

Interview Log**Interviewee:** Joyce Fitchett**Tape #:** OH135**Interviewer:** Kelly Feltault**# of Tapes:** I**Date:** August 31, 1999**# of Sides:** 2**Location:****Topic:** Crab Picking Project**Corresponding Photography Log #:****Comments:** Phonetic Spellings: Marumpsco, Birdy Merle, Lit Dryden's

BEGIN SIDE A

J.F.: If I could have you say your name so I can make sure this is going to pick you up.

J.F.: Joyce Fitchett.

K.F.: Okay, Joyce. And you said you were originally born in Marion?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And can I ask what year that was?

J.F.: I was born in 1946.

K.F.: Okay. And what did your family do in Marion?

J.F.: Well my dad and mom were in the oyster and crab picking.

K.F.: They were? Okay.

J.F.: My mother picked crabs. Yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And the funny thing was she used to take me to the crab house with her as a little child.

K.F.: Okay. Which crab house was it?

J.F.: It was -- years ago, it was a crab house on the little island down here called Jersey Island.

K.F.: Okay. Now didn't you have to take a little ferry over to Jersey Island?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. Did you guys -- was that still operating when you were --

J.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But you can still go around the other way too.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: Yeah. But that was a quicker way if you went from the downtown area.

K.F.: Right. Okay. Yeah, I've read an article, wasn't it like a dime or something to go across?

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

K.F.: Okay. So what was it like going across the ferry to the island every morning to work?

J.F.: It was scary, but I liked it.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: 'Cause they also had a bridge you could walk across instead of going on the ferry.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: That was the early part of the, you know, the early part. Then eventually they tore the bridge down and that was the only way you could go was by ferry.

K.F.: So your mom picked crabs. Did your dad shuck oysters?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). How about your mom? Did she shuck too?

J.F.: She did both.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Okay.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And did your dad work in the crab houses in the summer?

J.F.: No, just shucking oysters.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: He worked in the fields and in the oyster house.

K.F.: Okay. You really came from a seafood family.

J.F.: Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: Well about what age did your mom start taking you into the crab house?

J.F.: I guess it was early, like maybe five, you know. I mean we weren't really allowed down there, but because they didn't have babysitters or whatever, they would take us with them, make us sit in the car. At times, I would go inside the crab house and start fiddling with the crabs and the claws and stuff. And eventually I got so I started to learn how to pick 'em. First it was cracking the claws.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And after the claws, I said well I'm going to try to pick crabs, so you know, I just started messing with the crabs. And after a while, I got so I learned how to pick a crab.

K.F.: Now did someone sit down and show you how to actually do it, how to pick crabs?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And who was it?

J.F.: My mother.

K.F.: Now how did she teach you how to do it?

J.F.: She just sat there beside me. She said now you take this crab. And, you know, you take a knife and how to cut the legs off. And I mean it was kind of hard at first, but I finally got it. And when I did, you know, I just went on and picked.

K.F.: Now what were you allowed to do with the money that you make?

J.F.: I could buy what I wanted. I mean, you know, if I needed little school supplies or buy little candy and bubble gum.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: That was fun then, you know. If you had 50 cents or a dollar, you know, you could go to the store and buy what you wanted.

K.F.: Now what was the town of Marion like when you were a little kid?

J.F.: Oh, man. Well actually I wasn't in Marion. It was a place called Marumpsco. That's way back in there.

K.F.: Oh, okay. That's funny because I actually come from a place called Marumpsco in Virginia.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: Yeah. I was born in Marumpsco, Maryland. But everybody referred to it as Marion because people hadn't heard of Marumpsco. So they would always ask well where in the world is that, you know. So they just said Marion and surrounding areas.

K.F.: Okay. And what was it like when you were a little kid?

J.F.: *Very* quiet down there.

K.F.: Yeah?

J.F.: Yeah. Not a lot of kids in that area. Just a couple of families here. You know, we were far apart. And we had a long, dark road to walk down.

K.F.: Yeah?

J.F.: Yeah, Lord. It was fun, though. When, you know, all of us kids got together, it was really fun.

K.F.: Right. Was it mostly farmers and --

J.F.: Yeah. My uncle used to farm. We used to raise chickens and hogs and pick cucumbers, yep, tomatoes and all that stuff

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

J.F.: We had to get up and do that early morning before we even come to the crab house.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. So like what time of the morning did you have to get up?

J.F.: Oh, well then, when I was five and *six*, I didn't. But as I got older, I did.

K.F.: A little bit older.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And what time would you have to get up?

J.F.: Oh, my, bless it. 5:00 in the morning, they'd take you out there and you'd pick some, you know, pick what you could. 'Cause my mom also shucks, that was like bring in vegetables down in the Crisfield area and sitting on the corner and sell them.

K.F.: *Okay.*

J.F.: Yup. Cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, all that stuff

K.F.: Wow. She sounds very industrious.

J.F.: We did what we had to do to get by. And my mom also took care of people. I mean like little kids for the white people. She would babysit for them sometimes.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: Whenever she -- my mom was a hard worker.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And I patterned myself, I guess, after her. Because I'm also a hard worker. I don't sit still very much.

K.F.: Right. Now you have more than one job working at the crab house, right?

J.F.: Yes, uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Yeah. I work at Easton Correctional Institution.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: That's --

K.F.: Just up the road.

J.F.: *Yeah.*

K.F.: What do you do there?

J.F.: I'm a guard, or correction officer.

K.F.: Oh, okay. I'll try not to be intimidated.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Well when you were coming into the crab house as a little kid, I know there were other little kids coming in too, what was it like being a kid in the crab house? Did you make a lot of friends there or --

J.F.: It actually wasn't a whole lot.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: No. It wasn't a whole lot. But my mother was a person that, we weren't really bad kids, so when we would go down there, whatever she told us to do, that's what we did. If she said sit in the car and don't move, you know, just sit there. If you need something, you know, I'll be out every so often check on you and all that, *we* did that. And we could get out if she come out and said now you can get out and just play around

in this area, but don't get in the road, you know, and all that. So I mean it was nice. And at times, like I said, we would go inside the crab house, I mean which we weren't supposed to be there. And if the inspector or somebody come, she would either make us go out or I can remember at that time she used to -- they had big cans about this size, big trash cans that they picked in.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: And if some of `em were empty or something, they would probably tell you get down in that can, you know. And you sit down in that can, you know. It was fun then `cause you know you was hiding.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: It was like playing hide-and-go-seek. But we would sit down in there. He wouldn't -- the inspector wouldn't stay that long, just long enough to check things and see if everybody was abiding by the rules and stuff. And they'd make you keep quiet, and they'd probably push me under the table, `cause the tables were kind of high, you know.

