it away. And then Mr. -- Mr. Phillips' father, Mr. Ali Augustus come to this plant, was an old plant here, and bought this one and started running this one after, what, '33 or '34. And then him and his father was here. And I don't know just what year his father died, but Mr. Phillips, I call -- he went to Ocean City with a pickup and started selling crabs.

K.F.: In the 50's?

J.N.: `56, Uh-huh (Affirmative).
K.F.: In a pickup?
J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Just sell them in the back of a pickup,
K.F.: And were they steamed whole crabs then?
J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, yeah. And he was pretty good. He'd take the crabs and steam and add seasoning and all. He took a fan and blow it out in the street so people could smell it going by so they could really smell that seasoning. You know how that attracts somebody when they smell that seasoning cooking.'
K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Did you know him then?
J.N.: No.
K.F.: He's older than you are.
J.N.: He's a lot older, yeah. I was born in the 60's, so Mr. Phillips is `78. Still real active in the company.
K.F.: And do you know what happened after he had the big success selling crabs in Ocean City?
J.N.: He just kept on and on, and that's when he had the guy Charles Shockley come in and run this plant 'cause he had to pretty well stay in Ocean City to move on. Charles Shockley run this plant here.
K.F.:
And is that the man who quit and J.N.: - Yes. No, it was his son. He lives across the road, Mr. Charles' son. He was here, I don't know, 30, 40 years, something. Then he gave it to his son. And then his son gave it up.
K.F.: And his son Charles too?
J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).- He's Charles E., his son's Charles A. I think Charles Everett and Charles Anthony, but it's Charles E and Charles A.
K.F.: What is the relationship of this plant to the other plant?. Are there -- on the truck outside, there --
J.N.: They're all the restaurants on the truck.
K.F.: Those are restaurants.
J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).,
K.F.: This is the only plant?
J.N.: We have another plant in Deale's Island. . Out in Deale's Island called Island Seafood. They've picked crabs there for years and years. And then the guy that run that one had lung cancer and died, and now we have:- all they're doing now is soft crabs in that plant.
K.F.: Okay.
J.N.: They haven't picked --they picked up until probably the last three years. They've just been doing soft crabs. They always did soft crabs and picking. Now it's strictly just soft crabs.
K.F.: Okay. So there are only two places that --
J.N.: In the United States.
K.F.: In the United States.
J.N.: Right;.
K.F.: Where are the other -- the other places are in the Philippines. and --
J.N.: Philippines, and Indonesia, and Thailand, Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And Thailand. No other ones are in the United States.

J.N.: No. And we're into Phillips Crab Soup, we're into seasoning, we're into mustard and tarter sauce, crab cakes, commercial crab cakes.

K.F.: Where are those at?

J.N.: . At a commissary in Baltimore.. .

K.F.: If we were trying to talk to someone who had a sense of the- history of the company,, would that be you, or are there. other people who --

J.N.: I'm pretty sure Mr. Phillips -- maybe he could tell you..

M.M.: Okay.

J.N.: He'd be glad to talk to you.

M.M.: I've seen these. I tried these. I just remember. I used-to buy these-in --

J.N.: Giant?

M.M.: Yeah.

J.N.: Giant sells them a lot,

M.M.: Yeah, when I lived in Alexandria, Virginia.

J.N.: So-so?

M.M.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). ' Better than anything 'else except --

K.F.: If you can get real homemade ones.

J.N.: I was going to say, 'cause they're frozen. They're not going to be as good because naturally they're frozen:' But we get a lot of people come on the bus tour, get some of those.

M.M.: Yeah, this keeps you going until you can get out here and get the real thing.

K.F.: Yeah. Now where do you all process clams?

J.N.: Now'the clam chowder is usually done out of old -} in Easton or one over in Delaware does their -- it's their recipe, Philips' .recipe.

K.F.: . Okay. Do you know what percentage of the business is picked crab- versus all these other products?

J.N.: Only --

K. F.: Tiny little bit?

J.N.: Picking crab you don't see it as a big item now. I mean we have a lot of -- process there. But in Baltimore now like the soup we do in the gallons, like, all the salad bars for Giants and all that, we make it -- they ntake it ourself at 'the commissary, put it in gallons' and freeze it, then they use it with alll these' soups -- or salad bars. ' They make the crab cakes there. We have our own canned seasoning.. , 'There's -- I knew I had one sitting there somewhere.. Our own tarter sauce, cocktail sauce.

M.M.: Where is this made, in Baltimore?

J.N.: Ithink Old Spice or someone makes it for 'em, -but it's our recipe, yes.

M.M.: And it's packed in Ocean City?

J.N.: No, it's packed in -- what's it on there?

M.M.: It says packed in -- packed for in Ocean City..

J.N.: Packed for, see, not by.

K. F.: Got it.

J.N.: And if you notice the crab meat cans, a lot of people's cans, they got in there distributed. 'They don't say packed or processed by.

K.F.: Okay, it's different. .

J.N.: ; Yes.. See technically, I can take my crab meat.cup, as long-as' I have a North Carolina number or a Philippine number, I can take my same. cup. Well I shouldn't say Philippine, but anywhere United States, North Carolina. If I put their picking number on my cup, and I put distributed by Phillips, it's still legal. It could be, picked in. North Carolina but put in an A.E. Phillips-' cup. But it's got: to have the North.Carolina number, or whatever plant it would be onto it. And the same with that. I mean, you. know, back over - Old Spice,, or J. O. or something, they make that for, us, but it's packed with our specs--our recipe.

K.F.: So all of the food parts you guys make,, are those Phillips', family, recipes? ,

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Everything is Ms: Phillips. Yup. They're doing a whole new process in Baltimore now.. They're, getting ready to do a. renovation. And .they're doing a whole new cookbook, aa whole new-thing on -, ,they're going to have some Eastern Shore food up there. Green lima beans; and **dumplings, and they were even talking, about putting muskrat, on the menu, everything up there** in Baltimore.

