

Interview Log

Interviewee: Patty Lowe **Tape #:** OH136

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BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: It's September the 9th, and we're *here* with Patty Lowe, and we're going to talk about crab picking in the Fairmount area. And her mother's going to join us shortly.

Okay. Patty, if I can just have you say your name and where you were born.

P.L.: Okay. My name's Patricia Lowe, and I was born in Rumley, Maryland.

K.F.: Can I ask what year?

P.L.: Yeah. Let me think. '68.

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

P.L.: It's really not changed. It's pretty much the same way it was 31 years ago. It's not changed much at all. Now the crab houses down there, they're more up to date than they used to be. But other than that, everything's pretty much the same.

K.F.: And what is the principle income for people here in this area?

P.L.: Not much. It's really what they make on the water is what they live on down here. So they do pretty good, though, I'd say. Their income, you know. I can't really say how much because I don't know, but the income's pretty good for down here, especially in the summer. Now in the winter, it kind of dies off 'cause there's no oysters down here, so they have to go up to like Kent Island, up that way.

K.F.: And what did your parents do?

P.L.: They were watermen. My father was a crabber, and my mother was a housewife until she learned how to pick crabs on her own.

K.F.: Okay. Now is that how people usually learn how to pick crabs down here?

P.L.: I'm not really sure. I'm not really sure if they were taught from their parents, or they were taught from somebody that was more experienced, you know, back then. But she just taught herself, she just picked up a crab one day and just started picking it.

K.F.: Well how did you learn how to pick?

P.L.: She taught me.

K.F.: And how did she pick?

P.L.: She just put the crab in her hand, and showed me how to, you know, chop the knuckles without letting the crab go. 'Cause the main important part is to keep that crab in your hand the whole time. It's faster. And then once your knuckles were cut on both sides, then you split down the middle and unfold it, and that was all your meat.

K.F.: Okay. And at what age did she teach you?

P.L.: I was about eight, about eight years old when I first started learn how, and it was about four years later before I got any good at it.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: I tell you. I was teasing her the other day, and I was like I don't like you for this, teaching me how to do this. My sister was also, she was about eight years old too when she started 'cause she had to -- my mother had to ask her and my older brother to drop out of school to help out around the house because my father got bad off, and she couldn't, mom couldn't do it on her own, raise us. So Bobby and Carolyn quit when they were in the 11th grade, and Bobby went on the water, and Carolyn picked crabs.

K.F.: Was that at home, or was that --

P.L.: At home.

K.F.: So your mom was really supporting the family.

P.L.: Yeah, she -- yeah, she did pretty much on her own. My father had a problem with more than, you know, with alcohol and stuff, and she pretty much had to raise us on her own.

K.F.: And you said -- you told her you weren't very happy that she taught you how to pick crabs.

P.L.: No.

K.F.: Why is that?

P.L.: No. Because it is the boringest job I think I've ever done. It takes so long, you know, and you just sit there, and you sit there, and you look down in the bottom of the basket, and you can't see the bottom. It seems like it takes forever. I'm like how can they get that many crabs in one bushel basket. And it takes a while. Takes a while. It takes longer to go back through it after you done it because you have to make sure all these little shells are out 'cause nobody wants to be eating that. Bite into a crab cake -- crunching shells, that's awful.

K.F.: And who really were the customers for your mom?

P.L.: Back then, I don't really know. Now she -- like Outen Brothers in Pocomoke, up in Salisbury, Price Buick Pontiac and Carvel Hall Motors. People my father knew when he was living, there's been many people that bought from her. And now that she's not, she's not picking for herself now, she's picking for other people now. So she picks for Phil Parks in Rumley.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: They have their license, so what she does, she picks their crabs for 'em, and every Saturday, they go up to Laurel Flea Market, up to Bargain Bill's, and they set up up there, they have license to do that. So she picks for 'em all through the week.

K.F.: Now Bill Parks, do they have other pickers or --

P.L.: No, just mom.

K.F.: How does that work?

P.L.: They -- what crabs they catch, they steam 'em, take 'em up there to her, and then they pay her for so much, the pounds she gets out of the meat, just like, you know, extra money on the side.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: And then sometimes my brother's wife, Sam, she helps 'em, helps mom. But as far as doing it for their own self now, I think mom's pretty much gotten out of it for now.

K.F.: I hadn't heard of a situation where, I guess, the crab house owner would steam it and take to somebody to have them pick it.

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. He's about the only one that does do it.

K.F.: Really?

P.L.: Because they have their own steamer down there. 'Cause a lot of 'em that wants her to pick for 'em don't. There's a few of 'em down there like Jeff Holly and Ray Lee Latimore, they bring 'em to her and she steams 'em for 'em.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And I guess if they're going to the flea market to sell it, it's really more local customers than it is trying to ship it off the shore like some of the bigger --

P.L.: Yeah, I don't think nobody down here ships it.

K.F.: Really?

P.L.: I don't remember anybody ever shipping it down here.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: They ship soft crabs, and hard crabs they don't sell, you know, steam, they ship them to Crisfield.

K.F.: Okay. I was familiar with, you know, the soft crab industry down here through another project that I had done, but I didn't know people were picking.

P.L.: Yeah. There's still a few down here that picks. Now Judy Bozman, she picks. But she doesn't, I don't think she sells. I mean I can't say that she does or don't. But she's been picking for right many years. And she picks in the crab house also. But let's see. A few other ones down in Frenchtown were picking, but I'm not sure they're still picking 'cause they're getting some age on 'em now. I think they pretty much give it up.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: But I think there's more pickers there used -- here last two years, there was more pickers here than it was just about anywhere in Somerset, Maryland, Somerset County.

K.F.: That's what I've been thinking. There are hardly any left in Crisfield at all.

P.L.: No, I think -- I can't even remember. I don't know if Handy's, Handy's Seafood down in Crisfield, they used to do it.

K.F.: Yeah. They're strictly soft crabs.

P.L.: And there was another one down there when I was -- let's see, I was 16, 15 -- I was 17 'cause I was pregnant with my daughter, and I picked down there. I can't remember who I was picking for.

K.F.: And what was Handy's like when you worked down there?

P.L.: I was in the soft crabs more than I was picking for them.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.L.: I'd wrap the still, you know they call 'em still, the dead ones, I'd clean 'em and we'd wrap 'em, and they were shipped out. So I did that until I had my daughter, Kelly, then I stopped everything. And then I picked that with the picking crabs, and I stopped that after my youngest son was born. So I haven't picked crabs now in about five years. Other than picking for like if we want crab cakes or something.

K.F.: Right, right. Well what was good about picking crabs?

P.L.: The money. The money.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: And how much would you earn, say?

P.L.: Well it all depends. If you -- I got a lot of orders up in Price Buick Pontiac too. And his -- a guy named Bill up there, his wife worked to Peninsula Insurance up on downtown plaza way. And I would get sometimes anywhere from 30 to 40 pound a week order. So you times that -- well then it was \$8 a pound. Now it's skyrocket.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: Yeah, so I was only getting \$8 a pound for it. So I mean anywhere from 40, 50 pounds times 8, pretty good money.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: But it was a lot of responsibility in getting it to 'em like that too because that's a lot of crab meat, and you had to keep that on ice, keep that cold, 'cause that stuff will rot within seconds. Don't last long. You can keep it in a cold refrigerator maybe two days, maybe three at tops. But after that, it's no good. I guess all the juice and the, you know, the crab smell.