K.F.: Right, okay.

J.F.: Push me under the table, and he would never know I was there. It was fun.

K.F.: Now did your brothers and sisters also go into the crab house?

J.F.: Sometimes, yeah. Sometimes they did. But I can remember, I don't know whether I was -- I think because I was a baby girl, you know, she took me more than she took the rest of `em.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: The others could stay on the farm and help my grandmother and uncle on the farm.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Did any of them go into crab picking?

J.F.: Yeah, eventually they did. My sister probably started when she was about nine or ten, then she started going down. But I was the youngest to be -- because I was there and started messing with the crabs then, you know, I just went on with it. And at first, I wasn't -- I've never considered myself to be a fast picker at that time.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: You know, I just picked. And it's a lady that I worked with right after I graduated, and she was pretty fast, so I patterned myself behind her.

K.F.: Oh. What was her name?

J.F.: Margaret. Margaret Lee. And it seems as if every time that she would go up with a gallon, I would try to pattern myself and try to go up with a gallon with her. So eventually, you know, it got so that I got, you know, picked up my speed and I got faster. And I was beating her then. After a while, I was beating her.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: So, you know, maybe not be a whole lot, two or three pounds maybe then, started to be a gallon, two gallons. And in a day, I mean I could come out of there with 15, 16. The highest I've ever picked was 20 gallons, 21 gallons.

K.F.: Twenty-one gallons.

J.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Which consists of five cans, five pound cans.

K.F.: Oh, so we're really talking as far as pounds.

J.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Five pounds equal a gallon.

K.F.: That's 100 pounds.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: A hundred pounds in a day.

J.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yup.

K.F.: Wow.

J.F.: Yup. And at that time too, we were cracking claws. And they cracked something called fingers, claw fingers, yeah. So that helped to make the pounds add up because you could get a lot of them if you knew how to, you know, really crack claws.

K.F.: Right. Now why don't they crack the claws any more?

J.F.: They do sometimes, but right now the crabs are poor, so they don't have a lot of big claws to crack, so they don't fool with `em as much.

K.F.: Oh. Yeah.

J.F.: The claw fingers, they want `em to be some size and have some meat on `em, so that's really why they don't fool with them.

K.F.: I noticed a lot of the plants, actually a couple of the plants ship their claws off to another plant and let them crack them.

J.F.: Yeah, yeah. Because they don't want to do away with them all together. If they can get something out of `em, then that's what they do, they send `em somewhere and let them use `em for whatever reason.

K.F.: Okay. And what was Margaret Lee like?

J.F.: Oh, she was something else. She was a young woman. Well she was my idol for real. I used to like being around her. She was a nice lady to be around. And she had four small children of her own, you know. And I don't know, I just took to her and she was nice. She was a real nice lady. And I liked her a lot. I used to go to her house, you know. So --

K.F.: And did she sit next to you?

J.F.: Sit right next, we sat right next to each other. Yeah.

K.F.: Do you remember who else sat at that table with the two of you?

J.F.: A lady named Birdy, Birdy Miles, Birdy. What was her name? Birdy -- Birdy Merle, and my sister sat on one corner, and Margaret's sister named Diane, she used to sit there also.

K.F.: Okay. So it was really a couple families.

J.F.: Yeah. Oh, it was about six people setting on our table. I can't remember all of `em, not at that time. Then they changed because a lot of people died, more people came, that sort of thing. I think Barbara Douglas, she was there at one time. Netty Lee, she was a sister to Margaret. Margaret, Diane and Netty, all them were sisters. And it was Birdy and Pauline. They were in the same crab house but didn't set close by me. Birdy sat there, but Pauline sat on the other side like. They were all sisters. And Hazel was there.

K.F.: Oh, all right.

J.F.: Yeah. And Hazel's sister, Ella. So it was a lot of people from this area.

K.F.: Sounds like a lot of family ties too.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And what made you move over to Byrd's to pick?

J.F.: Because these crab houses went out of business. At that time, it was called Lit Dryden's, I think that's the name of it, Dryden's Crab House.

K.F.: Oh, yeah. All right.

J.F.: And a lot of `em went out of business. And so we would go, you know, wherever there were more plentiful crabs, more crabs.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And that's why I wind up to go, I wound up going over there. Because like I said, Margaret used to work there, so when I got older, this was when I -- after I graduated from high school. Well just before I graduated, I used to work down there, you know, getting supplies for myself during school because my mother took with a stroke when she was, I think my mother was in her 40's when she had a stroke.

K.F.: Oh, young.

J.F.: Might've been more. I think it was less than that, she was 30 some. And, yeah, she took with a stroke and I was trying to still go to school, which I did complete and graduate. It was kind of rough because I was home with my mother trying to take care of her, and trying to get away down here, which I would come down here most the time with my dad.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: But during that time, you know, well I'm not saying -- but during that time, they kind of drifted a little bit, so he was on this end more than he was at that end. So I was there with her trying to keep her together. And that's just the way it was.

K.F.: Right, right.

J.F.: So we came -- I would come down here, my sister used to live right over there.

K.F.: Across the street?

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

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And that's how come -- that's what takes me being down here. She used to live over there, and I used -- just as I -- my last couple of years of school, I would always come down here and like if I had to go to the school for some reason in the evening, I would always come down here. My mom would come down that morning, and she would stay over there until I got ready to go back home. Or we'd stay overnight here with my sister.

K.F.: Right, right.

J.F.: And that's how it was for a long time until she passed. And she had the stroke for 13 years and died at 51, I think it was.

K.F.: Wow. That's really young.

J.F.: Yeah. Died at 51. And my sister, she passed -- seven years, eight, let's see, '92. And my dad passed in '92. She in February, my dad in April.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

J.F.: Yup.

K.F.: Well what was Crisfield like when all of these crab houses were operating? I know it was a very busy seafood town, but I've never had anybody really describe to me what it was like when every plant was in full operation.