M.M.: Is there another generation of kids that are taking over from the --

J.N.,: Steve, Steve Phillips technically is the president.

M.M.: And he's in his 40's, 50's?

J.N.: Steve is low 50's.

M.M.: Okay, all right., So somebody is taking it over.

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). He technically is president. Mr. Phillips is chairman of the board..

M.M.: And he's-responsible -

J.N.: What has really happened, Mr.:Phi llips has still got, the say of the three: in Ocean City and Florida. Now Baltimore, Washington, all these food products and the Asian plants, foreign plants, is all; for Steve,..

M.M.: And this plant -

J.N.: That's Mr. Phillips. here. This is strictly. his. This was his father, and. this is his. ; He won't, he don't even have Shirley's name on this one. This is his. `Cause he gets a salary, and I send it to him, he says don't tell Shirley I got this. That's his money. .

(Laughter)

M.M.: I [love.it](#). Does he come to visit oncen in. a while?

J.N.: Oh,.yes. He's very -

M.M.: He does? .

J.N.,: Yes,, he's a, remarkable ,guy, yes. Very good to work for. Yup. He'd, [go.to](#) restaurants, sit down and eat, and ask the waitress all, kind of questions, you know, pick at `em. `Cause a lot of people don't know `em, you know, got so many waitress. Where did. the crabs come from, or where, do you buy your crab meat from and all that kind of stuff.. So he gives all kind of answers.

M.M.: What., is Phillips known for, besides the quality ofthe crab meat?...

J.N.: Everybody that's -- as far as a decent employer, everybody,really,brags is good_ to their employees.

M.M.: Okay, okay.

J.N.: A very good employer for the State of Maryland,, you know, between all the restaurants for Baltimore and. Ocean City. And they've always -- even like Ocean City, they're one of the first ones that done the housing for the summertime kids, who come

have a place to actually be able to, live and stay. You know, 'cause they, can't afford to buy a place down there: So dormitory housing.

M.M.: Okay.

J.N.: And that's why we done it here..

K.F.: ' You guys had dormitory housing *for your summer* employees' at the restaurant before you even'--'

J.N.: Yes: Right,' they've done that ever since in the 60's or 70's whatever. And then he just built onto the seafood house, the restaurant up at Fenwick. And he's also done the same thing here, put housing upstairs: He had a job to get permits for it because of fire Marshall and' everything else.' But he wanted to do it to try to, you know, have something for people to stay. 'It's so expensive to live in Ocean City. So he's done everything to try to get the workers, you know. And there's a shortage of work force right now. I mean it costs so much for the kids to go to Ocean City, they stay in their home town and work now. So many job opportunities here right now. ' So unless they just want to go and party out for a summer, which they all need to get it out of their system.

K.F.: So probably Ocean City was really the beginning of Phillips branching out and --

J.N.: Yes.

K.F.: And when did that sort of take off?

J.N.: Hold that a minute. You want *to* stop it?' I'll call Ocean City.

(Off the record briefly.)

J.N. : -- Washington today. I don't know how he does it between his social life and all the businesses. He still keeps up on everything.. The only thing I was glad he did, probably about probably five years ago, he finally got a limousine and a chauffeur.

K.F.: He did?

J.N.: Yeah. I mean just to the point his mind was not always paying attention to driving. At least now he can rest or sleep, come in and let the chauffeur drive.

K.F.: Well Jim, I was going to ask you whether any of your family members are in the seafood business.'

J.N.: None at all.

K.F.: None?

J.N.: None. No. My father, he worked as a longshoreman and a farmer. And my mother, well she raised four of us kids, four boys, and the school bus, she drove a school bus for like 35 years. And that's it. No, I got no brothers, uncles -- I have maybe another uncle truck driver, another one hauled crabs a little bit for I.F. Cannon years ago. But, no. As far as full-blown watermen; none at all.

K.F.: And do they -- the same way?

J.N.: ' Pretty well. They're **all self-employed**. They can land wherever they want pretty well, yeah. They jump around too. They think somebody's treating them better or doing better, but they jump all around. Yeah, I had one a few years ago crab for Billy. Then he got upset with Billy,' he come here. Then he said he wanted to go back to Billy, you know. It don't bother me. I guess some people it does, they take it personally. Free world. Go where you want, do what you want.

K.F.: Well how did you guys fare last year with the bad crab season here in Maryland?

J.N.: ' At the end, we done better than we anticipated. I mean if it weren't for the late many crabs in October; we would've really had a rough year.' A lot of plants in here, they

lost~money. We didn't make much either, but we did get our head above water: I mean . we did not lose money. A lot of the plants around here, you know, i don't know if they're telling us the truth or not, but anyway, they said they lost money. Which you have to haul crabs in, pay freight; pay more; you know, it getss into the pocket book: You know, more lost hauling `em, and the. higher price..

M.M.: Where did your crabs come-from last summer?

J.N.: Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana, ' See that's something else. That's why I'm saying like you' can't understand. We pay . more for,crabs. North Carolina pays less for ` crabs. ' They pay \$2-for picking: We're paying some they were paying \$1;75 and \$1.65, which they have increased theirs now. They pay less for `crabs. We got to =~ we pay more for -crabs, then we have to haul `em up here and we pay more for picking. And they pick the meat and send me to the Baltimore market, and we have to compete against it, you know. And it's something else, everybody's still -- some people still holler for Maryland crab meat, but like one customer in Baltimore says what's the difference- any more. You haul crabs in out of North Carolina, out of Louisiana, wherever, you have Mexicans, North Carolina has Mexicans same as you do. So it's the same style worker. You know, why are you hollering that Maryland crab meat is better? The regulations are pretty well the same, steam under pressure and all that. So he's got a legitimate argument. -And' Maryland meat is usually \$1 a pound higher. And that don't sound like much if you're going to go buy a pound or two. But somebody that's using 500, 1,000 pound a week, ' adds up.

