

Interview Log

Interviewee: Harold Bozman, Merline Cooper, Louise Stevens,
Garfield Young

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Interviewer: Kelly Feltault **# of Tapes:** 1

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Topic: Crab Picking Project
Harold Bozman Seafood

Corresponding Photography Log #: yes, see Bozman Seafood series

Comments: Had some difficulty periodically with sound quality. Phonetic Spellings: Silky, Rumbley and Frenchtown, Wells, Carol Dryden, William Tyler, Arthur Parks.

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Okay, if I could have you say your name.

H.B.: Harold Bozman.

K.F.: Okay. And when did you start this business, Mr. Bozman?

H.B.: We built this business in '66, 1966.

K.F.: And who's we?

H.B.: Who built it?

K.F.: Yes.

H.B.: David Wilson at Crisfield.

K.F.: Okay. And was the plant always in this spot?

H.B.: Yes.

K.F.: Yes? Okay. Well what was it like in '66 when you started the business?

H.B.: Well we started shucking oysters here.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

H.B.: And then -- when did we start --

SPEAKER: '81.

H.B.: '81 we started picking crabs here.

K.F.: Okay. What made you switch from oysters to crabs?

H.B.: Well our oysters died out some here. And we went picking crabs. And we've been picking crabs ever since.

K.F.: Okay. Now when you started the business, were you already in the seafood business, or had you been in the seafood business before that?

H.B.: I hadn't been in seafood business 'til the year of 1966. I did freight oysters in the trucks before that.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Okay.

H.B.: To the western shore, over there to Farmington, Virginia and Hague, Virginia. And then to Crisfield.

K.F.: Okay. And what were the early days of the business like?

H.B.: Well the business was good then when I was shucking oysters. And we were shucking oysters here, here was the partition right here.

K.F.: Oh, okay, in the floor?

H.B.: Yeah. That was the division right there. And then we knocked that wall out and we built -- added this to it.

K.F.: Oh, okay, okay. And this was your shucking --

H.B.: Yes, we shucked oysters over there.

K.F.: All right. And what did you have to do to change to crab picking?

H.B.: Well we had to buy these stainless steel tables and put in here. They won't allow you to pick on wooden tables.

K.F.: Right, right.

H.B.: And then shucking oysters, that turned into stainless steel too.

K.F.: Right. Okay. Did you still have the little like pedestals that the shuckers had to stand on?

H.B.: Yeah, we had them out in the truck, probably now some of 'em.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

H.B.: Them little wooden boxes --

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: -- that you stand into.

K.F.: Right. Were there any new licenses or anything you had to get when you switched to crab picking?

H.B.: Well you had to get a buyer's license for to buy oysters from the State of Maryland. And we have to have license to pick crabs too.

K.F.: Okay.

H.B.: And this plant is passed by government regulations.

K.F.: Right, right. How much do those licenses usually cost?

H.B.: What's our license cost? Do you know, Billy?

SPEAKER: Cost when we first got into it -- it was under \$100.

H.B.: I think the first oyster license, buying oysters I think it was about \$50.

SPEAKER: I don't know what it is now.

H.B.: It's more than that now.

K.F.: Yeah. So once you get the license, you get to keep it. You don't have to keep renewing it, or --

SPEAKER: Yeah. You have to renew it.

H.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: Oh, you do.

H.B.: You have to keep renewing.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: They've got different types of licenses, like we can pick crabs, shuck oysters, and it all comes under a general heading of a certain kind of seafood business.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: Packer, shipper. Then they got what they call just a shipper. And all he does is buy it already processed by somebody else, but you can sell.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

SPEAKER: But Harold's got it all.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: He had to buy the boiler, boiler -- baskets to steam crabs in. So it was a little bit of expense to start up.

K.F.: Yeah --

SPEAKER: And you have special trays like they're picking on right now, like a tray that they use to pick the crabmeat in.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: Everything you use has to be passed by the health department like he said.

K.F.: Now where did you all get your steamer?