J.F.: Well at least you had -- you had a lot of different spots you could go to if you chose to do that. But like if one crab house worked that morning and it wasn't a lot of crabs, and the other crab house worked, we would all go from one crab house and go to another and still go to work.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: You know, still work. You go down there and pick if you wanted to. `Cause I know a place all the way downtown we used to go to like that. After we get finished one place, we go down there and work sometimes until night.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Now how --I guess they didn't really have a payroll. Did they just pay you in advance?

J.F.: Most of the time -- sometimes it was cash in hand. Yeah. Because they wanted the crabs picked up.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

J.F.: Yeah. So that's a way they could do it.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And being that I was in school and needed some extra money, I would go and do that, after school or whatever. And I could get me 10 or 15, \$20, you know, like that. So we did what we had to do to survive, you know. Because we couldn't really depend on our moms and dads because at that time, they were making money and providing for us, but it was a bare minimum.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: It was very little that, you know, that they had. But I mean we ate good because they always saw to it that we have food and clothes, that's the two basic things -- and got our schooling. You know, we couldn't ask for nothing more. And if we could go on the outside and make a little spending change, you know, we did it.

K.F.: Yeah.

J.F.: So basically, I've always worked most of my life. Started young and I'm still going, thank God.

K.F.: How do you think that influenced you as the type of person that you are?

J.F.: It's made me realize that you got to work for what you want, you know. And I do that. I do what I have to do. And I have at times worked three jobs just to survive.

That's just like I tell a lot of those -- we got men inmates up there, and you hear them complaining and griping, you know, a lot of times. And I just tell `em, I said look, you all, I mean what you complaining for? I said you ain't doing nothing, you know, or **haven't done anything. Here I am, I said I had to work three** jobs to make ends meet. I said you can do the same thing. You don't have to be out there selling drugs, you know, or whatever. I mean, you know, I -- you just tell `em. And I mean not saying that they listen, but --

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Right, right.

J.F.: But I certainly tell `em, you know. And they always seem to want to blame somebody else for their mistake. I said you can't blame nobody but yourself because you put your own self in that position.

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

J.F.: So, yeah, it's just helped me to know that in order to get anything in life, you have to work for it. You know, you're not going to get it by somebody coming and giving it to you, putting it in your hands, you've got to get out there and work. And like I said, I worked two and three jobs, I've worked the restaurants, maybe a half a day, and I'd work

housecleaning for somebody and I pick a few crabs here and there, you know, I just did what I had to do.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And I've worked in the fields also. Yup.

K.F.: Do you think crab pickers are hard working, industrious people?

J.F.: Yeah. That and when I started picking crabs, it made me -- well I mean like I said when I first started out, I was kind of slow. I mean I wasn't really slow, but I just did basic. And as I progressed, I knew that I'd have to get more speed or work harder, you know, in order to make more money.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: So this is one reason why I tried to, you know, pick up my speed, you know.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And I tried to do it, you know, the best I could, you know, without getting a lot of bone in the crab meat and stuff like that.

K.F.: Right. Now do they check the meat at first before they go through it?

J.F.: Yeah. And nobody's not going to tell me that they don't pick -- that they pick crabs and don't get a bone. You got to be an awful slow picker in order to not get no bone. Awfully slow, and very particular. So I mean, you know, if you're going to pick crabs and pick with any speed, you're going to get bone. You're going to get it.

K.F.: Now somebody was telling me that for them picking crabs is very mental activity 'cause you think a lot while you pick crabs. And I'm wondering how it is for you when you're picking.

J.F.: I guess you think, but really I'm thinking about getting a gallon, you know what I mean. It's not all that mental to me, but I just love picking crabs.

K.F.: What do you love about it?

J.F.: I just love -- I just love seeing the meat pile up, you know. I love getting the lump out, you know. I just love it. Ever since I start -- when I started picking crabs, I just loved picking crabs. I mean if I can pick a crab, I'm going to find a crab house so I can pick some.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: And to me, it's fast money now, to me. I mean I can go down there, if I can go down there and pick six, seven gallons, and I'm coming home with 60, \$70, see.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: Maybe not the full amount because they take tax out of it. But I love it, I just love it. I always have. When I first started, I didn't. But as I, you know, I was picking crabs when I first got this house so I mean, you know, I struggled, but I'm at the point now where I'm --

K.F.: So crab money helped you buy this house.

J.F.: Yes. It certainly did, yes, ma'am. And working house cleaning, I was house cleaning for a man. And he had asked me had I ever thought about getting a home, and I said sure, I'd love to have a home, you know. I mean so it came through by him, but it was still crab picking and house working and restaurant working that I came through. And it was low income houses. So I mean I've been here, what, 20, 24 years, 25, home free. Thank you, Jesus.

K.F.: There's nothing like owning your own house.

J.F.: No, it's not. Got nobody come here and put you -- only way you're going to get put out is you don't pay, you don't pay your electric or whatever -- I mean then you're not going to get put out, you just won't have no electric. Or you don't pay your taxes or something, they might try to make you leave. But, yeah, everything that I have I have because I've worked hard all my life. And my dad was a hard worker also. I can't leave him out because he was a hard worker. He provided for us, you know, the best he could. And when daddy failed to come up to par, mom would get out there and struggle, you know. That's the way she was. I had a good mother, very good mother.

K.F.: One thing I've been curious **about** is why is it always women who seem to be picking crabs? I know there are a few men, but there are very few men picking crabs.

J.F.: Yeah. I think because it's a sit-down job, number one. And men ain't too good at sitting still, you know, so I think that's the basic reason.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: But, like you said, it was more men in the crab houses back in the day.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Oh, I didn't know that.

J.F.: Yeah. It was -- I know several men that worked in crab houses.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: If they couldn't find work any other place, they would come down there.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: They came there and worked too. And it was one man, Aaron Payton, he could pick a crab.

K.F.: Did the men seem to have a different picking style than the women?

J.F.: No. They all basically learned the same way. No, not really.

K.F.: Okay. Well we've been interviewing crab pickers up in Dorchester and Talbot and all over the Eastern Shore. And one thing I've noticed is that all the crab pickers in Crisfield are all African American, and in Dorchester County, it was all mixed, picking houses were mixed. In earlier days, they were segregated, but still mixed.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And I'm wondering if you can tell me why white ladies down here don't pick crabs?