K.F.: Do you guys have a regular supplier in North Carolina that. you always deal with?

J.N.: Two or three. I have J.W. Halgood out of Virginia, and Captain Neals, and a man out of North Carolina we deal with. And a couple of them down in Louisiana we crab from. Probably have to get them again this year: They say this is a trend. I don't know' when it's going- to end though, about, you know, ' crabs. They say it's going to get better. I don't know when. You would enjoy talking to Mr.: Phillips, I know' you would. 'He could give you some good answers

K.F.: Do you have a phone number for him?

J.N.: 1-800-549-2722. And if you don't talk to him, ask to talk to -- he gets so many messages, talk to Paul McKenneth, he is really his right-hand man, and tell him that you were here and you would like to set up an appointment with him, and what it's about. And I told him -- tell him to call me, I'll tell him also. But he's in Florida, back and forth, and he's got eight grandchildren too. And all of them in private school, in college, a couple are back in the business. That's something else he done, when he started, he took all his like cigarette shirts and hat, and his advertising things, and cigarette machines in an account and that's what he's used for the grandchildren's education. Just set that aside, that was for their -- they had paid for all the grandchildren's education from 'private school on into college.

M. M.: Where does the crab meat that you all. pick go?

J.N.: Most of it's Ocean City. Then the rest goes into Baltimore. Yeah, Ocean City, then some into Baltimore.

M.M.: Okay, to the restaurants.

J.N.: Uh-huh. (Affirmative).

K.F.: Where do you see the business going in the next couple of years?

J.N.: Don't look too good: Far as the supply of crabs, that's our major concern. -And before-we had plenty of crabs, no workers: Now we can get workers and we don't have the product. Like I say these workers they come here, their country, I mean. if you see some of the pictures, they hate to show to us, and hear some of the things they go through, I mean that's a shame. That's why they're so hard working group. They send so much money home in Western Union. If the girls would get money here, take it in town, send it Western Union, \$42 or something: to send \$300. Then when it goes to Mexico, the family has to pay to get it back, and then they rip 'em off on peso. Everything in Mexico. is a rip-off or a bribe: It's terrible. - I mean if they send \$300, they're probably technically - lucky to get 200. And when you're down and out, it hurts that way.: 'So now we've got a guy that's been very good. He charges 5 percent whatever you send, period, to do it. The bank here in Cambridge, and then it goes there, and then he calls: the family, they go there and pick it up.

K.F.: Oh, that's great. So you don't have to go through Western Union at all.

J.N.: Right..

K.F.: Did you do that for them?

J.N.: Yeah, well they went to -- excuse me.

(Off the record briefly.),

M.M.: This is good, thank you.,

J.N.: Is it?

M.M.: Yeah. It's really interesting.

J.N.: That's on the back of our menus in the restaurants.. Everybody gets to read it.

M.M.: It's a good idea. I was going to ask you, in these restaurants, do they talk about the history -- it's right, on the menu.

J.N.: Uh-huh (**Affirmative**):; Right on the menu.

K.F.: You were talking about some of the traditions of the Mexican people. Are any of them making any of the embroidery and 'stunt.

J.N.: Oh, yes. They all crochet and sweaters and things, yes:

M.M.: And at -- we saw -- what did we see, flowers? Paper flowers for sale?

J.N.: Yes.

M.M.; Do they make:-- .

J.N.: Well they have them, when they have =;they have it usually in June.

KY.: June:° ..

J.N.: Hooper's Island. What is it called?

K.F.: It was essentially a religious celebration.-.

J.N.: They made all the flower decorations,, and the paper crochet to connect it...

K.F.: Okay. So they don't sell them. They just make them for the custom:

J.N.: Uh-huh (**Affirmative**).. They love flowers. Artificial flowers and all, in the rooms and all, they love flowers.

M.M.: I've been to -- Juarez is where, right across the border?

J.N.: - Uh-huh:(**A#firmative**):.

M.M.: I grew up out there in New Mexico.

J.N.: Okay.

M.M.: And the markets are full of paper flowers. The pottery's all got flowers all over it.

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, they're, great, for. flowers:. Like f.sayjjherooms, housing, upstairs, you know, artificial flowers, baskets on the wall or vases, and all; they love flowers. And they're walking up the road, they're always picking some kind of flowers or something bringing back. They love flowers., ;May -- she's the one's been with us several years. She's a real good squi ,.She'd give you, the.,sbirt 4Dffher. back., .I'll never forget when it was pouring down raining, she was out here trying to give somebody some: directions where some other people live. She stood in the rain just talking to `em just as unconcerned. And it was pouring, she was getting soaking wet, Q .she w#4 Just so generous to everybody.

K.F.: Have you had the same pickers for 12 years?

JX: No. Probably some of the most,;we,'ye,had,prob#bly.bepn..here about sevenYears,. eight years.. SQmeqf them have been here thataong,, ,

K.F.: And are they, all **coming** from the, same.,place in,Mexic ,

J.N.: No, all over, , ,

K.F.: All over.

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Is it central Mexico?

J.N.: Pretty well all over really, different p, ▽ ▽ ,

K.F.: Really?

J.N.: Uh-huh we did 7, never **really** get., none. right from. the town.

Usually the ones in outlying areas are more less Americanized is what I say., And truthfully, I don't. know *how they cope with*, I mean when they **come** here, they have all the luxuries we have, to p, back. home... 1,,m W, if they,yp,;1eveT. had, it in;heiT life *not*, to: know it... But J just d n't knpw_hqwp4py,;ppryyQt when they,go back, home.. I mew they have running water, hot water, air conditioning, a good bed, yo!Aknow,everything.: :I mean there they have to walk two hours to a telephone. You know.. And, the **AS** they= I mean some of them~wer,e almost **sor-im** They just; haypenpughMoppyaqz get through to get them food. No jobs, can *ot* find jobs And eveytbing bribes then, rips them off,, you know. Everything costs somuch.