H.B.: Where did we get it? We got it from -- what was his name? David --

SPEAKER: R.D. Greer. Bought it through Richard's --

H.B.: But we got it through a man that worked there. What was --

SPEAKER: Dave, Dave --

H.B.: Dave Hill.

SPEAKER: Dave Hill.

H.B.: Dave Hill's who we got it through.

SPEAKER: Which he worked for R.D. Greer.

H.B.: He worked for R.D. Greer and Son in Salisbury. They're still in business, R.D. Greer.

K.F.: Oh, they are? Okay.

H.B.: But I don't know where Dave Hill's at. I don't think he fools with it no more.

K.F.: Okay.

H.B.: And the guy that works on the equipment back there now is Lenny Collins. He does the work on it. He's licensed to do it. Then it has to be passed by Maryland inspection man. He comes here once a year.

K.F.: Okay. Now how did you find your crab pickers?

H.B.: How did I find my crab pickers?

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

H.B.: Well we had (indiscernible) at one time, but a lot of people has died, and it's dwindled down to just a few now.

SPEAKER: A lot of 'em was the oyster shuckers.

K.F.: Oh, really?

SPEAKER: Changed over from shucking oysters to picking crabs.

K.F.: Did they already know how to pick crabs or they didn't?

SPEAKER: Some of 'em did. Then the ones that have taught the others. But it took, what do you think, about a year or two?

H.B.: Huh?

SPEAKER: About a year or two, more people learn people picking crabs.

SPEAKER: Yeah. Right.

SPEAKER: Few younger ones tried it. Some of 'em did right well.

H.B.: Young people I don't think's gonna take this business up.

K.F.: No, that's what I keep hearing.

H.B.: They're working to McDonald's and Hardee's and all them kind of places. They don't, they're not interested in this business.

K.F.: No. That's why I think Dorchester County has a lot of Mexican women picking crabs.

H.B.: If we stay into it, I think that's what we gonna have to do.

K.F.: How many crab pickers do you have left? Three I see here.

H.B.: Well we got, we got two or three more, but they're not in today. One of 'em's operating on one lady's toe, I think. She split her toenail.

K.F.: Oh, gosh. Now have these crab pickers been working for you for a long time or --

H.B.: Yes.

SPEAKER: Fifteen, sixteen years -- year we picked crabs.

H.B.: That one back there in the blue has been here about 18 years.

SPEAKER: Louise has too.

H.B.: Louise?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

H.B.: Has she started here when Silky did?

SPEAKER: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Lot of people aren't too far along behind. Tom, we were still shucking oysters. We were doing both in this same building.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

H.B.: But we had to put a partition into it when we did, when we did both. They put a partition in between here and they shucked oysters over there and picked crabs over here.

SPEAKER: This table -- you can see where it would've been.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

SPEAKER: And the shucking boxes or stalls, what they call 'em, (inaudible), they stood up in those stalls. And they had a special block that they shucked on, and it was called a (indiscernible) board, was the name of that. Just a wedge that they put the oyster on to give 'em a little bit of support while they shucked it. But you're more interested in crab picking than oyster shucking.

K.F.: Well somebody else is doing the oyster half. I'm doing the crab part. (Laughter.)

SPEAKER: I think -- Chincoteague crabs.

H.B.: Is Bill Jones still running the Crab Claw restaurant up there to St. Michaels?

K.F.: You know, I don't really know.

H.B.: I think he is.

K.F.: Probably. I know they're still open and going strong.

H.B.: They had a nice restaurant there.

K.F.: Yup. They've got a nice spot for one too.

H.B.: Oh, yeah. Beautiful there on that water.

SPEAKER: Two main reasons why crab picking is not as big as it could be here now. One is the State of Maryland's about the only the state in the union that you have to steam your crabs with steam. All the other states boil theirs.

K.F.: Boil them. Now how does that make it -- does it make them more expensive?