K.F.: So what would you have to do? If somebody ordered 50 pounds, would you have to pick it all within one or two days to get it to them, or how --

P.L.: About a week. We would deliver up in Salisbury on Fridays. And if I couldn't fill my orders with the crabs I got, then mom would help out. And then we'd, you know, just keep track of what she -- how many pounds she had. But we took a lot of crab meat out of here.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: Yeah.

K.F.: Now what did you all pack it in?

P.L.: There's, they're containers, they're pound containers with lids on `em.

K.F.: The plastic ones or --

P.L.: Yeah, we used the plastic ones. And most of the time, they had on the lids it was either special, or lump, or claw, and we marked it. But we didn't get too many orders for the lump. That's hard to get. I mean it's easy, but it slows you down. It really slows you down `cause you have to take that knife and kind of -- it's a certain way you just have to kind of twist around and get that ball of lump to look like that, and to stay like that in that cup. So when it come to lump, I get a hold of mom. Say mom, we got a couple of lump orders here. And she hated it too `cause you never could get that lump to just stay perfect. By the time you drop it in that cup, it would fall right apart.
(Laughter.)

K.F.: So you guys were really picking more special and claw than --

P.L.: We didn't have too many claws. No.

K.F.: What did you do with your claws?

P.L.: We could sell it when we took it with us, but we didn't have many orders for claw. A lot of people don't like that. I think more people's with the crab meat than the claw. Claw's good meat, though, but claw's better for like a salad, making like crab imperial or something like that. Claw's more for that, like a crab dip. I don't know why.

K.F.: I've had a few people tell me it makes better crab cakes.

P.L.: Claw?

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

P.L.: I don't think it does `cause claw's very hard to keep together because it's dry. Claw meat's real dry and don't stay moist long. If you leave it in a cup without a lid on it, set it on the counter and get up the next morning, it's like rocks. It is, it hardens right up, when your crab meat doesn't.

K.F.: Now what did it mean for your family when you were raising your kids for you to have this income?

P.L.: It was -- it meant a lot. It helped out a lot here. `Cause where he was working and I was picking, and as far as the kids, they loved it `cause they knew mom was going to spend more money on them than dad would.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: But it was nice having extra money. It helped out a lot around here.

K.F.: Do you want to get the phone?

P.L.: Yeah, excuse me.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE.)

K.F.: Now have you taught your daughter how to pick?

P.L.: Huh-uh (negative). I don't think I ever will.

K.F.: Why not?

P.L.: Just -- she's very smart, very intelligent child. She's got more out, you know, more of a lookout towards life than picking a stinking crab.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And I hope she stays, I mean she's very intelligent, very smart, very smart child, and I just can't see her doing that. She'll pick `em now, as far as just eating `em. We steam `em, we steam `em up. The boys go down there to this ditch here and they catch crabs, and they eat crabs two or three times a week. Now she can pick `em and eat `em, but far as just helping you or something, like she goes down to mom's, mom would be like Kelly, why don't you get a knife, help mom-mom crack these claws. Oh, gosh, she'll stay, I ain't doing that, mom-mom. I'm like good, you go, girl. She doesn't like `em at all.

K.F.: Well now can you tell me, you were talking a little while back about how you used to sit on the picnic table.

P.L.: Right here in the yard.

K.F.: Okay. Can you tell me more about the set up you would have at the picnic table?

P.L.: Just my stainless steel bowl and my knife, and a crab basket beside me. My cigarettes and my coffee.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And that was it. And when I was done I'd, you know, clean the mess up, and Barry would take the shells and take `em down to the, this is an old dump down here, so he just took `em down there and dumped `em. `Cause they used to -- years ago, they used to -- over in the water, and now if they catch you it's a big fine.

K.F.: Yeah, it really is.

P.L.: So you have to take `em to a landscape -- land fill, you know, county dump now. But that's what I'd do. I'd sit out there. And I was telling Pat earlier we had, before we had this front porch closed in, if the mosquitoes got real bad, I'd move up on the porch and sit out there 'til 12, 1:00 in the morning.

K.F.: Really?

P.L.: Yeah. I've picked up `til two, 3:00 in the morning before.

K.F.: Wow. And what time would you start picking?

P.L.: Well most of the time, I would go ahead and steam `em, and get `em out of the way and let `em be cooling. And then I'd get the kids their bath and put them to bed, because they were -- it was hard trying to deal with them, you know, keeping them out of the crabs and me picking. So I'd start about 9:00, about 9:00 at night. That was only if I had big orders I had to fill through the week. I wouldn't do it -- but I'd start about nine. I'd get done sometimes two, 3:00 in the morning. But I had three, four bushel I had to get done too. So it was tough. And some nights out on that porch the mosquitoes would eat me up. I'd have welts on me. I'd feel like I could take `em and just chunk `em right off the porch. It's aggravating `cause we never, we couldn't never afford anything, you know, well enough to pick in. So you had to make out the best you could do.

K.F.: Right. Now if you were picking at night, were you taking care of your kids during the day?

P.L.: Well one of `em was going to school half a day, and then my oldest boy, he was small, so he would sleep, most babies sleep if you're lucky. Then I'd get a couple hours

"I-

-sleep, and get up 7, 8:00 in the morning, clean the house or, you know, do what I had to do. Then that evening, back to picking.

K.F.: So this was really a job that you could work into your daily family routine.

P.L.: Oh, yeah. `Cause sometimes if I didn't really have to break my neck or rush to get these orders, a lot of people I had orders for, they were very patient. So it's nothing I had to stop giving my family, you know, my family life up for the crabs. I didn't have, never had to do that.

K.F.: Right. Now the orders for like, you know, 40, 50 pounds of crab meat, did that come from one person, or would it be a couple people?

P.L.: No. Usually me and mom could do it.

K.F.: And who, I mean who would order it? Would they order 50 pounds at one time or

P.L.: Oh, no. You're talking about just like one person.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: No. There's a lot of people works at Price Buick Pontiac. You have the parts department, you have the service department. And one guy would just kinda like let me call back, and he'd just make his rounds. And one person would take maybe six, seven pounds, one person take five or six pounds, and back -- like down the street, Carvel Hall Motors, they take -- one person takes six or seven, you know, it would add up.

K.F.: What was the busiest time of the season for you guys?

P.L.: In picking? The earliest part of summer, the beginning of summer, and right before fall, `cause a lot of people like to have their meat to freeze for the winter.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: And then the summer, they waited all winter to get the crabs. So once they got wind of us picking, yeah.

K.F.: Now how did you guys sort of let people know that you were starting to pick?

P.L.: I don't really know. I pretty much got that after mom. She had so many people, orders and stuff And then she just asked more or less if I would help her, you know. So I got more, I got more of my orders from her really.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: People she's known. And then when she stopped, if I was picking, I'd just continue going on with `em. `Cause you satisfy `em and, you know, make `em happy. You get some phone calls, they call you back.

K.F.: You were mentioning some of the regulations related to the home pickers that Maryland had. Can you tell me how that has affected you guys in what you do?