K. F: What **do** they eat when 7,

JNZ And thoy,!e4y* their, fmm!ies, and comp.: here, and. 01- that., ,

K.F.: Do they have kitchen? ,

K.F.: Most pfthehouqes,h4yekitqhpi 14tftheycoqkin?

Yeah... ,gh~yesfk, Mine usually OO got -- like. might have that they take ,charge cq,qkpi\$, , Like one 44y, this ;one .will cook, ,anotpor, one, will clean; Sool and they got a schedule up, they h it alt, so

get ingredients: for the food? Is there a groppry, \$store-in,

Cambridge that has

J. N.: Food Lion has a. lot, Food City, and there's a,guy, comes, down.an, ; sells. ,.It's a truck. out of Delaware

K.F.: He does?

J.N.: And he has. all,, even their juices and all.. YPa#L. ,

K.F.: And he comes for --

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Tortillas, they buy them by the case.

K.F.: You know exactly where he's coming from

J.N.: He comes in a big truck. And he sells a lot of stuff here now. Do you speak Spanish?"

M.M.: No, I wish I did. I wish I learned.

J.N.: You tell me. I thought maybe you spoke Spanish.

M.M.: No, no.

J.N.: You speak Spanish?

K.F.: I speak a little.

J.N.: Pocito, huh?

K.F.: I understand more than I can actually say back.

J.N.: That's my problem. Yeah. And I thought about trying to take a Spanish class. But I mean I've got kids up here that's taking it for years up here in high school, and they can't understand any more than I can, so that's what discouraged me.

K.F.: But you know what, you have the advantage of hearing them all --

J.N.: Talk with them all, right.

K.F.: Which is actually --

J.N.: Yeah, learn it and communicate with them. Right.

K.F.: Have you gotten better with the Spanish over the years?

J.N.: Yeah. But in the winter time see when you're not speaking it

K.F.: It goes away.

J.N.: Yeah. Well, it'll come back, almost like a lot of words, and so many words that are very similar. If you really pay attention, the words are so close to ours.

M.M.: '01-huh (Affirmative). That first year when they came, was there "do any of them speak any English at all?"

J.N.: Huh-uh (negative).

M.M.: What did you do? Did you have a little book of Spanish to translate?

J.N.: No. No, I had Latin in school. When I was in school, they gave us Latin.

M.M.: That didn't help much.

J.N.: Yeah, that was a lot of help. I don't know yet what. Between that and Arthur McBeth and literature, I don't know which one I've used the most. But anyway, that's what I had to have. No sign language. And now we got -- I mean the girls now, been here seven years, they know a lot of English. And I have one that speaks very good English. - Very good English. Which she had been to Texas when she was like 13 or 14 with her aunt, so she picked up right much. And they do go home, they study, and they have books and they try to learn a lot. They want to learn English. And Father Joel was teaching there for a while. He was teaching them some English. - That's when one of them brought me the little bar in Mexico there. See it there?

K.F.: How do they now, get along with the other pickers in the plant?

J.N.: They all love 'em now. Just the change. Well there are still a few that don't. You know, you're going to have some not going to be happy. But I'd say now, probably 90 percent of them have no problem.

M.M.: Did you help with that that first year, or did you just step back and

J.N.: No, I tried to --

END SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

J.N.: -- and the girls went with him. The girls, in the afternoon went up to her house. They had their shower, they let, their hair, all down.. She did not know `em, she did not know the girl. They had changed that much. Pete, he didn't know a couple of `em one day in town. He just didn't realize it was their own workers when they: first -- you know - - when they first, the new ones had just come. They had, the, most beautiful hair. It's everybody -- they can crochet -- but not crochet it, but put it up. in so many ways. Braid it. It's beautiful hair.

K.F.: I know that a lot of the pictures I've seen from the .40'ss and 50's with, different plants, the women came to work in dresses.

J.N.: Right.

K.F.: Nice dresses, pressed out, starched out with their -- and I remember. looking at those photos, they pick crabs in that dress.

J.N.: . Uh-huh (Affirmative).. I mean it hasn't been too many years you, see women wearing slacks, jeans or anything.. I mean it. hasn't been that far back.

M.M.: My grandmother never --

J.N.: No. I got couple of the, Mexicans I've never seen in a pair of pants, yet. They're still from the old school. And I'm surprised because one of them is 'her mother's here, and the mother wears pants. But the. daughter I've never seen her wear pants. .

M.M.: How come you were so open minded? flow come -- what in your background do you think made you know that this is going to be okay, and that the rest of the people -

J.N.: You always got to take the challenge. You always got to try to find something new. That's what's wrong with Dorchester County. It's set back, don't want no changes, the same -- we got people fighting that Hyatt now, don't want that Hyatt, you know, right here. Just people do not want to change. They're afraid to take..that step, that initial step. Don't know. `til you try. ..So I decided to try it. Did you, hear about the flak; from the people about the workers? You don't have to mention no names, but do-you .hearr much., . flak from where you've done interviews?

K.F.: No. The concern about it at the beginning.

J.N.: Oh, yes. At the beginning, yes.

(Telephone -- off the record briefly.)

J.N.: One of them that I've had -the. hardest-battle with has been Meredith & Meredith. They have been very hard about this hole project. They have been very negative.

K.F.: They are the only. ones that..I've talked to, that. --

J.N.: Negative.

K.F.: -- still do not have any --

J.N.: And I still told him he will have `em by the year 2000. I made his son the bet `cause his son's in the business now. I said if you want to stay in it, you're *young*.. Your father's old, well not old but older and bull-headed. But if *you* want to, *stay in* the: business, you're *going to, haye, `em.. Last year he asked: me., a couple* questions about them, and I told him *afra in*, I said you'll have 'em by the year 2000.. *Tighton* won't. do it, and , Bobby Hall -- Hall,,and them three were like in *a click*, them three, And Clayton,. he really *did not* do it *for* a couple of years, on account of J,C., eventually, he, went to, it-and now he wished he'd done it before. I said you can't let somebody else run your business.