SPEAKER: They can gain money by cooking their crabs in water. They boil it just like a lobster, and the meat saturates, you know, gets saturated with water. So you're really paying for water instead of pure crabmeat. When a crab's steamed -- pressure, steam under pressure, you're going to get very little moisture in it, very little.

H.B.: They're not going to let you do that, though.

K.F.: No.

SPEAKER: And the other reason is the State of Maryland's about the only state that all this foreign meat that comes into this country, every other state, they repack it into a cup and sell it, but you can't do it. One individual got caught for doing that not too long ago. And all he was -- just trying to make a living, keep up with the rest. And he was just a victim of the circumstances. There really weren't anything that he was doing bad at all other than, you know, putting meat out of another country in his cups. He wouldn't do it in -- in his cups. The other people in the other states -- they deliver and all of your meat goes to the same markets. So you're competing with somebody can send the meat up there 3 or \$4 cheaper than you are. So here you are, got the best crabs, best crabmeat on the market, but you don't get paid any more money for it. And you're not going to be in business long when you got the separate (inaudible). And that's why you see picking crab houses dwindle in these last two or three years.

K.F.: Right. Now is the state doing anything to change that? No?

SPEAKER: All through the State of Maryland, you have people -- that's what's got our hands tied. People across the bay on the other side, they're

the one that rules that seafood industry here. And you'd be hard pressed to find very many processing houses across the bay. There's a few, but not many. I think it is one, I think it's still good crabbing in Smith's Island.

K.F.: They have the co-op, and then they still have a few ladies who pick at home.

SPEAKER: But another thing too, you got your crabbers who catch their own crabs and they can legally pick and resell so many pounds of crabmeat. They don't have to have any of this equipment, don't have to steam it under pressure, and that's just one more thing that's against the business coming to do business, to pick crabs.

K.F.: How much meat are they allowed to pick?

SPEAKER: I don't know how much it is.

H.B.: They're not allowed to pick none and sell it on the market unless it's passed by a place like this, but they do it. And they sell it right to the same restaurant where you sell it to. But they're not allowed legally to pick none.

SPEAKER: They can't sell it to commercial restaurants, but individuals come to buy it. They're allowed so much. I don't know what it is.

H.B.: But the health department don't do nothing about it. But if we make a mistake, they'll put us in the jailhouse.

SPEAKER: Well they caught Smith Island sending all the crabmeat over here -- so instead of them being fined and getting -- State of Maryland turns around and buys their picking house. They've got a picking house, they're doing it for free. There's another problem. You know, strike against you. Here you are, you're trying to do it legal, and the State of Maryland twists the laws around help them with the picking house over there. They didn't have to pay for that. It all come out of the State of Maryland. So then you have all that meat that they don't have the expense and the building.

K.F.: And what did the picking house sound like when you had people shucking oysters and shucking crabs, a full house?

SPEAKER: Oh, you wouldn't have been here talking. You couldn't have heard yourself talk. For one thing, it was a mechanical conveyer that run underneath the (inaudible). We were opening another conveyer on a truck in the back. We probably had at least -- we had 15 or 16 shuckers, and probably that many pickers. It was nearly 30, 30 some people working in this building one time.

K.F.: Wow. Now how long did you guys keep both things going? Do you remember?

H.B.: Pardon?

K.F.: How long did you keep both the shucking and the picking going simultaneously?

H.B.: At one time, we kept it going the whole year. We shucked oysters in summer.

K.F.: Really?

H.B.: Summer and the winter.

SPEAKER: Trying to think when the last year that we were shucking oysters. Been a right good while, ain't it?

SPEAKER: Yeah, it --

SPEAKER: When did Mable die?

H.B.: Huh?

SPEAKER: When did Mable die?

H.B.: Mable died in 1990.

SPEAKER: That was probably the last year we shucked oysters, probably about '89. I think it was 10 years since shucking oysters. Seems like each year you got a little bit more regulations. At one time, we didn't have to buy a scale from the State of Maryland for -- to weigh the crabmeat on.

Now you have to buy a \$150 -- scale to use. So that's another little expense.