J.F.: Back in the day, white ladies did pick crabs.

K.F.: They did?

J.F.: Yes.

K.F.: Okay. See no one has told me that.

J.F.: Yes, ma'am.

K.F.: They did.

J.F.: Yes, ma'am.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: It wasn't a whole lot, but they were there.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: Yes, ma'am. They were picking.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And up until, I think, about maybe 15 years ago, there were some still going in the crab houses picking crabs.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: Yes.

K.F.: Did they pass on or something?

J.F.: No, they just went other directions, you know. I don't think they really liked to do it, you know, 'cause it's messy, it's smelly, you know, but you know, 'cause people look at you kind of strange if you go into a store or something and you've got crab clothes on. Like if you go to a store immediately from coming from a crab house sometime, you want to stop by the store and get whatever you're going to get 'cause you're not coming back out again.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: I mean people, you know, kind of sniff their nose up at you but, look, hey, I mean you know, I've been working, you know.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And I been doing an honest day's work.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: I ain't been out here trying to hit nobody in the head try to take their money or nothing, you know. I've been down there working hard, you know. So I mean I feel that, you know, you have to -- some people, they make you feel uneasy, you know, when you go in stores like that. And some people will not, some people say I'm not going in the store with no crab clothes on. But look, if you're coming from the crab house and you need something from the store, what's the use in you coming all the way home, washing up, then you got to go all the way back down there. You know what I mean?

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

J.F.: If people on the other jobs and need something, they're going to stop by the store on their way home.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: Why can't I? You know. But I mean, you know, it makes you kind of feel uneasy when you do that. But, yes, there were white people in the crab houses. Like I said, it wasn't a whole lot. It was more African Americans than it was whites, but they were there. Yes.

K.F.: Now did the white ladies join the union as well, or was --

J.F.: Yeah, they were in the union. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: How about you, were you in the union?

J.F.: Back when they had it, yes.

K.F.: What were the union meetings like?

J.F.: I didn't really attend. I just paid my money because it was mandatory, it would come out anyway, you know. If you were in the union, you had to pay dues.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: So that would come out from -- your boss would take it out anyway. If you belonged to the union, he would always take the money out every week.

K.F.: Right, right.

J.F.: I think it was something like -- at one time, I know it was \$2.50, \$2, something like that.

K.F.: A week?

J.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). A week, yeah. Yeah.

K.F.: Now what did the union do for the crab pickers here? I mean I know what it did during the strikes and the --

J.F.: Only thing I know that --

K.F.: -- in your time.

J.F.: My time, only thing I know they get is maybe 10 or 15 cent or a quarter in pay.

K.F.: In a raise?

J.F.: In a raise, yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And it's up to, what, \$10 now, and that's where it's basically been for the last five, six or so years, maybe, 10. I can't remember when they started paying \$10 a gallon, but it's been there now for maybe -- at least five years or more.

K.F.: Okay. Now what are some of the traditions at the crab house?

J.F.: Traditions? You mean what we do while we're there? Basically you go in, you get your cans when you get in there, and you get your lids if you need lids to top your cans off with, and you wash your pans and your cans and your aprons, and you dip all that stuff. And you go ahead and sit down, and the man put the crabs up and you basically go ahead to work. We have a starting time which is, down there it's 6:00. They go in at five -- I mean at six, and we start work. And then we go ahead and sit down and start picking.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And at 9:00 every morning, we have prayer in our crab house.

K.F.: Right. Now you all are the only ones left doing that, really.

J.F.: Yeah. That's been -- that's been a tradition down --

K.F.: Forever?

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Well there used to be a point in Crisfield when the picking houses would sing, but that's --

J.F.: We do that too.

K.F.: You do still sing?

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

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: Not every day, maybe. But if somebody will come out with a song, everybody will join in. And sometimes, we have a certain good time down there, that's for sure, we really do. We really do. It's like this morning somebody started a song off, and everybody started joining in. Boy, they was going to town.

K.F.: Do you want to get a glass of water?

J.F.: No, I've caught this cold, and it's like a tickling. I just went to the drug store a while ago and got me some medicine. I took some right after I come in, but I don't think it's time for **me** to take some more.

K.F.: Now what are the songs that you sing?

J.F.: I was trying to think of the one they sang this morning. I don't know, any song that come across in your mind and somebody -- you can hear, if you, you know, you're sitting there picking, and all of a sudden you hear that little tune coming. Just any song that, you know, maybe you sang in church that Sunday, and it come across your mind and

you wanted to try it out, you start singing it and everybody start joining in. And after a while, you got the harmony coming in, and it is really beautiful. I'm telling you. And even when we sing the Lord's Prayer, we got different voices blending, and it's beautiful.

Every morning at 9:00. You weren't down there at that time yesterday, were you?

K.F.: I just missed them --

J.F.: Boy.

K.F.: I pulled in and I walked in, and they said we just finished.

J.F.: Oh, yeah.

K.F.: So I'm going to try to come tomorrow, you know, make sure you all are picking.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: And come tomorrow see if I can record the singing of the Lord's Prayer.

J.F.: Yeah. I tell you, that was really beautiful. This morning it was nice. And then I can't think of the name of that song that girl started singing, but she started singing it. And everybody just joined right in. I think one woman wanted to get happy. She was up there -- Lord, have mercy. It was really nice.

K.F.: Why do you **all** think you're the only crab house that's still doing that?

J.F.: I don't know. Maybe because -- I think we got a lot of religious people in there.

K.F.: Oh, you do?

J.F.: Yeah. We have a lot of people, preachers, women preachers.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And prophets, I guess you call `em, or missionaries.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: They're just doing their work, I guess. Just about their business, father's business, trying to bring souls to Christ.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And even at times, we have special prayer.

K.F.: Oh, you do.

J.F.: Yeah. If somebody ask for special prayer like if they have death in the family, or have some type of sickness, somebody sick in their family, they'll ask for special prayer. And different people will lead the prayer, lead a prayer, have prayer that they pray personally from their --

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: And that really sets things off And Jim, he's real good about that because he's -- I mean when he, when he knows it's prayer time, 9:00, he shuts off everything. Don't answer no telephone, don't do nothing. He just stands right up there with his head bowed too, you know.