P.L.: Nothing. Nothing's had an effect on us all. You mean more or less like you're saying competition more or less what you're saying?

K.F.: That or any problems with the health department coming through or anything.

P.L.: Oh, no. There was one woman down Rumley that worked to Battleford Ridge dealing -- my mother worked there for many years. And there was a woman that worked down there with her. Marie Holland. And she's a wing-ding. And she got in an argument with mother, my mom, one day at work, and she reported her. But nothing came out of it. Because when they went down there, and it was kind of sad because mom had so many pounds of crab meat, and had crab baskets of chum sitting beside her. And Marie Holland called her and told her she reported her, and they were on their way down. And mom just

chunked it all out in the water. I mean had no choice 'cause if you got caught, there's no way you could've -- we'd been able to afford the fine. And she just chunked it. And they never did show up. So she was more or less pulling her leg, but still comes and watches out for her. Just one of them want to get even type people. But other than that, we haven't been bothered. Haven't been bothered with the -- there's been a couple, you know, I don't know how you say it really, close calls I guess you'd say it with mom. I mean we had a crab house running down, and we were renting from a guy. And we call it the New Jersey peeler run.

K.F.: What is that?

P.L.: Down here when the peelers and the crabs aren't very good, well a couple years ago, New Jersey, up in New Jersey, they had so many crabs, they just had nowhere for 'em. So they would bring -- their truck would come down here and bring thousands of bushels of crabs, peelers. And we would buy 'em.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: And they were like 35 cent a piece. But you could double your money. So we had like eight floats going. So we got into it. And I had a ball. I mean I just -- man, that was so nice. You know, just peelers in the pond floats, but it was a 24-hour shift. There's no stopping at all. Barry, he'd go down in the evenings, and he'd have to come home and, you know, he would fix the dinner, take care of the kids, and he'd have to go to sleep 'cause he'd have to get up and go to work the next morning. And I was down the shanty until the sun come up, then we swapped. Which I had a babysitter here. She lived with me, so that was a big help. And when the kids would get to sleep and I'd come back home, I'd take my babysitter down with me. And it was just like these hard crabs rolling around these floats one minute, and millions of soft crabs the next. And you have to get 'em out because they'll harden up. And I remember one night down there, we were so tired. You know how you get real tired and you get the giggles. So I took Erica down with me. And Bobby was right next door, my brother has his crab house. And I was just dipping away, you know, I was like -- and I got -- Bobby, come help me, come help me, you know. I couldn't believe it. It was fun. It was really fun. Tiresome, but fun. And I got into that. And Bobby, he taught me how to pack my crabs 'cause you have to -- your jumbos are the biggest soft crabs you can get, and you had to layer them in so many rows. And then on the other side, you know, you take this white piece of paper, and you lay over it. And then we'd get pine shafts, put that on top, and then pack it with ice. So he taught me how to do that, and in about two days' time, I had that down. We have done some stuff

(Laughter.)

K.F.: So this was your own little crab house that you guys had that --

P.L.: No. It was a guy named Bobby Bradshaw's.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: He had bought -- it was on my mother's land, and he bought a piece of land from her. And he set up. But now he's sold out, and some other people has it now, but we rented it, we used it for the New Jersey peeler run.

K.F.: Has that happened since?

P.L.: No. No, it hasn't.

K.F.: Just that one time.

P.L.: Yeah. So far, the crabs have been pretty plentiful. They're hoping here soon, if this weather holds up, it's going to be another run, peeler run here soon down here 'cause a lot of 'em shutting down, there's no crabs. Gone.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: So they said if the weather holds up, they'll be having another crab run in a couple more weeks. That puts a hurting on a lot of people, 'cause it's early yet. It's early. And if I'm not mistaken, I don't think they start oystering until October, somewhere like that.

K.F.: Yeah. I think that they even start somewhere --

P.L.: Yeah. So they're like sometimes a month or better with no income whatsoever until they can get up to bed oyster. We've tried a little bit of everything with these crabs. But that was fun. That was fun. And I was telling you mother had some very close calls. 'Cause I was laying up on the car hood one morning. And wasn't no sense to coming home 'cause I knew I'd have to go right back down there.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: So I just kind of like sprawled out on the car hood. And about that time, I heard this voice say, ma'am, could you tell me where such and such was? And I jumped up and it was the marine cop -- the coast guard. And I wanted to holler so bad, mom, you know, get out of the crab house or do something, but it was nothing I could do. And she was sitting there just picking. But he walked right on in but never said a word to her.

K.F.: Really?

P.L.: Never said a word to her. And he was looking for somebody down there, and she told him where the person was, and he thanked her and left, But I thought I was just going to die.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: Of all people, look up to a marine, and there I was asleep on a car hood. And I wanted to scream mom, get out of there, you know. I just knew they were going to just haul her away.

K.F.: What is the fine if you get caught?

P.L.: I'm not really sure. I'm not really sure at all. It changes so much. But just about every person in Smith Island had fined for that pound net crab meat over here. And but I think a lot of 'em -- now there's a lot of over there picking in Smith Island. Tangier and Smith Island. Now that's the crab pickers. You want to see a person pick a crab, go take a trip over there one evening and watch 'em. Can't even hardly see their knife moving they pick so fast. Never in my life seen it, nothing like it. And a lot of 'em come over from Smith Island to the hard crab derby and enter that picking contest. They can pick 'em over there. But they're set up. I think now after that big crab bust thing, they've pretty much gotten set up where they can pick.

K.F.: Yeah. They've got a co-op going over there. They've got the regulated building and all that kind of stuff

P.L.: Yeah.

K.F.: What are some of your other memories of working the crabs in this area with your mom?

P.L.: When we had the floats in the water years ago.

K.F.: Oh, right, and not on land.

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And back then, you had like drop cords with the bulbs, the drop lights. That's what you had hanging on poles over top the water. And you had crab floats, they float, you know, they float. And you'd have to get in this little skiff and go out to `em and fish `em up, bring your crabs back in. And that was fun `cause I used to go out with mom `cause mom was scared to death of the dark, you know. And like the boat would get rocking or something she'd say oh, Patty, don't do that, don't do that, you know.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: But that was fun. And I used to go out with dad. But that was fun, though. That was interesting. Everybody down there had floats on the water then. And you had to get on the boat to get to your crabs. But there was also a lot of crab picker thieves back then too.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.L.: Yes, `cause you could just kind of like in the mornings go out, get on your way out the crabbing, you know, the river, they'd just swoop, a lot of `em done that.

K.F.: Oh, really.

P.L.: A lot of `em. But everybody, far as I can remember back, everybody had crabs in the water. There was nothing up on land at the time.

K.F.: Do you remember when stuff started moving to up on land, what age you might've been?

P.L.: Well I was 14 when my father died, and he still -- or did he have -- I can't remember if he had floats in the water then or not. I'd say probably when I was about 12 when everybody started moving up. And really you had no choice `cause the water got so polluted. It was just crabs were dying.

K. F.: Oh.

P.L.: But pretty much everybody has built up, I was telling you, I was also letting you know about the main crab house down in Rumley, used to be Lou Mazelio. That's the only one that's -- well it's not running now `cause they left and moved to Florida. But it's the only crab house that has the pier and still the whole set up exactly down there.

K.F.: Is it still up there in Rumley?