H.B.: Maryland Crabmeat Company, they just handle soft crabs now, don't they?

K.F.: They don't have anything now. They're closed.

H.B.: They're closed up?

K.F.: Closed. Yeah.

H.B.: But this summer, I think they handle soft crabs.

K.F.: No. No, I talked to Tim Howard, and he said that in the spring they were doing some soft crabs and they were doing snow crabs from Alaska.

H.B.: Snow crabs?

K.F.: Yeah. And then in June or July, they just closed. And they're not doing anything.

H.B.: Not doing nothing.

K.F.: Right. So from what I can tell talking to as many people as I have, they're all sort of planning that's probably what's going to happen in the next couple years.

H.B.: Well you're going to have to get pickers from the service if you stay in business. Because these people up here, no young people getting into it.

SPEAKER: When our crab season goes out here -- crabs from other states.

K.F.: Right, right.

SPEAKER: And one thing they shouldn't be doing, and they're still doing, they dredge crabs all winter down in Virginia. You can't dredge in

Maryland, but they dredge in Virginia. Crabs out of the head of the Chesapeake Bay, go down towards where the Bay Bridge Tunnel is and bid up for them, that's where they catch a lot of 'em and that increases the population. We heard that they were going to try to do something to curtail that this year, but I don't think they are because anything -- too far off (inaudible).

K.F.: Yeah, that's usually when they start.

SPEAKER: So if they were going to do anything, they would've told the watermen long before now.

H.B.: That meat is good for about three weeks of dredging. After that, then they start getting sand and grit into it. Then it's no good.

K.F.: Right, right.

H.B.: But the whole time this is going on, all these watermen (inaudible). That's year-round now. Comes from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Japan, South America, Mexico. Anywhere that's got a crab, they're shipping it in. It's something when a crab comes halfway around the world right here to your back door and goes up to the same market that you've been shipping it to and live within 150 miles of it, and they're putting it there for about 3 or \$4 less a pound than you can process it. And that's the way, what you've been up against I'd say the last three years, three to four years anyway, all this foreign meat comes into this country.

K.F.: Now where do you all buy your crabs from? Do you buy them from watermen down in Grumbley and Frenchtown?

SPEAKER: Yeah, right around this area.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: And (inaudible). From right down here --

K.F.: Right. And do you have regular watermen that you deal with all the time?

SPEAKER: Well it used to be years ago that you went to two or three, the ones you wanted crabs from, like in the wintertime, they would catch you all the crabs you need. But now it's just wherever you find the cheapest crab. And two, we can't handle all they catch now. We don't have very many pickers.

K.F.: Oh, right.

SPEAKER: When they get into the peak of their season, and they're catching 50, 60 bushels, and that's way more than we can pick in a day's time. There was one time there we used to pick close to 100 to 150 bushel a day here.

K.F.: And now how many do you pick a day?

SPEAKER: About 10 to 15. And that's on a good day. Like today is probably half of that.

SPEAKER: Remember what we --

SPEAKER: Don't remember that.

SPEAKER: It's up to \$2 a pound what they get now. But seems like to me it was under a dollar when we started. Something like 80 cents. A lot of it was that price. The hardest was to get claw meat. And that was 10 cents under what the white meat was. But now it's both the same. Of course, your bigger packers, back there then, they have claw cracking machines where they ground the claw up, the meat and all, into a soft grind. The meat all dried up.

H.B.: Is anybody doing anything in Crisfield now?

K.F.: Well Metompkin has one of those claw cracking machines, and I think -- I know Byrd's sells them their claws. But there's only -- J.M. Clayton is the only plant that I've been in that still has one person who's only, you know, cracking claws. And the rest of them sell their claw meat to somebody else.

H.B.: He still picks crabs, don't he, J.M. Clayton?

K.F.: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

H.B.: He has a lot of pickers?

K.F.: He has a lot of Mexican pickers.

H.B.: Yeah. That's what they got. That's what it's coming to. That's what it's coming to, Mexican pickers.