K.F.: Really?

J.F.: Yeah. Everybody. He wants no movement from nobody. And if somebody's up there and they want to talk and stuf, he says just hold on 'til prayer's over.

K.F.: Wow, okay.

J.F.: Yeah. He honors that real -- a lot. He really do.

K.F.: Okay. Now is this the father or is this the dad?

J.F.: This is the father and the son.

K.F.: Father and the son.

J.F.: Yeah. He don't want no kind of movement at that time. Everything ceases.

K.F.: Okay. I talked to Jim Dodson this morning, and I'm going to try to interview him in two weeks. He said he was real busy this week.

J.F.: Yeah, 'cause he's running back and forth from the restaurant to the crab business.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Now what about the Mexican workers who are in there?

J.F.: They just came in there this year. Well he set 'em up last year, and I think he thought that things were going to be plentiful, but they weren't as plentiful last year. They're not even plentiful this year. But they finally learned how to pick, so he brought 'em in, and they've been doing good, really good. He got a girl down there to show 'em how to pick, and they have really progressed.

K.F.: Now do they go home to Mexico in December and come back or do they live down here some place?

J.F.: I don't think -- they live here. He sets 'em up. But they do go home, go somewhere. I ain't going to say it's home, but they go wherever they come from. Some of 'em said they live in -- one woman told me she live in Texas. Some said they come from Jersey, Delaware.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And too, it was a lot of --we don't have a lot of women now that pick. This younger generation is not going to pick no crabs like that. The older folks, they will. But these younger generation, they ain't coming in no crab house. And I think that's why because he only had a faithful few that was working. So at that time, he thought he was getting a lot of crabs, so he said well, he's going to have to do something to get some more people to come so he can get his crabs picked. So he thought of this idea of the Mexicans, and I think some kind of way it's federally funded or something maybe.

K.F.: Yup, yup. That's -- if you go into a crab house in Dorchester County, it might be two or three local women, and then 15 to 20 Mexican ladies.

J.F.: So I mean it worked out, it worked out fine. I mean at first we were saying Mexicans, what you gonna bring them in here for? But, you know, the man needs his work done, so he has to do what he has to do. 'Cause like I said, them young people is not coming in there. They're not going to do it. We have very few young people that come in the crab houses. We might get two or three that'll come in there and start off cracking claws, you know.

K.F.: And do they stay long, or --

J.F.: They stay the summer, enough 'til they get, you know, money maybe to buy clothes, school clothes with. 'Cause we have one girl in there that came every morning, she was cracking claws. And I think she made her school money for this year. They say she was making **anywhere from** 75 to \$100 a week cracking claws. So I mean that was a big help.

K.F.: Yeah. Now if you had to describe the smell of the crab house to somebody else who'd never been in it, how would you do that?

J.F.: Jesus.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: It's just a bad smell. That's all I can say. It is a bad smell, and it's worse, it's worse when you leave from there and come home and let it sit. 'Cause I'm getting sick of myself right now.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: For real. But it's just -- it's just like something that has been setting for a while. And it's gone bad. That's the way it is. That's what I say. It's just a bad smell.

K.F.: Okay. And tell me about -- somebody mentioned yesterday a work called -- I think it was bluff The extra crab meat you might have in your pan at the end of the day.

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

K.F.: Is that what it's called? Did I hear them right?

J.F.: They call -- yeah, they call it a bluff If you -- something left, you might want to give it to somebody else. Or if you have a handful and -- he don't want you to take none home, but if we got a handful and bring it out and bring it home. Make yourself a little crab cake, or a little bit of crab salad or something like that, yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: He don't want you to but, you know, a lot of times, it's not always what you -- you know, if you work in something, quite naturally if you get a taste for it, you're going to say -- well I'll go to him and ask him. I say Jim, I got a little bit of crab meat left, is it all right if I take it home, and he'll say yeah, go ahead. But he don't want you come out there with no two or three cans full. I can understand that because you're killing him.

K.F.: Right, right.

J.F.: Yeah. But if I have, if I got a taste for crab meat, and it's very seldom that I get a taste for crab meat. I got to acquire the taste in order to eat it, believe me.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: But in the summer time, I'll try to do up crab cakes, maybe 15 or 20 crab cakes, 30, 40, put in the freezer, 'cause I have people in my family that like crab meat. But I buy the crabs from him, and I bring 'em home, and I pick 'em out, and I do it like that rather than to try to take any crab meat from him. I buy the crabs from him and pick 'em out myself. And then I make my crab cakes up for the winter, and I have 'em all winter. And like if you have company coming from the city or something, you have something that you can serve 'em.

K.F.: Now is that something you usually do in the fall?

J.F.: That's what I do, yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: Yeah. It's really a tradition with me. I just like to have a few **on hand**. 'Cause I **remember some time ago**, it was a lot of people that came here from the city in the summertime, and when they came, I mean I was able to have a seafood dinner, you know, because I brought crab cakes home, I had *fzsh* in my freezer, so I mean, you know, I could go in there and fix that food for 'em, and we had a good time just like having a party.

K.F.: Well what are some of your favorite recipes for crab?

J.F.: Oh, I love crab cakes, I love the crab cakes. But like I say, I have to acquire the taste. I love crab salad. That crab salad that I make I think is good.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: And mostly, that's about all I eat of it. And sometimes I just take it and stir it up in the flying pan, you know, just warm it up and eat it like that. Maybe put a little egg in it.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And -- oh, I know. How do you get ready for the crab season to start up again every year?

J.F.: How do you get ready? Just wait for him to say it's time to go pick crabs. And, you know, I have a crab knife. I make sure I know where that is and, you know, get that and have it straight for that. I don't like no sharp knife so I don't have to do no sharpening to it, I just like my dull knife. And I got a blade that's so thin you can hardly --

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: Yeah. Maybe if you come down, I can show it to you. It's so small, real skinny.

K.F.: Okay.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: But that's the kind of knife I like. It's gotten to the point where I've picked it down just like that just by picking crabs.

K.F.: And you --

J.F.: I didn't sharpen it -- I mean I didn't shave it down or nothing. It come from wear of picking crabs.