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: It is. And it's Lou --

P.L.: It's Jean Mazelio and Louis Mazelio used to live there. That would be a beautiful picture if you ever want to take a picture of that. Just like around, I don't know what time the sun goes down now, but when that sun goes down off of that water, it's a beautiful picture, very pretty picture with that old crab house out in the water like that. But other than that one, and -- that's about the only crab house down there now. Everybody's moved off. But you had no choice either. The tide and the weather.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: It's a lot better on `em now `cause they're on land and it's a lot easier too. `Cause how my brother has it set up, he walks in one door when he gets off the boat from crabbing, and walks out the side door and goes right to his floats. So it's a lot easier. He's under cover a lot.

K.F.: Right. Now can you describe to me when all the floats were in the water and -- I mean I've been to Rumley and Frenchtown, I know everybody's shanties and piers are

right next to each other. What was it like with all the women down there fishing up the crabs and cleaning the crabs?

P.L.: A lot of the women never done it.

K.F.: Oh, really? It was just the men?

P.L.: It was more the men. In just about everybody's family but us, you know. 'Cause mom, she took care of all that. I mean dad, he crabbed until he got sick where he couldn't crab anymore. But she would bait the trot lines and get him ready to go crabbing the next morning. She'd make sure the crabs were steamed and packed and put on ice. So as soon as his feet hit the shore, he was gone. You know, he'd holler mom, I was in. That was all you seen of him 'til the next morning. And they trot lined a lot. Well daddy used -- well back then, my dad would use eel. You would chop it. Buy your whole eel, and you'd chop it and put it in a big barrel and salt it down. And then you have the special hoops on a string. And every -- maybe every foot, there was a piece of eel. And that was thrown over, and that's how they caught the crabs. I've been out with mom and dad a couple times when they used to do that. You know. Dad used to get on mom a lot because you had to -- back then, you didn't have no automatic roller. So you had to pull it by hand. And about that time dad was saying mom, here comes that doubler, don't you miss that. And sure enough, she'd miss it. Gosh. Oh, goodness, you can only imagine. I don't believe you missed my doubler, you know. And that's a long day out on the water too.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE.)

K.F.: Well what about Harold Bozman's picking house? Did you work in that sometimes?

P.L.: No, I've never worked there.

K.F.: You never worked there.

P.L.: We had one open right beside where we used to live in Rumley, where I used to live in Rumley, and I picked there.

K.F.: Oh, okay. What was that one called?

P.L.: That was when Edward Dize had it open. We picked there with -- there's a few colored ladies that's up here to Harold's that was down here with us.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.L.: But now a lot of the girls that I used to pick with when we were all younger has grown up, had, you know, their kids and gotten out of it too. No, we've had a ball in them old crab houses.

K.F.: Can you tell me what that was like?

P.L.: That was fun. If you were in a bad mood or depressed, you walk in there and give yourself a half an hour, you would be on all four laughing with these colored girls. And just talking about like, you know, like their boyfriends or husbands. There was an older lady down there, she kept telling us just about every day one of these days I'm going to find me a nice looking young man, and I mean she said this for years. And sure enough, she did about after about five years, she did. I see her all the time. And we would laugh at her, and she was a right older lady. And she was like I'm young yet. I'm going to find me a nice looking young man, you know. And the way they talk would crack you up.

K.F.: Like how?

P.L.: Just the way they talk, you know. They get their necks working and their hands going and the things they would come off with you just couldn't help but laugh. But they

would get singing, you know, church songs and hymns. And they would get going. About that time, there was a girl down there, her name was Cindy. And they would all get singing, and about that time you'd hear her take her knife and just kind of tap and get with the rhythm, the music. And Mary Lou, she would come in, that was Edward Dize's sister. She would come in, and she would get going on, what in the world are you all doing in here? You're supposed to be picking, not singing and carrying on. Just getting `em going `cause they always -- they'd be like oh shut up, Mary Lou, and get on back out the door, and they start singing, rolling in again. They were the good old days.

K.F.: Now did everybody sing, or just the black women?

P.L.: No, just the ones that could sing. The ones that couldn't, like me, would shut up and listen. Mom, she never sung. She would, at home like she knew it, but a lot of songs they would sing, we had no idea what they were singing, you know, `cause they were in their type of music, and we were in ours. So -- but they do have a voice. Some of them colored people really have talent. They don't need the instruments to get `em going. You know, like one starts, and the others, you know, kind of blend in with `em, they really got some good voices on `em.

K.F.: Okay. And did you notice, would they start singing for any particular reason?

P.L.: No. They would sit down there and get talking about like a song or something they seen on t.v. the day before, and they'd get down there and be like did you see them awards last night, or the music awards? And such and such was on there singing, she had a good voice. And I guess it would just kind of click in their head what that person was singing and they would start singing it. Just right out of the blue. But them girls would tell you anything, or just talk about stuff you wouldn't believe. It was something.

K.F.: How is that crab house set up on the inside? Can you walk through?

P.L.: Yeah, you can walk right around. It was just like a big stainless steel long table. It held about 15, 20 people.

K.F.: One table?

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: And you just walk around it, and you had them big trash barrels like them 50 gallon trash barrels, then you had one in between each one of us. Then when they were full, they would come around and dump `em. And it was a little, like a little cubby hole like you see like people selling popcorn or such. Like a little booth. And when their crabmeat cups were full, we'd take `em up there and Mary Lou would weigh `em for us. And if they were full, she'd pop the lids, you know, snap the lids on and mark `em. And she kept bookwork on it, you know, how much I made, or how many I picked today. And we would pick Monday through Friday and get paid Saturdays.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.L.: Down there. We wouldn't get paid every day.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: Now my mom and I, we grew up beside of Edward and his wife, Cybil. So if we ever needed any money for something, we could get it from `em, but they paid crab checks on Saturdays.

K.F.: And who sat around you? Do you remember?

P.L.: No, not -- well it was just like everyday. It wasn't the same, you know. You didn't have a seat, you know, a specific seat. I'd have like, you know, one girl one day would be Cindy or the next day would be her niece, Mindy Corbin up here. And I'd sit by a woman, her name was -- they called her -- what did they call her? She lives right down the road here, big colored woman. I can't remember her name now. I do, but I can't say it, you know. Just different ones. Mom would sit beside me or we just plopped wherever we could get a seat.

K.F.: Okay. And where did they dump the crabs for you to pick?

P.L.: He would take `em and put `em in the back of the -- oh, the crabs we picked?

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: They were spread right on top the table right in front of us.

K.F.: And were you picking across from somebody usually?

P.L.: Usually, Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). Usually, you know, the girls would come down and sit beside -- you know, in front of us. And we'd just kind of work out of the same pile. And when the crabs got low, they'd bring more in, dump `em.

K.F.: And were there -- was there anybody who was known for picking over the crabs or anything like that?

P.L.: No.

K.F.: No?

P.L.: No. Never happened --I've never known anybody doing it.

K.F.: Some of the bigger houses, they talk about, you know, you don't want to sit next to so and so because they pick over the crabs and leave you all the little thin ones that don't have any meat.