You got to do what you got to do to make the business work. And that's something J. C. has always been the top dog, had the say. And, you know, and he's the one jumped the picking up to 2.25, and we did not, we left it at \$2.00, and he got mad over that because we didn't jump the picking up along with him. And he said it was illegal. I said no, J.C., if we go' along with you, that's illegal 'cause that's price fixing. We've got a right to do what we want. Just 'cause you do it don't mean we got to 'do it. So he tried to tell us it was illegal if we didn't, 'we were discriminating.' I said we're not -- you run your business, and we run ours. But that's the 'only thing. He's the only one that's really been negative. A lot of them were; but they changed their mind.

M.M.: Are the decisions to raise the prices made here? Do you and Mr. Phillips do it here, or is it made -- do you make a recommendation to the --

J.N.: We all try to do it the same. I mean we try to do it-- so we don't take each other's pickers or whatever. I mean it's always been a thing -- same with crabs. We all pretty well decide -to' pay the same. Technically, 'they can say it's price fixing. But, you know, we do it mostly so the crabs won't be going back and forth. But to me, it's not price fixing because they're self-employed. They' can land 'em here or they can take 'em somewhere else. So it's not, thus is "what' were paying today. If you "want to land 'em, fine. If you don't, carry 'em somewhere else. So I can't see it's price fixing. Some people try to holler it is. That's just what we're 'paying, . Land 'em or try to get it somewhere else. But that's the reason why 'We do' it. We're not trying to be cold. But, I mean, that way so we're not trying to compete against ~each'other' as far as taking' the crabbers or the pickers.

K.F.: We wanted to ask you some questions' about your equipment in'the front.

J.N.: Okay.

K.F.: ~ We noticed the chairs outside. Are they handmade here?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

M. M.: Tell us about' those chairs.

J.N.: Just a regular piece of galvanized iron, and' a piece of wood bolted to" M, and they "all sit on cushion's. .

K.F.: And who designed that chair, and how --

J.N.: It's been here a long time.

K.F.: A long time.

J.N.: Them tables were here in the old factory years and years ago:

K.F.: Okay.' Were both of those chairs like that here when you got' here?

J.N.: Uh-huh'(Affirmative).

M.M.: I have not seen handmade furniture in any of these picking houses yet: Have you?

IN: They're all -- Bobby Hall just uses PV pipe -- the white pipe, but yeah, they're all-

M.M.: ' Handmade.

IN: ' Uh-huh (Affirmative).

M.M.: W'onder'why?

IN: " T" don't know just the' height' that the ladies wanted for' the` table. See they, like'to sit there. They stick the pan up under the edge of the table, sit there and pick in the table. ; 'Cause you 'get up here, then they got` arms up, you know. So that's why they always sit back,' and' they put' the pan-right across here and 'hold` it" 'up and pick' in their lap like that.

M.M.: So it's custom-made for --

J.N.: For the height, you know, which way was best. 'Cause I mean it does get. tiresome sitting in the same position, sitting there all day.

M.M.: When we came in, we were calling you on the phone, I sat in one of the chairs. And the chairs look really uncomfortable. They're really comfortable. They're designed so that they -

J.N.: Keep you straight. Right.

M.M.: -- back so that you're back doesn't get --

J.N.: And most of the ladies sit on the pillow, you know.

M.M.: They do.

J.N.: Sit on a pillow. But we can't have it out: It's got to be in a plastic bag, sealed up, you know, so that way they can take it off when we sanitize and clean it off

M.M.: Do you give them a plastic bag in the morning and they bring --

J.N.: No, they usually -- sew it up some kind of way, they do it their self. Or even like you get those maybe like bedspreads or something with the zippers on them, sometimes they use them, you know. But they have to be so they can't get soiled and dirty. Have their own pillows. Matter of fact; -I think it's a box back there laying on top the Coke machine --

M.M.: With all the pillows in it?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Do they each have their own chair and their own --

J.N.: Yes. Oh, if you change a chair, man, they can tell you that's not their chair when they come back the next year. Normally I -- normally we put numbers on them K.F.: You have numbers underneath the chairs?

J.N.: No, we didn't because we put them back in the same place. But, you know, we know where everybody sits. They got their certain place and certain picking number: But they can tell if the chair is not their chair. Especially Lou, she raise hell with that.

M.M.: Are there seniority among them? Do the younger pickers, who are newer defer to the older pickers?

J.N.: Yes.

M.M.: They do,

J.N.: And they show 'em how to pick and all. That's one thing about having -- I try to get family, cousins or relatives of some of them 'cause they will take time out to help show 'em how to pick and all that. They won't -- you know, 'cause technically, they're here to make money, And they're not going to take their time out, we will still pay 'em, but they're not going to take their time out to show 'em. Like afternoons or evenings after work, they will still go get a few crabs and try to show 'em on a Sunday, try to help their family, coax 'em along to learn how to pick quicker. Where if it was a stranger, you **know, I'm going to** -- I'm going to, town, or: I'm going to sleep, I'm not going to. fool with you, you know.

K.F.: What are some of the families of pickers that you have here, or did have?

J.N.: Oh, from the Americans?

K.F.: Yeah. Or both, actually.

J.N.: At one time, we had the three sisters, Dot, and Rebecca and Mavey. Now we have neither one.

K.F.: What was their last name?

J.N.: Originally, they were Flowers.

M.M.: Are they picking crabs, or are they just cleaning?

J.N.: One does not pick. The other one picks every blue moon, and the other one does pick maybe three, four days a week.

K.F.: Are there any retired women? We've heard from some people that sometimes once you get older, you come back again.

J.N.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Sometimes that happens.

K.F.: Do you have any of that?