K.F.: That's what they say.

H.B.: Have to build 'em a house out here and put 'em in and turn 'em in here.

K.F.: Yeah. That's what they've all done.

H.B.: And tip your hat to 'em when they come in.

K.F.: Well they're like, you know, regular crab pickers.

H.B.: Really they have to drive 'em other places. They want to work all day and night. They have to drive 'em out.

K.F.: Well I don't think they want to work all night. I don't think they're that --

H.B.: What do they pay them? The same thing they do the other pickers?

K.F.: Yup.

H.B.: Well I imagine they're glad to get here. 'Cause they work cheap down in there.

K.F.: Well, yeah. All the money they make goes home and goes to their parents and their kids. They don't keep any of it here.

H.B.: They send it all down. That lady back there grunted when you said that. Send all their money home.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: You all are allowed to talk too. Who do we have picking crabs here today? What is your name?

M.C.: Merline Cooper.

K.F.: Marilyn? Is that it?

M.C.: Merline.

K.F.: Merline, okay.

M.C.: M-E-R-L-I-N-E.

K.F.: Merline, okay. I have a really bad ear.

H.B.: That's okay. Not that great either.

K.F.: No? It's hard in cement buildings to really hear too well.

H.B.: Right.

K.F.: And who else is picking crabs today?

H.B.: Louise Stevens.

SPEAKER: She cracks claws.

L.S.: I crack claws.

K.F.: All right.

SPEAKER: She's a claw cracker.

H.B.: And Garfield Young, he's a claw cracker. And you can put Wanda Winton down there. She'll be in tomorrow. And I don't know -- will be here or not. She'll be here.

K.F.: Okay. Well now have you all been working for this plant for as long as it's been picking crabs?

SPEAKER: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I have.

K.F.: You have?

SPEAKER: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

H.B.: She got married, but the man thinks she eats too much and they couldn't afford to keep her.

K.F.: You're going to let him say that?

SPEAKER: Yeah, ain't that something?

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

(Laughter.)

H.B.: I tell you what she can do. She can eat a tinfoil bucket full of anything. And the doctor says she's losing weight, but I can't see where she's losing nothing. But the doctor says she is.

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

M.C.: How did I learn?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).
M.C.: On my own. Down in Deals Island.
K.F.: In Deals?
H.B.: Her sister taught her.
M.C.: In Deals Island for Mr. Webster.
H.B.: But she's not as good a crab picker as her sister.
K.F.: Who's her sister?
H.B.: Louise Cooper.
K.F.: And who's Mr. Webster?
M.C.: He's dead now.
H.B.: That was Richard Webster.
K.F.: Okay.
H.B.: On Deals Island. He run a great big oyster shucking place.
K.F.: So how long have you been picking crabs, Merline?
M.C.: About over 50 years.
K.F.: Wow.
(Laughter.)
K.F.: Now you must've taught a few people how to pick crabs, haven't you?
M.C.: Oh, yeah. I have. Yeah.
K.F.: Can you tell me how you teach someone to do that?
M.C.: Well they just sit with you and watch you what you do, while you're sitting. And show 'em how to cut the crabs, first take the back off, then how to cut the crab.
K.F.: Let me come down there 'cause I can't see from here.
M.C.: Show 'em how to -- wait a minute, I started this one so I'll just take another one. You know like take the back off. Then you clean it. Then you take the meat off of it, all that go together. And the main thing is show 'em how to take the jumbo lump out. But see, everybody don't cut a crab alike.
K.F.: No, you're right.
M.C.: Like that's the way I do it. That's how I do it.
K.F.: And you do the squish.
M.C.: Yeah.
K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Not everybody does that either.
M.C.: Right. Lot of people just throw that --
K.F.: Away.
M.C.: But there's a lot of meat into it. And I pick mine. See I'm going to get all the meat out of the crab. See, like that. Some people tell you throw that away. See, but a lot of meat comes out of that piece of crab.

K.F.: Yeah.