P.L.: No, they were pretty decent about that down here `cause they knew we were all picking for the same reason, pretty much, for money, and you know, if you seen a bigger crabs than theirs, you know, you just wait, I mean you know, you just grab to pick. I mean that's the idea of it. You get in there and you pick and you get what you got to get done, and how many pounds you think you're going to do. Like we would go over there. I'd say well I pick maybe six or seven pound today and I'm going home.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: And there was no time limit. You got done. You get home. If crabs were on the table and the girls were tired, or they've been there any more than eight, nine hours a day, they'd break the crabs back off and stick `em in the cooler to be picked the next morning.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.L.: As long as they stay cold and the backs are on the crabs, they last longer. So we would just kinda get them first thing in the morning before they would steam the newer ones.

K.F.: Uh-huh (*Affirmative*). And how long did you work at this house?

P.L.: I probably picked there off and on for no more than two, maybe two and a half years. So I got out of that.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: When we were allowed to go walking, or go to sleep-overs and stuff, good-bye crabs, you know. Gone. But it was fun if you look back at it. It's interesting talking about it, you know, `cause the questions you ask are, you know, brings back stuff.

K.F.: Well that's what the project's trying to do is have people talk about their experiences as a picker, because I think that's the part that when people come to the Eastern Shore as a visitor, they never see those things, they don't know about them.

P.L.: Huh-uh (negative).

K.F.: That's part of what the museum's trying to do.

P.L.: Right. I think it should be brought back. There's a lot more history than people give it credit for in this place here. And, you know, as far as the crabs and the crab floats being in the water and stuff back then.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: Which it was. Onetime a day you never had to go to Kent Island or Cape Charles or anywhere like that to oyster. It was plenty of `em here. `Cause Harold Bozman was the one that brought the oysters back.

K.F.: Oh, okay. So his operation really was crabs and oysters at one point.

P.L.: Always. Always has been a crab -- waterman. And the operation, you know, like the business. He was more in the business. Have somebody else to do for him.

K.F.: What about net fishing, like pound netting or anything like that?

P.L.: Not this year, I don't know of anybody doing it. Now Denny Bozman, he's done it. He done it last year.

K.F.: Okay. Several people told me that that was making a come back here on the bay side `cause the crabs have been so bad last year, a couple people have gotten into it.

P.L.: I don't know.

K.F.: Well what do you think would be the most important thing for a visitor to know about crab picking here in this, in the Fairmount area?

P.L.: I'm not really sure. Just -- I don't know. I just would say it's important to look into it for them `cause there's a lot done down here that don't get credit for what they done.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: You know.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: Which a lot down here has been hush-hush about it too. A lot of what I -- I still don't know a lot that's happened down here. But I think it just should be open more to the public down here for that. I don't know.

K.F.: And I guess one question I've been asking people who worked in the crab houses, can you describe the smell?

P.L.: This what?

K.F.: The smell.

P.L.: The smell?

K.F.: Of the crab house.

P.L.: Yeah. Just rotten. Smells like fish done laid around for a couple days. About the best smell of it all is when the crabs were steaming.

K.F.: Yeah? What is that like?

P.L.: It's a good smell. You know, you ever smelled like crabs steaming or the Old Bay coming off of `em?

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: But you never had to season them 'cause you weren't allowed to do that, you know, but that was about the best smell. Which down here, now this crab picking house, they say this one up here was never, you know, kept as clean as this one down here used to be.

K.F.: Which one?

P.L.: Harold Bozman's and Edward's. Now Edward's was pretty clean. Now there were some days, you know, you just get rushed up and they had to be a certain place. There might've been like a basket or a barrel left. And you go in the next morning, knock your eyes out of your head, stunk so bad. Just like going to the landfill on a hot summery day. That's about what it smelled like. And that stinks. I get stuck with trash around here a lot, have to go up there to the landfill. Harold Bozman's and Edward's. Now Edward's was pretty clean. Now there were some days, you know, you just get rushed up and they had to be a certain place. There might've been like a basket or a barrel left. And you go in the next morning, knock your eyes out of your head, stunk so bad. Just like going to the landfill on a hot summery day. That's about what it smelled like. And that stinks. I get stuck with trash around here a lot, have to go up there to the landfill.

K.F.: Oh, right. Now what did you smell like when you go home?

P.L.: Now that's a smell that's hard to get out of your hands. And as far as your body, we had aprons, you know, that come over your head and tied here, and they were long. That kept our clothes pretty much clean. But as far as it getting in your hands, it's very hard for the smell to get out of your hands, especially if you have fingernails. It's like it just kind of blends right into your skin. Bleach and water is about the only thing that will get that smell out. And it's like mom, she can come up here some evenings after picking all day, and I'm like -- you get a whiff of it even she's just gotten out of the shower. It's just where she's been around it all day. It just kind of lingers around in her skin. And she's took like baths and, you know, special bubble baths and stuff put in it, and she can still smell it when she gets out. Very hard 'cause I tease her on it. Gee, mom, did you wash today? She's like yeah, I been picking them crabs.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: It's a very strong, it's a strong odor. It really is. It stinks.

K.F.: Okay. One thing we've been thinking about at the museum is that's a big impression that crab pickers have is the odor. Trying to figure out how to impart the odors so the visitor would have it and then walk out stinking like a fish.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: It's hard. Very hard. But it is very, it's a strong odor. You know, a lot of crab juice dripping down. And you get picking, you know, a lot of times we get so tired from being hunched over, you know, picking, when you straighten up and get picking the juice will just run down your shirt, and, oh, we'd be so nasty and tired when we got done. Your bra, you know, just -- run right down your arms, right down your hole in your sleeves. And you'd be like oh, you know, nothing you could do to stop. You just kept right on picking. It does stink.

K.F.: I had another question, and I just forgot it.

P.L.: Anybody cold? Are you cold? I'm starting to get goose bumps.

K.F.: I have long pants.

P.L.: Yeah, are you cold?

K.F.: I'm okay.

P.L.: I can cut this down.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

P.L.: Anybody care for one of these? They're a bad habit. Do you smoke?

K.F.: No.

P.L.: Good.

K.F.: My parents threatened to kill me if I did.

P.L.: I know. I must take after my dad because mom doesn't smoke, she's never smoked and never drank. Which I don't drink, just occasionally, you know, we might get her to go out to a dance or something. But I smoke. I must've took after dad. Berry don't smoke, he chews. And so far, I said other than his -- I have a step-son, and I think he's starting to get in the habit of smoking. We're trying to get him out of that before it ruins him. 'Cause he's into football in high school and lifting weights and --

K.F.: Oh, yeah. They don't work together.

P.L.: -- run that track. In deed, they don't. I couldn't run. If somebody ever got after me, they might as well just grab me 'cause daggone if I'd ever be able to run from them. (Laughter.)

P.L.: Just the thought about it kills me. It's a bad habit, it's a nasty habit. My daughter can't stand it. I just hope she does what -- she won't even come near me if I got a cigarette. Which I only smoke here. I don't smoke in the living room. And I will smoke out on the porch every once in a while. But mainly I do my smoking in here. 'Cause I washed about two years ago, I took time and I scrubbed that paneling down in the living room, and I tell you what, and my curtains -- I ain't smoked in there since 'cause I'm not doing that again for a while. That was some nasty stuff rolling off that glass and them -- my pictures and stuff. Nicotine. You know, don't you?

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

(Laughter.)