J.N.: Yes, I have one lady that's retired, She's picking. She lived in Baltimore, moved here, so she does it for something to do: She don't pick very much at all, but she loves it just to come sit here. She's from-the city; she never grew up with it. Matter of fact, they were in the jewelry store business. But she just loves to come pick and socialize. Matter of fact, she don't pick very much at all, but she just-loves it. So I know a couple older women. I know Margaret Bennett, she retired from Air Pack, and now she goes back and picks. after she retired just for something to do. And for a little extra income. Plus that way they can draw unemployment, plus for Social Security in the winter. When the weather's bad, they don't have to drive. So they stay home.

K.F.: Do the pickers choose where they sit?

J.N.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).

K.F.: And are they segregated by -do the Mexican women all sit together? -And out of the 22. Mexican women, you have how-many local pickers?

J.N.: At the most,, five, six,

K.F.: Five. And do the five and six local pickers sit together?

J.N.: Most of the time. And -it's& nothing to discriminate, but they-can talk to each other where the Mexicans can't:

K.F.: Yeah...

J.N.: But like t say, by now been here long, they all picked up a lot of English and Spanish, and they really communicate a lot now.

K.F.: How about the other workers in the plant, the people that -- the guys who bring the crabs to them, do they interact differently?

J.N.: No, they don't usually come in., They just come from the dock.

K.F.: Okay. .

J.N.: And Pete; he's inhere. He's learned a lot of Spanish... He's only been here; what, two ,or three years, but he's learned%& lot of Spanish. All the numbers and -

K.F.: Is. Pete **right** here?

J.N.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*).. All the numbers are in Spanish. He's learned all them.

We used to be able to-come up =- he'd write, down 22 pound or, whatever they had. Wheri he'Come up, we'd.tell them what they got so there's-no discrepancy "at the end of the day. And he would have to say, you know, shelf 22, but now he can spit it out to 'em in .l. Spanish 'cause he's. learned- all.these numbers. And Tony, we have .the Mexican. guy here, he's been here now six years.

K.F.: He was mowing the lawn earlier today?

J.N.: Uh,huh (*Affinnatfve*).. ,Yeah::

K.F.: Yeah, he's nice.

J.N.: He does all my cooking, cooks all the crabs.

K.F.: And did he come here originally as one of the migrant workers?

J.N.: He is a -- he has a green card. Technically, he can work anywhere in the United States, he has a green card.

K.F.: Okay.

J.N.: He usually stays here. But he's a very good worker. He wants to do it right. He's very good.

K.F.: Do you have trouble getting that help that are the packing -- tell us about the people who pack and also the people --

J.N.: Yeah, it's a little bit hard to find anybody to do that 'cause then, like I say, you really have to, you know, answer the phone or talking to people, you got to really it's hard to do. But the Mexicans do pick up on everything.

K.F.: Okay.

J.N.: I mean Tony, he can steam, he weighs, he can weigh the meat; he can pack the meat: He's been here long enough, he's learned it all. too.. He's very good.

K.F.: Okay. Are most of the rest of them local people?

J.N.: I only have usually three.

K.F.: Okay. And they do both get the crab-to the pickers and then pack?

J.N.: Right. Tony and I do all the steaming all at night, and Pete's herein the morning; and another Mexican helps me put crabs on the table and take care of -- and then Tony and I do all the cooking and Tony jumps in wherever, unloading the boats, or dumping, cooking the, crabs, you know, cut the bait, he does everything.

K.F.: Back to the family pickers that have worked here, besides the Flowers family --

J.N.: Had another mother and daughter. Daughter just -- mother just died, Miss Virginia, that was a mother and daughter.. And that's all we have.. We have had another family. We've had maybe about -- well everybody's related anyway. As far as the Mexicans, I have Margot and her daughter, I have one -- I have two mother and daughters, I have three sets of sisters. I have one, had three sisters here at one time, but they're not here now. They all - couple of 'em got married, they've had babies, so they don't come back right now. But they were -- it was three sisters. We got one Mama Charlie she watches over her daughter. I mean, if you see one, you see the other one. They're always walking, they're always together all the time. Really strict over her daughter. She's 27. Mama Charlie's been here now, she's probably been here six, seven years. She's the only one I see that wears glasses.. Of all the workers here, she's the drily one that wears glasses.

K.F.: Really?

J.N.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). "So they

must have very good eyesight in Mexico. Talk about Mary Revis she other day, everybody on the Island knows Mary -Revis and loves

her. She left here one day walking, and a guy across the road here picked her up and took her to the post office. She walked out of the post office: Ronnie Jones, another guy, picked her up. She was going to the store: He took her to the store. He went on up the road, turned around, come back, just riding. She come out, of the store. He picked her up, brought her back to another friend's house on the Island: She got. Out of there, she come out, and Buddy, our mailman, picked her up, brought her home. So she don't never

have to walk. We always tease her about all these boyfriends she's got 'cause everybody just knows Mary Revis.

M.M.: Do they get -- are all of them married; or all of them single?

J.N.: Lot of single, lot of 'em married. A lot of 'em leave their little tiny children. I mean some of 'em got children less than a year old, year old. Leave 'em and come back to work 'cause they need the money. .

M.M.: Have you had any that fell in love and wanted to stay?

J.N.: We've lost some.

M.M.: You have.

J.N.: Yup:. And I, you know, set up the recruiter because it's from the State, all that, but like the recruiter says, no matter what happens to them, if they go to jail, it's still better, 100 percent, than what they have in their country. Because no food, no money, no houses. So I can see why they do it. And the guys, these are vulnerable girls. You know,, ' they come here, you know; and the guys talk 'em into everything, you know. Having a baby, or sex or whatever, and then stay here. You know, and some of 'em are abused. You have to watch what they do. Father Joel 'has run into that several times, I think. And we try to tell the girls, you know -- we're not trying to tell you not to stay, be cruel to 'em, we're not trying to - I tell 'em it's illegal, but I'm more concerned about them being abused or whatever. You know, they get pregnant, have' a-kid, and what are you going to do? . They're~illegal; they can't get a job, you know, and it's not that easy out there.