M.C.: And then you pick the other pieces there. Right there. And that's it. That's the end of the crab.

(Laughter.)

M.C.: Have you ever tried it?

K.F.: Yes. Now I've been talking with crab pickers for a year now, and they've all made me learn how to do it. So I'm real slow, but --

M.C.: Yeah. Well I was too when I first started. Real slow. My sister picked 13 pounds together all day. That was when we was in Deals Island. That's when I first learned. Thirteen pounds. And the next year, we went right on picking five of these to a gallon. And I went to -- and I was right on picking five or six gallons. And from that I kept going up, kept going up 'til I got so I could pick 11 gallons, 10, 11.

K.F.: Wow.

M.C.: I worked several places down there in Crisfield.

K.F.: Which places did you work at?

M.C.: I worked places -- you're talking about (inaudible)?

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

M.C.: Wells is one back then.

K.F.: Okay.

M.C.: When I left Deals Island, that's where I went. Wells was running it. I worked for Dryden, Carol Dryden. I worked for Mr. Tyler, William Tyler -- Tyler. You know him?

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

M.C.: I worked for him. I worked a lot of places, but those places I named you now, I didn't stay. But I worked Carol Dryden one time 13 years. I worked for Mr. Tyler, Frank Tyler, I worked for him about 24. And these different, and other places where I just let go when they needed somebody to help 'em with crabs, you know, catch up the crabs and things, I'd go in and work like on Saturday, you know -- and D. Ward. You ever heard of D. Ward?

K.F.: No.

M.C.: It was a bridge right there, Alan Tyler was -- the crab house (indiscernible). And I used to work there too. Right after you come over the bridge.

H.B.: There was a drawbridge there.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

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

K.F.: And what do you remember the crab houses sounding like when they first started?

M.C.: Oh, my Lord. It was something then. We were picking day and night. See we picked all day, we picked crabs all day, 'til about 4:00 in the evening. We'd go home and come back, pick 'til 11, 12 at night.

K.F.: Okay.

M.C.: And we was in Crisfield then. I worked with Carol Dryden then. Yeah. They don't pick no crabs like we used to then. And really, crabs are not like they used to be then. Then they had nice old big crabs, you know. Right then. But not now like they used to be.

K.F.: Now I heard that occasionally this crab house still sings periodically when they're picking. Is that true?

M.C.: Oh, you mean hearing the sounds of -- yeah.

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

M.C.: Yeah, oh, yeah.

K.F.: You all still do that sometimes?

M.C.: No. Not now. Sometimes he does.

K.F.: This is Garfield, you do sometimes?

G.Y.: No.

M.C.: Yes, he sings.

K.F.: There aren't many crab houses doing that actually any more.

M.C.: No. We used to have prayers and everything. We had prayer every morning before we go to work, everybody come in and we would have prayer. And then we'd start work. And sometimes someone sang. But then we don't have that no more now. All done away with.

SPEAKER: In school, used to have prayer.

M.C.: Huh?

SPEAKER: In school, used to have prayer.

M.C.: Oh, yeah.

SPEAKER: -- to have prayer. They don't now.

K.F.: What was that?

SPEAKER: Huh?

K.F.: What was that?

SPEAKER: I said in school, used to have prayer but they stopped now.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: Some say they're trying to get that back.

H.B.: Maybe that's why we ain't got no pickers, they ain't praying no more. (Laughter.)

H.B.: That's probably why the pickers is gone.

K.F.: Now, Louise, you have a very interesting shaped knife. That's a little different than what most crab pickers' knives look like. Is that better for getting out the claw meat?

L.S.: For me, it is.

K.F.: For you. Okay.

H.B.: Where do you live at?

K.F.: I live in Maryland. I live across the bay.

H.B.: Across the bay?

K.F.: And work at the museum.

H.B.: Annapolis?

K.F.: No. Annapolis is too big.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Well is this the only crab picking house that's down this way that's still open?

H.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: Really? How many did there used to be?