P.L.: I never thought Gene smoked, and Berry told me he used to smoke real bad. Yeah, heavy smoker. Yeah, almost three packs a day. I do bad too. There's some days I can -- I can do a pack, and there's other days when I've got stuff on my mind, I can do two, sometimes three. I was up to about three packs a day, and I quit smoking. And I quit for almost 12 days, almost 12 days. And I got up that morning, and I just -- I should've threw 'em out is what I should've done. But the ones I had here when I stopped smoking, I put 'em in the freezer in case I ever wanted one. And I just got up that morning and it goes so good with coffee first thing in the morning. And I knew they were in there, and I just got right up and got it. I was like -- and Berry, he come home -- excuse me, but he come home and he said I know you been smoking, ain't you? I can smell it in here. I said yes. When I puff that first smoke of cigarette, I said it was better than sex was.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And he like to fell right on the floor. I said that was better than sex, I swear. He like to fell right on the floor. He got the biggest kick out of that. That was just like oh, when I took that first puff. He's like the stuff you come off with. You're liable to hear anything. He come right -- you know when you just think about that stuff and hit it right

off the top of your head. I can just let him have it sometimes. He just shakes his head and walked on away.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: One question I wanted to ask you, Patty, was how many other women did the kind of work like your mom does or you do where they're picking crabs and helping their husbands' water business?

P.L.: Very few.

K.F.: Very few.

P.L.: Judy Bozman over in Frenchtown, she has, she's done and I think she still helps out. And the rest of `em, it didn't fascinate `em. They either had other jobs or felt like they had more to do than tend to crabs.

K.F.: And what was it about the soft crabs that you thought was more fun than other jobs with the crabs?

P.L.: That they're, the soft crabs were fascinating because like I was saying, one minute they're hard, and the next minute, they're soft crabs rolling around, and it's just -- you don't realize how quick you can fill up a tray. And a tray was -- I don't know what we were shipping `em out for, what we were getting for a tray, but it was like three trays to a crabbing box. And one crabbing box was, I can't remember how much they were. So when you knew you were going to fill that box up, you know, there's such a -- you know, there's that money. But as far as fishing up crabs and dealing with soft crabs and peelers, it's a lot easier and a lot better job than the hard crabs picking.

K.F.: Okay. Why is that?

P.L.: And you get more -- well the hard crabs, you pick `em, you're sitting for two or three hours. Very uncomfortable. Kills your back, your legs, your feet swell up. With the soft crabs, you're constantly moving. You know, you have to -- you're constantly fishing `em up, and walking here, take your tray, walk `em back to go get some more. So you know, more on you -- it's tiresome `cause after a while, you just can't, feel like you just can't go any longer. But the soft crabs, you know, you have to sit there until they're done. You don't have much of a choice to get up. And you can't, just say like, you know, some days Bobby's there, he'll get hungry or something. He'll come home up here and he'll eat and just drop everything, and then go back and fish up and a little while later, but hard crabs, you can't do that. So once you plan on sitting down picking, you got to pretty much plan your schedule for if you have something to do, don't plan it 'til two or three hours ahead of time.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: `Cause you can't do, you can't get to it. So you have to get that done once them crabs are starting to pick. Now there's been times mom's, you know, threw `em in the cooler down at -- Bobby has a cooler that keeps the crabs, keep `em from rotting. And she's like threw `em in the cooler for a few minutes like, you know, emergency or something comes up, she's got to leave real fast. But very seldom she does. I wonder where she's at.

K.F.: I'll have to call her up and see if I can come visit her another day.

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). You can do that.

K.F.: Now where exactly is Harold Bozman's picking house?

P.L.: Did you see the Fairmount Post Office?

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: It's coming down, it would be from that. They're on --that's on the left hand side. It would be on the left hand side, one, two, three, four places down from the Fairmount Academy.

K.F.: Oh, from the Academy?

P.L.: I mean -- shoot, the post office.

K.F.: The post office, okay.

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). It's a dirt road. It sits right -- the crab house sits back a little ways in between two big houses. And one of the big houses has a fence on it on the left-hand side. And then Harold's is right there next to it.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: Let me call mom and see if she's home.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: 'Cause if she's home and forgot it, then she'll be down there picking, I bet.

(OFF RECORD)

P.L.: -- wrong with her.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: But, God, she does, she's just the type of woman she can't tell you no. And she goes in these houses sometimes, we were talking about it over to Pat's, and she'll charge `em, some houses she does for \$35 a house, and she's in there all daggone day, from -- she'll leave some mornings 8:00 in the morning, and it's sometimes two, 2:30 before she rolls back home. And I tell her, she's crazy. There's no other word for it. You know, certain people you go in don't want mops on their floors, they'd rather her hand mop.

K.F.: Oh, gosh.

P.L.: And the rugs have to be beaten out a certain way, you can't just shake `em `cause a lot of people are afraid they're going to fall apart.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: Washes mini-blinds, takes mini-blinds down and hangs `em back up, and washes inside and out windows. It ain't worth it. I told her all the time it's not worth it to even get out of the house and do that. But she lets these people, you know, do that to her. She's always been like that.

K.F.: So what other jobs have you had besides working the crabs?

P.L.: Just really working in the crabs, and housewife, and then her housecleaning on the side. I help Pat out and also work for Wayne Mure.

K.F.: What is that?

P.L.: Wayne Mure.

K.F.: What does he do?

P.L.: He's real estate. He buys houses, and Barry and his dad and brother remodels `em, and I get `em -- clean `em out before they start, and clean `em out after they get done.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: So that keeps me busy. I'm game for anything really. All but windows.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: I don't like doing windows. Don't mind doing the inside, but I don't like doing the outside. Can't you tell? Can't see out of mine.

/^.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: But that's about it. I went back to, I went back to school last semester and tried for my GED. I was taking night classes, but I didn't --try for my GED, I didn't get it. So I'm going to try to go back to school this month, try again. That was hard. My, gosh, was that hard. That was stuff I ain't never seen before in my life. Because I mean I only went to ninth grade in school, and the little while I was in there, I mean school just never interested us, you know. So I learned right smart in school in my GED classes, but when it come to taking the test, it was a totally different story. Eight hours, that was so stressful.

K.F.: Eight hour test?

P.L.: Eight hours. I was there at quarter of eight, and I didn't get home 'til quarter after five. Well I had to travel, you know, my traveling time.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: I was stressed. I felt like I was just --just --constantly reading and writing. And I think there at the last going off with math, they give me a scrap piece of paper, and I was just burned right off, you know, sitting up there all day. I'd go up and take a break, you know, you'd have to take your papers up and then go out. And I walked by, and I had this little problem worked out on this paper, you know. And I thought well maybe I'm doing it right. So I walked by and glanced over, well one problem this girl had a piece of paper from front to back trying to work this one problem out. I was like well I know I ain't got it right, so I finally just sit down I wanted to come home so bad. And I just couldn't do it. It is so hard. And I really preach a sermon to my kids too, like, please don't drop out, you know. 'Cause they see mom struggling, so maybe they won't.

K.F.: Yeah, those long tests like that are really hard.

P.L.: It was really hard.

K.F.: You're right, your brain is so tired, half way through, and you still have stuff to do.