K.F. So -out of your pickers, Lou would be the good one to talk with?

J.N.: Yeah, she's not too bad, The old woman. ; There's Mr. Phillips with one of the girls.

M.M.: Oh look at her hair. Isn't she beautiful.

K.F.: That's Mr. Phillips; . We take 'em, to Ocean City every year,, let 'em eat to the restaurant and all,-

M.M.: At the --

J.N., , Summertime, yeah, eat at our restaurant: 'Take 'em on the boardwalk.

M.M.; Do you-tease all your pickers- the way you tease Lou?

J.N.: --Oh; yeah.. I tease 'em 'ah, , ,

M.M.: . Do you?

J.N.: Yeah, htease everybody like that.. Yeah; I tease em all. Commissioner's Office and-all of 'em. I always 'tease 'em.: .

M.M.: ' My [boss is](#) that way.. It makes' working a lot better '.

J.N.: Oh, yeah. That's what I hate about calling somebody, *you know*, smell good; look good, I don't know what the world's coming to. I hate to hear that kind of -- I don't agree. I don't like somebody abusing 'em or making sexual -- but I mean **some** of the stuff, just, too say somebody took good -or whatever, or. honey, you know.

K. F.: Yeah, I know,

J.N.: I don't know what it's coming to.. So when you gonna try to talk to Lou?

K.R.- I'm going to go visit her probably- af & we talk with you. *and she's a good girl*

J.N.: Let me see if I can get her.;. *and she's a good girl*

K. F.: I've been calling her and calling her.. She's never home:

J.N. ; - Or onn the phone.

(Telephone. Off the record briefly.)

J.N.: Everybody's here. We've had channel 4, channel 16, channel 47, channel 50, 54. They've all come. A lot of people don't like it, but you know, our people are used to it now.

M.M.: I was sitting here wondering what it would be like to be watched while you work. -

J.N.: They're used to it. I say, a lot of them busses, they don't mind that. Here's our bus tours so -far.

M.M.: Is this okay with you that this is happening? Does it make your job --

J.N.: It's a little bit of-- oh, yeah. Just a bad time of day, I mean because usually 10, 11:00; and we usually quit picking at 1, 1:30,-You. know; we got to wash, washing down so it's not extra wet. And I just pretty well have to stop everything to take care of the busses, you know: As'far as,the telephone; you know how the telephone, is. If you -- is she done? -If you, you know, if the phone calls; you take'a message, you're not gaining no time, you got to call `em back, you know. So you don't --then we have to set up -a little store,because we sell crab meat, and sell the.shirts, and the hats, and the soups and'the seasonings. You [got.to](#) pack all that up. .

M.M.: It's'interesting; - So it's good.marketing,. and good education;-but it's. not necessarily great for the efficiency of the --

J.N.: It's all dumped down on us here.

M.M. Interesting. He was saying that they usually come right when they're washing up, and they've got to -be careful because of the water around.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

J.N.: And Tom Flowers is so hyper. He comes in here so wound up You .know, Jesus.

M.M.: Did you tell him, we had -- Martha, the -- from the boat that we fixed up and christened two years ago, he came and dedicated the:boat.'.And'i just couldn'tbelieve, he talked 30 minutes, you know, And .-- ;

J.N.: And he changes so much stuff He goes on and on. I've runn into it when I got in with this, and I've had him come in on this, and he wants to changee this; and change that. You know, you got everything set up, a routine, and tie comes in and wants to change something. And, like :I say, commissioners,.all the different -, we've 'had to,run into. 'But'- that's part of life. =.I don't care. 'He dedicated ahis bridge' down-here, remember; that bridge?

K.F.: Yes.

J.N.: . Let: me see one of those brochures a minute...I'think-.after I got -- this-made me think..ofthat.. Khan, somebody -complain about one. of those brochures.

M. M.: Oh, it's wonderful: -<I-like it, What didn't: they'like about it?

J.N.: -Said it was a bridge - 1--don't -know if it was'this or the'.ounty; that's what I got to~find out, ~if they're talking about thin brochure or it .was the county brochure; Going over a bridge to nowhere.:

M.M.: Oh, I just --

J.N.: People there were fussing about it. There's Chesapeake Bay MaritimeMuseu t, so you're right in here. Look at that:.,

M.M.: I'm going to take it home and show it to my. boss who's-going to be very happy. '

J.N.: . ' Until you **see additional fee** required. dowri the bottom.'°Well I mean the busses, you know, it's more expensive.

M.M.: I didn't see the bridge to nowhere in that brochure. It must be in the county brochure. "

J.N.: That's what I'm thinking, maybe it's a county brochure. Somebody, guy down there- give me hell about it -the other day." He said it depends which way you're going on the bridge. Maybe you're, coming this way, then you could say that. You ever check this out online -- whatever, maybe some information, history on the website? I don't even know what ails on there either.

M.M.; : That's' a good idea. .

J.N.: They done a good job with this brochure. There's mother and daughter picking there...

K.F.; Well. let me ask you, Jay. If we start to think about this exhibit, and we try to put together -- we want to do you know -- what do you think would be the most important thing that we try to capture?

J.N.: I don't know. Like you say, you like the--tables and chairs. You said that. I mean I don't know. That and you need to show the -- you need to have some kind of actual crate. I mean, how big a room you got you're, [going to](#) try to do this in? How big a room is it?

K.F.: How big is it, Melissa?

M.M.: Well, the building is 7,000 square feet, But the crab picking and it's about the seafood industry, so only a part of it. will be the 'crab. picking. ' So I would --

J.N.: I mean is it going to be big as this, like this packing room area?

MM: Probably. a little smaller:...

J.N.; : Little smaller,-

M.W.: 'Cause we've got the whole, the other

J.N.: I mean not the whole room, you're just talking about where this wall is here, what we call, the packing room.. ,

M.M.: -About that size, yes.

J.N.:... About -that size; -So you could only put probably a-couple tables and chairs.