K.F.: Okay. I know some ladies like to have like sharper --

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.F.: -- said they never have time during the season to do a whole lot because they're working most of the time in the season. And they said sometimes they'll clean their house real good before the season starts.

J.F.: Yeah. Well I do that twice a year anyway.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: About twice a year, spring and winter. Just before winter gets ready to come, I'll get all my windows washed so I don't have to, you know, so they'll be clean for the winter, or for the summer, whatever. I do that. And I'll take everything down and wash it, like the curtains and, you know, all that stuff. I'll do that. And if I have to clean rugs, you know, I do my general housecleaning. I try to do that once in the summer, beginning of summer, and beginning of winter. But I have more time in the wintertime so it pushes more to the winter. And in the spring when you're not working, you know, just before spring comes in, you want to get a spring cleaning, so you do that.

K.F.: All right. And how do you balance the two jobs you have now? How does that work?

J.F.: Well I don't do too much picking crabs now. I really don't. But when I can, I do.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE.)

K.F.: So how many days a month or a week do you pick?

J.F.: Well this year for real, because they didn't have a lot and I already have a job, I said I would leave that for them. But like see 'cause they haven't been that long really started picking and picking a full day, or a full week. So I just didn't bother about going. And the crabs were so bad this year, they're really poor this year. And I just felt like with me having a job, why go down there and take from them when they could, you know, because they have to have money in there so they can draw in the wintertime. By me having a steady job --

K.F.: What do you mean draw in the wintertime?

J.F.: See they put money, it's like putting money in the bank almost. They draw unemployment, unemployment benefits.

K.F.: Oh, right.

J.F.: And you have to have a certain amount in there so you're able to draw a certain amount.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: See. If you make -- and it has to be in quarters, in the right quarters, like I think it's June, July and August, the three quarters that they have to have a lot of money in wherein they can draw maybe \$100 or \$120, whatever. You know.

K.F.: Okay. So you're just picking crabs every once in a while?

J.F.: Every once in a while, yeah.

K.F.: Okay. And what keeps you coming back to the crab house?

J.F.: 'Cause I like doing it, like I told you. And because I want to go down and see some of the people that work there.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: Yeah. I might not see 'em, you know, every day, so I'll go down and chit-chat with 'em like that. So why not work and chit-chat?

(Laughter.)

K.F.: What is one of the more funnier moments that you remember from working at the crab house?

J.F.: Funnier moments. I know we got some funny ladies down there. They're kind of like clowns sometimes.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: We got one girl in there that'll get up in the middle of the floor on Fridays and she'll start dancing.

K.F.: Really?

J.F.: Yeah.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: Now that's a funny one. Maybe if you do come down, we could ask her to do her dance.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: You want to do your Friday dance. See how I'm cracking up? Yes, indeed. I enjoy that. They're so crazy. And sometimes somebody can get laughing and it'll be a wild, general crazy laugh, and you can get laughing off of that. It's just a funny place to be sometimes. You know, you enjoy yourself just being around everybody. Yup. But I don't know nothing else, but that kills me that she gets up and dance, she says today is Friday, today is payday, and she'll jump up in the middle of the floor and she'll get dancing.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: Oh, gosh. Yeah.

K.F.: It sounds like you all have the liveliest crab house I've seen so far.

J.F.: We do. We really do have fun. It can be sad at times, but it's fun too,

K.F.: Why is it sad?

J.F.: You know, like if somebody has a tragedy in their family, you know, and then when you have that special prayer, I mean that really gets to you. You know, you can be serious, you're serious then because you're thinking about that person that's having a difficult time. But it also can be fun.

K.F.: What's the hardest thing about picking crabs?

J.F.: The hardest thing about picking crabs is like going down there now with the crabs being so poor and you can get a lot of meat out of. That's another reason why I didn't think it was beneficial for me to go because I have to get up 5:00 in the morning in order to be to work at six. I don't get home until 12:30, so you know, it's kind of breaking my rest. Now if I do that five days in a week, it's really killing me. So, you know, I just try to go maybe two or three days a week now. But the hardest job right now is going down there when you got to pick a poor crab and you got to come home. Like in half a day's time, it used to be -- I used to come home with maybe at least anywhere from 80 to \$100 in the morning. And now I can go down there in the morning now and I can come home with 50 or 60, see, so that's a big drop.

K.F.: That is a big drop.

J.F.: So it's kind of disappointing when you got to go down there and pick a poor crab like that. And they haven't been very -- they haven't had a lot of meat in them this year, not at all.

K.F.: Do you all pick only Maryland crabs, or are you picking North Carolina and Virginia crabs too?

J.F.: Anywhere he can get 'em from.

K.F.: Okay. So sometimes you're picking --

J.F.: Yeah, 'cause he sometimes go to Virginia or Delaware -- I mean not Delaware, Virginia or South Carolina and get crabs. At the beginning of the year, he did that because they weren't -- it wasn't none here. And what was here, they were selling so high, he couldn't afford, so we had to go out of town and get 'em.

K.F.: Now what about when you used to pick the big number one Jimmy's before they started selling those off to the city --

J.F.: Oh, man.

K.F.: What was that like?

J.F.: Pick them bad boys all day long. Not all day, but about a half a day. Man, you could make some money.

K.F.: Yeah.

J.F.: You could really make some money. Especially those big crabs. I didn't like -- really, I don't like a real big crab, but I just like a good hand-size crab, you know. Fit right in there. Oh, man. That's what I, I love the joy of just picking them crabs and just seeing how many I can get out of 'em. I just love picking crabs. That's all.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: And if they had a lot right now and they were real plentiful, I'm not going to say that I wouldn't have another job, but I probably would go more. But it doesn't matter if the crab is a Jimmy crab or a sook as long as it's fat.

K.F.: Fat.

J.F.: Yup. 'Cause you can get just as much meat out of the sook crab if it's fat. But you do better with a Jimmy because it's a cleaner crab and a bigger crab.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: Yeah.

K.F.: Cleaner 'cause it doesn't have those organs in it or --

J.F.: It has the organs, but it's just -- it's just a different type. Now the sook crab is the crab that has the sweeter meat, I think.

K.F.: *Oh*, okay.

J.F.: The he crab -- the she crab.

K.F.: The she crab.