P.L.: Yeah, it's a long time. I think I finally got done about quarter of five that evening. And I got there at quarter of eight. And I, you know, take cigarette breaks or breaks here and there. You're allowed to take as many breaks as you want, but couldn't really take too awful long because you had a period you had to get it done by five. Terrible. Land oh mighty. It was really hard. But girlfriend of mine they call Binky I was just talking about, she went up and did hers, and she missed it by four points. She missed writing, three points, and math, one. So she's going to go back. I told her she ought to go back. She's pretty smart 'cause she hasn't been long out of school, she ain't but 20 some years old too, that makes a difference.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

P.L.: I haven't been in a school probably 16 years, and that makes a big difference.

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

P.L.: And I've just always been a housewife and a mom. You know, when it comes to kids or something like that, I'll tell you anything you want to know. But history or algebra, forget it. Don't ask me. And, you know, sometimes you think, why do you need all that junk? You know. I mean, you never know when you're going to need it.

K.F.: Yeah. I always thought that way of algebra.

P.L.: Yeah. My daughter, she's into algebra two this year. So my sister's girl is in the 12th. She's good in algebra. So I told her maybe Rebecca can help Kelly out 'cause I

have no idea what I'm doing, algebra. I really don't. Really hard. But I think the whole time we were in class, I was just getting fractions down-pat. It took me that long to get the fractions. You know how the least -- lowest denominator and --

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: I was just getting that down-pat before I went to have my test, and they give me this math book, and I was like what is this mess? Had no idea. All these lines and stuff, you know, line segments and measuring of, you know, the footage and stuff of, you know, like a square. And Berry, he tried to help me with that, and I didn't have no patience with him trying to help me. That just went right out one ear and went out the other. You know, 'cause I'd get aggravated 'cause I couldn't do it. And he'd be like well look, I'm trying to show you. And I was like I know, but you're not helping me. I just felt like I weren't getting nowhere. So it really frustrated me the whole time I was in school. And then some evenings when I left, 'cause it was from 6 to 8 Mondays and Thursdays, and some evenings I left and got to school after all day here and cleaning up. And, God, I was just so burnt out. So a lot of it just never sunk in. And then trying to study through the day when I had one child here, it was hard. So I'm going to try again. I'm going to keep trying. One of these days I'll get it. I told mom maybe before I get too old, I'll be able to get something, be working somewhere.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And she never went back and got hers. And Donna's son, that's also Donna's daughter I'm talking about, he went to class with us for four weeks, and he is a whiz. You see somebody like him not working when she's working now for Moore's yard work, but he's kind of back and forth on the road and on the street, a genius. And he went up there, and you only needed a 225, and he passed that GED with a 283, and was in school for four weeks. Very, very smart. And to see somebody like that with that much skill. And he's waiting. He's going to go in the Army, I think. And I think it'll be the best thing for him 'cause there's nothing down here for kids to do. There's nothing, nothing. If you let your kids go and do what they want to do, they're going to be in trouble down here. 'Cause that's about only thing they can do, you know. But when we go, we usually take 'em that way, you know, roller skating, or Discovery Zone, or something like that, to the movies, 'cause there's just nothing down here.

K.F.: Well what about when you were a kid? Was it the same situation, or did you guys

P.L.: No, no. That's why I was so bad. I was bad.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: I was real bad. No. We never got to do anything. We couldn't afford it for one.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: Every once in a while Fridays, when Nickels was in Fruitland, mom and dad would go up there once in a while and drop us off roller rink in Fruitland.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: But pretty much when we wanted to do something, we had to sneak to do it 'cause we just never got out. It was always well maybe one day, or maybe tomorrow. And I knew it was a lie because they're just, you know, telling us to kind of postpone us a little bit, get us, you know, just get us away and quit bothering 'em. But we never got out much, never got to do much, We were poor growing up. And what money mom made,

and the checks dad had coming in, 'cause he was getting liability checks and social security, and with that money coming in, what mom was making had to pay for the bills.
K.F.: Right, right.

P.L.: And but the only time we really did get a little bit of spending money is when my father did die, us kids wasn't 18, and mom got a social security check for us, and she would give us \$20 a piece out of it every month. And we would hit the Dollar General hard as we could hit it.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: We were in our glory when she would give us that. I'll never forget it. We were standing like right there where Tim's Snack Bar is down in Princess Anne, used to be Tim's Snack Bar. And she would be like here you all go. We were just like bye, mom. You know. We were in our glory. We'd go out and buy these little plastic barbie dolls, and all these little pieces to Barbies. And mom, she would cuss at us 'cause she'd have to pick all that mess up. But we were like, you know, looking at the counter, when's that next month going to come, you know, to get some money.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And we had it rough. But I'm surprised we're close as we are. We grew up pretty close. I'm closer with my youngest brother, which he's in Florida. My biggest, my oldest brother, call him big brother, he lives right across the road here.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: And my sister lives in Mount Vernon. She works at the Food Lion in Princess Anne. I don't get to see much of her, and I don't call her much. And Bobby, I don't see him much either, you know. I mean if we see one another and we speak, you don't really think we're brother and sister. I mean we're close, but we don't act -- you know what I'm saying? I don't even know how to explain it. Well me and Bobby never really got along growing up. He was always Carol's pick and Eddie was always my pick. So if ever come to me and Bobby, I hollered for Eddie, you know, to take care of me and take up for me. And every time, you know, me and Carolyn would get arguing something, it would be either Eddie or mom, you know. But we get along, we get along a lot better now as we've all grown up and took responsibility than we were growing up. We give her a hard time. Poor old mom. We have really, it's awful. Really if you think about it. I mean it's funny 'cause we do get in here sometimes talking about it, and it's embarrassing to me because there's some things, you know, Barry had never heard. And mom's like yeah, what about this time when you were such and such age and you did this and that. And I was like God, don't go there, please don't go there.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: And Barry was like I want to hear this, you know. Oh, gosh. And Sesame Street was like, you know, really good then, which it still is a good t.v. show, and I never told anybody but I was scared to death of Snuffle Lufagus, that big thing with a big trunk on there.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: And she had to tell Barry that the other night. I wouldn't go to bed. I can remember that too. I wouldn't go to bed. I'd sit on the top of the steps, and I would cry and cry until mom and dad would finally tell me to come on get in there with them. I was scared to death that big stuffed animal was going to get me. And she was telling Barry

that, and he got the biggest kick. I was like God, mom. You know, but they could tell on you.

K.F.: That's true, they can.

P.L.: I get on Kelly now about it, you know, I'm like wait 'til you get a boyffiend. I'll bring these pictures and stuff out. She's like oh, mom. I guess she hears mom teasing us, you know. This little boy she likes now, my daughter Kelly, he runs on weekends -- he goes to school. I think he's a year older than she is. Which I guess that's okay, isn't it? A year older. And on weekends he roof -- he does repairs, you know, repairs roofs for these people where he lives. And I was telling Barry well that might be pretty cool for you, you might hit it off pretty good with this guy then 'cause that's what he does. You know, so she was telling me that the other day, and then she went to church last night and she come back with this really beautiful porcelain teddy bear. It's like a collection, Christmas collection, it's got a scarf, and a pair of earrings and a matching necklace. I was like oh, my God, just starting.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: Gray will be on this side before too long, working its way around. You'll be seeing bottles of hair coloring laying around in the next couple years.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Now what kind of entertainment was there for kids when you were coming up? I mean it sounds like you did a lot of work when you were younger.