Probably. one. table. and a couple chairs around it. You're. going to. put-like maybe a chair, there with; an apron on, it and a knife, and all laid out like a display of what they're actually using, a hat or a hairnet, you got to have one or the other.

K.F.: How about sounds? What do you hear?

J.N.: Nothing but crabs cracking, and banging and beating., You. can just -I mean that's one thing, the Mexicans every seldom do talk., They, don't say much at all.- Mine are, now the rest of 'em, I think. they're a hooping and a hollering and singing. ' Billy says it's so noisy. ; But my women; they're, so quiet, they don't say much-' -They talk, you-know, -soft amongst themselves. Now all the plants in the Philippines, everybody has to wear mouth guards and full uniform, all blue uniforms with their hats and mouth guards:: So, they really can't do nothin at all. I'm going to talk to Pete.

(Off the record briefly.)

K.F.: Talking to people about the equipment that they have,, where they got it, if they made it,- In some cases; some people have to -

J.N.: -. The crates, have been here. Like I say; our tables been here. ever since the -. God knows when, Charles Shock could tell you more about that far as how long they been > here. The crate, he made the crates, he said, and the tables, years and years ago.

K.F.: Okay.

J.N.: The boiler and retort, which we're putting another one in now. We're lining it with stainless, so we're making a new retort..

M.M.: Are you making it or are you buying it?

J.N.: He's modified it. A local guy's welding it, yeah, making it up. ' So you all be interested in coming down one of the days and go on the bus, boat ride and the bus tour with `em, or --

K.F.: Yeah. Actually I'd be interested in coming down and being able to take some photos of, you know --

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I mean also I didn't know if you want to happen: to come a day we have a bus too. If you just: want to pile in and listen so you can see the whole how we do a bus' if you would like, if you can work it into your schedule someday.

K.F.: Do you want to do that too?

M.M.: Yeah.

J.N.: You: know, go. for the boat ride just' so you could see it, you know, if you wanted to.

K.F.: Yeah. We've been trying to set it up so that we can come into the picking houses and see people working because that's the only way we're going to be able to --

J.N.: Get the full -- you can talk about it all you want. 'Til you actually see it --

K.F.: Seeing it's a whole different thing.

J.N.: Yes.

K.F.: So and take photos.

J.N.: Uh huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: That's going to be the bulk of the.-- (Inaudible):

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We have also: a thing where we let `em all take pictures, and then we have a prize at the end of the year: for the best photo for the season.

K.F.: You do?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: What, do you do with the prize winners?

J.N.: I don't know, I think they give `em meals and something else.

M.M.: What' do you do with the photographs? Do they take them with?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative):

M.M.: Or do you keep .

J.N.: We keep some of `em -They're supposed to be getting some blown up. We want to try to put some up on the walls eventually.

M.M.: But you've got the pictures. here?

J.N.: No, probably in Washington. We get ` -- submit `em back in Washington:

M.M.: Okay.' That's a neat idea:

J.N.: 'Cause even -- well see there's one there that she give us:. See-the-one with the crab pot-is in the brochure; her taking a picture of the crab pot:

M.M.: Uh-huh- (Affirmative). Okay.:

J.N.: And the one with Tom down the aisleway. That's in the brochure: 'Me, have -a lot' of pictures taken. I mean we have some crazy questions.

K.F.: Like what? (Laughter).

J.N.: One of `em wanted to know if you broke the claws off and throw `em back; would you get another crab. Now I know the stone crabs, if you break the claws off, you'll get another claw, but she said would you get another crab.

K.F.: **A whole new crab.**

J.N.: **Uh-huh (Affirmative).**

(Laughter).

M.M.: Are you (Inaudible)?

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yes.

K.F.: You know how history --

J.N.: Why crabs are red. Nobody understand why they're red because all they've ever seen, I -guess, has been -- I mean seem green because all they see is red ones cooked in the city, wanna know why they're green, or will they bite you, you know, all them kinda questions. How they bit you, how many pounds they pick. They all want to know how much they make per hour and all these kinda questions. Ask `em if they work for wage and hour; `cause they were asking _all them kinda questions. I said you all working for wage and hour? `Cause they want to know how much they made and all this stuff.

(Laughter)...

J.N.: Crab pots, L-Y's, soft crab is the most interesting to everybody; actually the most

K.F.: Before they shed them.

J.N.: Yup. People love that more than anything.

M.M.: And what part of the business right here is soft crabs?

J.N.: We don't have none, but we're going to put floats up just for demonstrating for the busses. We used to have `em, butti't got, to the point it was not profitable.

K.F.:~, Okay.. And so all that's been. removed .-

J.N.: We tore all of it right. 'So:Fm' just, going to 'Put up 'three or four floats, and just for the busses and demonstration.

K.F.: It is amazing. The people we -- you know, when we opened watermen's wharf at the museum, the Crab Claw Restaurant uses the floats.. People stand there ^{and} watch the whole process. They don't leave until. they see it:happen. They'-rd fascinated by it.

J.N.: Yeah, that's the most inquisitive thing. of all. And the picking. They don't realize how they can pick so much and all that. And to see `em get the lump out The Mexicans, they are so great with the lump. They can roll the lump right out. I never get the lump, out, you know, it's a technique to it. -Cutting the. crab just right-- '

M.M.: Kelly had some yesterday --

K.F.: -- yesterday from a picker from Clayton's who -- she's one of the older pickers, and she actually (Inaudible):. She-was teaching me. And, of course; hbroke'the first two: The next one I got out, she's like oh, very good. Her husband was there, -and she-said look, she's better than you are

J.N.: Oh, no. Now Lou, when- she' cuts'hers,; she cuts it. And then on one' side when she cuts the top off, the lump comes out with the top just on:bne si&of .the crab: She's the ., only one I _seen' do that

M.M.: We'll have to ask her to --we'll take a crab with us.: i want to take a crab

K.F.: We'll take a crab. ^{we'll take a crab}

J.N.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).