J.F.: She crab. And the Jimmy crab, the one that's the he, they're good at times, but I'd rather have that she crab to eat 'cause the meat is sweeter. And the spring of the year, they are really good. Oh, boy. Yeah. They're really good. It tastes like a piece of sugar almost. Sometimes you get one, you know, that they really taste good.

K.F.: Now how about as the crabs go through the season? Do they get tougher to pick in the fall or --

J.F.: Winter crabs are hard to pick.

K.F.: Winter crabs?

J.F.: Yeah, they're real tough. And sometimes when you first start, because you -- sometimes when you first start, they're kind of hard to pick, but the worst is the winter crab.

K.F.: Yeah. What's so tough about that?

J.F.: Because a lot of times, you're picking -- I don't know. They're just hard to pick to me. In the beginning -- dredge crabs, that's what we call 'em, dredge crabs, the kind you get under the dirt. They're the hardest to pick to me.

K.F.: Right. They're so dirty or --

J.F.: Yeah. Of course, he washes them the best he can and gets most of the dirt off of 'em, but they're just hard to pick. The shell is tougher somewhat when you go to cut 'em. The ones they got now, they ain't nothing because they don't have a lot of meat in 'em, so they're very easy to cut.

K.F.: They must be just hardening up.

J.F.: Yeah. They are just hardening up from the soft crabs.

K.F.: Okay. Well what do you think is the most important thing for us to tell people about crab picking, particularly crab picking here in the Crisfield area?

J.F.: Well that -- that's a hard one. It's not like it used to be, but it's better than a machine pick, a person picking the crab, picking the crab is better than a machine pick because you don't get as much shell. Machine, like the one I know they had one time when they said they were going to use the machine to pick **crabs, well that was fine. But they found** later that the machine was leaving a lot of shell in the crab. So still, you need that person to pick those crabs.

K.F.: **Right. How did you all feel when they announced there was a machine to pick crabs?**

J.F.: At first, I said well oh, if they got a machine, then that means we won't be picking crabs anymore, you know. But I **found** that not to be true because it was like a vibration or something, shaking the meat out of the crab. And like you say, when you do that to a crab, you're going to get a lot of bone in it. And that's what happened. So I knew it wasn't going to hurt us.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: I knew it wasn't going to hurt.

K.F.: Well somebody was telling me that there was some sort of a rivalry between oyster shuckers and crab pickers.

J.F.: What you mean, a rivalry?

K.F.: Well they said that crab pickers are considered better seafood workers or something.

J.F.: I don't think that to be true 'cause you got -- well the only thing is now a lot of men don't shuck oysters. You got a few, the few that shuck 'em, they will shuck 'em, you know. But I don't think it's a rivalry. I just think that you just don't -- it's just like the young people don't come in the crab house, you have young men that are not going to go in the oyster house. That's it basically. You got your older set of people, and they will. You know, they'll shuck -- if they got oysters, they'll go down there and shuck 'em. That's the older generation. But you're not going to get these young people to go in no oyster house and shuck no oysters. They'd rather stand on the corner first. Believe me. They might go down there and carry the oysters, like wheel 'em in to the people and that sort of thing, but they're not going to shuck.

K.F.: What do you think they're missing by not going into work like that?

J.F.: They're missing, they're missing -- they're not really missing a whole lot because I doubt if the young people actually wanted to shuck, ever wanted to shuck because shucking is nasty, just as nasty as crabs. You get all muddy, you got to wear boots, you know, you get wet. I mean I don't think they're missing nothing, but an experience, that's all.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: But as far as -- in order to do something and do it well, you got to want to do it, you know, and you got to like it. So if you don't like it from jump street, it ain't no use in you even going in there.

K.F.: How much longer do you think there will be local crab pickers in the houses?

[Crash heard outside]

J.F.: Jesus.

K.F.: Did they just hit something?

J.F.: Somebody just went down in that, damn -- Lord forgive me, Jesus. Who is that fool? How he couldn't tell whether he was going in that hole. David S -- you mean to tell me he couldn't see that ditch? He ain't all right either 'cause he ain't gonna get out of that. He ain't getting out of that.

K.F.: Nope. Looks pretty bad too.

(Laughter.)

J.F.: Lord, have mercy. But what was I saying? Jesus.

K.F.: Oh, how much longer do you think that the local crab houses will be still having local workers?

J.F.: They'll have them as long as there's crabs. Man, you're not going get out of there, I'm telling you. He's not coming out of there like that. He's going to tear that truck up. But people will go pick crabs because it's fast money, and it's not a lot of hard work picking crabs. If you've ever learned how to pick a crab, you always know how to pick a crab.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: It's not like going on anew job, you know, if you've ever learned. You're going to have to get a wrecker, baby. That's a deep ditch.

K.F.: Okay. All right. Well I guess that's it unless you want to add something.

J.F.: Not really.

K.F.: Okay. Did any of your kids learn how to pick?

J.F.: I don't have any kids.

K.F.: Oh, you don't have any kids.

J.F.: Nope. Never was fortunate enough to have any. I always wanted `em, but never had one, so I chalked it up to --

K.F.: Yeah.

J.F.: -- maybe I shouldn't say it, but I mean I'm not sorry now. Now that I see so many kids, you know, that have come and the trouble they get in. I don't know why anybody -- if I ever had one, I just want one. No more.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: No more. `Cause I see my niece, my niece had two, and she -- Huh-uh (negative). I couldn't bear it. I couldn't go through that. And kids nowadays are coming out -- they're smart when they come out. They're smart when they are born.

K.F.: Yes.

J.F.: And got a mind of their own. Don't want you tell `em nothing.

K.F.: That's true.

J.F.: You got any?

K.F.: No, but I used to be a teacher, and every year they got -- they got smarter, they also got more smart mouthed, too.

J.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yes, yes.

K.F.: So I got out of teaching.

J.F.: I said God must knew what he was doing when he didn't give me none `cause I -- I don't think I could handle raising children that won't listen, and won't mind, you know what I mean? Huh-uh (negative). `Cause everybody wants their child to be a certain way.

K.F.: Right.

J.F.: And when they're not, I mean not because you think they're better than anybody else or anything like that, but it's because you want the best for your child.

KY.: Right.

J.F.: And when they grow up and go their own way, and don't want to listen to you, it just aggravates you and makes you mad, you know. So I mean, but nothing you can do about it. You got to let them go out there and experience it.