P.L.: Entertainment, we got together, played a lot of softball and kickball. And which the Gino store used to be right across the street here where this brown house is, Miller store before it burnt down, and we would all get together and go there and play pool and, you know, just kind of like sit out on the porch and hope mom or dad would ride by so we could get a ride back home. 'Cause we used to walk and that's when I was telling you that's when Berry and Bozo when they first come down and bought these two houses, and they remember me and Eddie walking. We wouldn't -- you know, knee tall walking down here.

K.F.: Right.

P.L.: And, you know, that was a long walk for five or six year olds.

K.F.: Yeah, that's --

P.L.: But back then, it was -- which mom, she just done it, you know, just to get us out of her hair, 'cause I'm going to tell you, we were terrible, you know. And she would tell us no, and we would just kind of like stomp and, you know, and then finally she'd be like go ahead, if your daddy sees you, you're going to be in trouble. I guess it's probably two miles or better from Rumley where mom lives to where the store used to be. And Barry told me that, we were talking about it not too long ago. He said me and Eddie would go down that road, and he said them little two sons of bitches would get a fighting and carrying on, talking about me and Eddie. 'Cause back then, Pepsi bottle was worth a nickel. So, you know, you see a Pepsi bottle, we would just kind of like break our necks to see which one was going to get it. And we would get a arguing, and Eddie would be like you gonna buy me a piece of candy out of that, and I was like this is mine, I found this bottle, you know. But now, it's a lot easier now. It was fun. I don't think -- I'd never want to go back there again, I'll tell you that. I don't think I could deal with it now. Got it too easy.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: Barry's father, he gets -- yeah, all you got to do is push the buttons on the microwave and this and that and the other now, don't you. Say, yeah, this is the 90's, you know, you old fart, you know, quit living in the 50's.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: I get on him terribly. Pat knows. We just -- you ever walk up with me and him and our conversations, our deep conversations, you would probably just flip out, I guess. 'Cause I just let him have it, but when Pat and Gene's around, I watch my language. But when they're not around, I really let that man have it. I call him everything from A to Z. That's no lie. That is no lie. And he'll come right back on me. And a lot of people look at us like, you know, these people are really mean, nasty towards one another. But he lived, that's where his father lived with his mother, which they divorced. And we had a big wooden crabbing boat, we'd fish, which we loved to fish, I love to fish. I go out there every chance I get. And I'd go over there and knock on the door, and I'd be like hey Bozo, you want to go fish? We're getting ready to leave. And he would look at me like I guess you're going out there. I was like yeah, if I can't go, you sure as hell ain't going on the boat, you know, I'd tell it. You little rotten son of a bitch, and that's just how we got along, and people just thought we were awful. But he'd give his shirt right off his back. He's a good person, very good person. But we put up with something. He has picked on me. Well I used to be real bony, and I had this -- I had just got up, and every morning, I still do it, I always go outside, or by the door and I wait for the kids to get on the bus, make sure they get on. And I was sitting on this old air conditioner, and real bony, and had my hair all sprouted out, I'll never forget it. And I was sitting there like this with a cigarette, hunched back, and Bozo -- that was when Gregory was going half a day, so the bus would come here like 12, or five after 12. They were walking up the driveway to come home and eat lunch. Bozo said I wish you would look at that mother fucker sitting over there, excuse my language. He said she looks exactly like a fucking buzzard waiting for something to die. And Barry and Mark just crackled. He said looks exactly like something over there waiting to die, a buzzard waiting for something to die.

(Laughter.)

P.L.: He's terrible, you just don't know. He's awful. But excuse my language. But he can tell you some stories. But I think the world of him. They live right around the corner now from us. They bought this trailer over here right around the corner. That was who was calling me, his wife. He remarried.

K.F.: Oh, right. Okay.

P.L.: Yeah. Thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years with the same woman. Now she's remarried and met a guy that we do not like. Oh, God, we hate him. And they just kind of shot away from -- Barry and his mom. That's something how somebody like that can change a person. You know, another man change a person so much. Just like nothing in the world exists but him, you know, heck with the kids. But he's originally from New Jersey. And him and Barry's had a spat once before since he's been here. He's just a very, very nasty man. And he's come to the wrong place to do that, you know. We've been here all these years, and Barry's been here all his life pretty much. He just thinks he's going to move in and take over. Can't do that. So him and Barry's had a spat. Before I like broke my neck trying to get over there before it happened, but I made it. We're bad.

But he has a bad drinking problem, and she used to drink occasionally, Barry's mom. But since Bozo -- we call him Bozo. But since Bozo left, she drinks awfully. And them two get over there spatting. Well just get the popcorn 'cause you ain't got to go nowhere for entertainment. And I'll be like Barry, don't you think you ought to go over there? You know, maybe he's beating on her or something. Hell with 'em, he'll say, let 'em kill one another. And we'll sit outside, and you can hear them, and the falling down, and the glass break and shatter. And see Barry never seen none of that, never put up with none of that. I mean his mom did somewhat of it, mom and dad, but -- they knew about it, but it was more or less, you know, they kept all that to theirself Well they just let the world know. The doors are open, windows are open. Just spit-spat. So we just sit outside, and every time I hear 'em, I'm going out the door. Want to be nosy. I'm like get him, hit him.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Well let me ask you who are some of the crab pickers in the area that we might want to talk to?

P.L.: Oh, let's see.

K.F.: And what is your mom's name?

P.L.: Elloise.

K.F.: And her last name?

P.L.: Parks.

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: Let's see. Right now two of 'em are teacher's aides in Princess Anne, primary. So I don't know if they're picking right now. Snooky is her name, that colored woman I was trying to get out a while ago, Snooky. She lives right around the corner here. Now she would be really interested to sit down and talk to. You couldn't ask for a better woman. Very nice colored lady, very nice.

K.F.: Does she pick over at Harold's?

P.L.: She picks at Harold's. I don't know her last name. Mom knows her more well than I do. But I could probably set you up to go over to her home and talk to her. She'll welcome -- you'll feel like you've known her all your life, you know. Very nice lady.

K.F.: Okay. And anybody else?

P.L.: The two I just mentioned is in school aides now teaching, you know, helping teach. No. I'll check with mom to see if Judy Bozman is still doing it. If she's doing it, she wouldn't mind talking to you either. She's nice. And that's about it right now, you know. 'Cause some of the women up there to Harold Bozman's now are kind of -- you know, I don't know. Like the ones we used to pick when we were younger is kind of, like I say, they've had kids and settled down and gotten out of it. So some of 'em now I don't know. And a lot of the ones that were there are not there. But I could find out for you.

K.F.: All right. Yeah. I was going to call Harold Bozman probably next week and see if I could pay a visit to the picking house.

P.L.: Well I'm sure he wouldn't mind.

K.F.: Yeah. But it would be great if we could talk with Snooky and Judy and your mom.

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, she must be house cleaning. She said she'd stop by. Usually when she says something, she does. She must've got caught up. She's probably scrubbing windows about this time.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Okay.

P.L.: I get on her.

K.F.: All right. Well do you have anything you want to add?

P.L.: No, not really. I guess that about does it.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)