K.F.: That's right.

J.F.: But it's hard for you to do that.

K.F.: Oh, I know. I haven't asked you about the crab picking contest.

J.F.: You know --

K.F.: How many times have you won, Joyce?

J.F.: Eight.

K.F.: Eight. Okay.

J.F.: The man come today and asked me was I going to pick, and I told him no. Crab picking is not -- the contest is not the way it used to be.

K.F.: How so?

J.F.: It used to be fun.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: But now, I mean, they're just coming in and just -- it's just like it's, I'm the best and I'm going to, you know --

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: You understand what I'm saying?

K.F.: Yeah.

J.F.: But I don't know. I think I'm getting tired of competing. But he did ask me, and then my boss -- when I come, when I was getting ready to come out, he said we want you to be in the contest, and I said well I don't want to be in the contest. So he said now I'm telling you now, we all really want you. But I just, I just can't make up my mind. I don't know what I'm going to do. But the man told me if I wanted to, just let him know, but I don't know. For right now, my mind says no. So I don't know. I ain't going to say. I might and I might not. But I don't have my name down as of yet, and it's fast approaching.

K.F.: Yeah. Now what made you decide to get into the contest the first year you got it?

J.F.: I don't know. I -- they kept asking me, for one thing, at the crab house. And every year, I would say no, no, no, I ain't going to do that, I ain't going to do that. Then I got into it, and I went out there. And the first year, I don't think I did anything too good. But you know what I did? I put the lump in one can, and the special in the other. I didn't realize that everybody was picking everything in there all together.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: So when I got done, I had two great big cans of lump sitting up there all pretty. And the rest of my meat, the little white meat, I had that too. So I think that kind of slowed me down. But I did good, you know, I wasn't too far behind anybody. So the next year, I said well I'm learning. So the next year, I said well I'll put all mine together too just like everybody. So that particular year, I did win, the next year.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: And after I won that year, they said well you know you got to get back in it so you can see if you win again, you know. And it was just like -- so that's the reason why I kept competing.

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

J.F.: Now I understand that me and Hazel have two -- she got eight and I got eight. First time winners. But I'm just tired. Tired of competing. And like I said, it's not like it used to be. Not to me. It was just a fun thing. Now they get more serious, get more foolish. I say.

K.F.: Okay, right.

J.F.: So I'd rather, you know, I mean I don't like no foolishness, and I don't like no -- I mean I know you're competing, but I don't think it's got to be animosity in it. You understand?

K.F.: Yeah.

J.F.: So rather than have to go through all that stuff, I just stay out. That's the way my mind is telling me now. But if I decide, it'll be in the next couple of days, but I don't think I am this year. Now I might come back in maybe two or three years and go back out there again. But I don't know. That's the way I did it before. I wasn't in it for about two, three years, and then I went back last -- the 50th anniversary, and I won that one. So but that was a \$500 win. 'Cause for the 50th year, they had, instead of -- see it's been 250

and \$300 for first prize. But this particular year, because it was the 50th anniversary, they decided to get \$500. And I went out there and won that. So I mean I think it was a shock to everybody because I don't think nobody knew I was going to pick.

K.F.: Oh, really?

J.F.: Huh-uh (negative). I didn't tell nobody. And I don't know whether anybody else did or not. But I think I shocked `em when I got out there and they saw I was going to pick. I think they thought I was just there to look. So I don't know. Maybe that was what made me win that year. But I don't know.

K.F.: What about this trip to Pittsburgh that Hazel was telling me about that you guys went on?

J.F.: It was nice. We started going -- this man from Pittsburgh used to come down to Byrd's, and he always bought meat from there. And he was -- one of his top buyers. So he said well since we got the crab picking contest, why don't we have an all expense-paid trip to go to Pittsburgh for the first place and second place winner. And what we did was, we would go -- he got a great big store up there sells everything, all kinds of seafood, all kinds of meats, all kinds of everything. He just had a great big store, it's called America. And that's where it started from. He said have the first place winner, we're going to have `em fly out, we're going to put `em up for a week and have `em come down, and this is another way of me getting my crab meat in the store. So that's what we did. We'd go down, and we were on display in his store, and people was coming in, and we was showing `em how to pick crabs, or showing `em how we pick crabs. And they would buy the meat.

K.F.: Now were any of them trying to learn how to pick the crabs?

J.F.: Some of `em asked how do you do this, and you know what I mean. But it was just a week's experience. It was really nice. I really enjoyed that trip. I really did. It was just something to look forward to every year.

K.F.: So you went more than once?

J.F.: Yes, yes.

K.F.: Oh, I didn't know that.

J.F.: My, Lord. I went, I think that -- when Hazel went, that was my third time, third time, I think. Yeah. It was nice. I enjoyed it.

K.F.: How did you feel with you being on display there in the store and people coming in watching you?

J.F.: It didn't bother me.

K.F.: No?

J.F.: No, Huh-uh (negative). `Cause they do the same thing in the crab house. You know --

K.F.: Oh, they let people come in?

J.F.: Yeah. People will come in and they say, you know, visitors in town, and they said we want to see how they pick crabs. So he'll let them put on crab hats and stuff, and they can come to the front and watch, and then they can just walk around, walk through. And they ask you how do you do this, and how do you do that. So I mean it's no different.

K.F.: Okay.

J.F.: But that was a nice trip. I enjoyed it. He would fly us down. He had his own -- well his girlfriend was, at the time it was his girlfriend, now she's his wife. She was a steward on an airplane, airline.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

J.F.: So that was one way of -- you know, I guess it didn't cost him as much to get us on. But that was an enjoyable trip. For a whole week. And then on that Saturday night before we left, we would go -- he would take us out, take us out that last Saturday night. Buy anything we wanted to eat. We'd go out to dinner. Dress up and buy dinner. And if you want to dance, whatever, we had a good time. It was really nice. And he showed us around.

K.F.: Yeah. Yeah.

J.F.: Took us different spots. It was really nice. And Pittsburgh is a beautiful town.

K.F.: It is nice.

J.F.: Yes, it is. I wouldn't mind staying there.

K.F.: Until about January. And then --

J.F.: Then it's cold.

K.F.: Then it's cold.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Cold and very gray. Okay. Well I guess that's about it.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)