H.B.: This the only crab picking place that ever was in this area.

K.F.: There weren't any down in Grumbley at all?

H.B.: No. They had an oyster shucking place down here on Fishing Island one time. Billy Jones run it.

K.F.: Okay. Who are you guys usually selling your meat to these days?

H.B.: Well we send some up to New York City, sell some of it in Cambridge, and a lot of it in the summertime we sell to Ocean City.

K.F.: Oh, okay. To restaurants and stuff like that?

H.B.: Yeah. Where did you say you live, right straight across the bay from here?

K.F.: No. I live in --

H.B.: You live in Virginia or Maryland.

K.F.: No, I'm in Maryland. I'm from Virginia though, originally. I was born there.

H.B.: What part of Maryland do you live in?

K.F.: Well it's west of Annapolis. It's a small community there. You know, then my husband's close to his work, and I can come over --

H.B.: Right. I used to take oysters down 301. Down through Waldorf.

K.F.: Oh, yes, yes.

H.B.: I went over the Potomac River bridge. I went down there to the 3 East, and make a left right at that stop light. I went back in there to load the oysters. Then down to Hague, Virginia. Crabmeat business will start picking up a little bit now. Thanksgiving's coming.

K.F.: That's true.

H.B.: The market will pick up on it.

K.F.: Do you all use pasteurizing or do you just do fresh?

H.B.: We go down in North Carolina, they pasteurize some for me.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And do you buy fresh from North Carolina?

H.B.: At certain times, we do. Yeah.

K.F.: Who does your pasteurizing in North Carolina?

H.B.: Washington Clearing Company.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Yeah, I know them.

H.B.: You know 'em?

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

H.B.: Nice fellow.

K.F.: Yeah. I used to live in North Carolina.

H.B.: Huh?

K.F.: I used to live in North Carolina actually.

H.B.: Did you?

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

H.B.: His first name is Jimmy that owns it. I can't -- his last name. I know it -- his wife told me, he had a good looking wife. Pretty. What did you say is pretty, Snooky?

SPEAKER: The trees.

H.B.: The trees?

SPEAKER: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Them colors.

H.B.: Yeah. We don't have pretty leaves this year. They say on account we had a real dry hot summer, and it done something to the material that was supposed to go to the leaf. And that's why we don't have pretty leaves. As long -- the weather's too hot and too dry. That's what the smart people says.

K.F.: I thought the leaves looked just fine.

H.B.: Huh?

K.F.: I thought the leaves looked very colorful.

H.B.: Well maybe in some places they do, but not down here they don't.

They're not as pretty as they were last fall. They say it was on account that it was real dry this summer. I know it was something they did to the stem of the leaf that the leaf didn't get -- that's what television said.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

H.B.: Well some weeks we pick every day, but this week we didn't have crabs so we didn't pick every day.

K.F.: Okay.

H.B.: But some weeks we picked every day. Come along a heavy wind the other week and we didn't get many crabs.

K.F.: Right.

H.B.: One dredge boat sunk out here.

K.F.: Where, up in the --

H.B.: The Rebecca Ruark.

K.F.: Oh, yeah. In Tilghman. Yeah. They got that one back up. She --

H.B.: They had the Coast Guard went there and got her up.

K.F.: Yeah. She's dredging.

H.B.: And they said it cost \$100,000 to fix her up. And she'll be ready by spring. So I guess she'll be ready for next --

K.F.: Well actually they took her out this week and they're working.

H.B.: Oh, they're working with her now?

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: Oh, that's all right then.

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: Yeah. Must not hurt her too bad then.

K.F.: Well she doesn't look too good. And then in the summertime they use her as like to take people out, take tourists out, and the Coast Guard told them they couldn't do that.

H.B.: Yeah. Well they'll pull it up this spring and work on it. She'll be all right.

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: Don't want to lose too many of them because -- not many of 'em now.

K.F.: No. There's only six left.

H.B.: Right. Only six of 'em left?

K.F.: Working.

H.B.: All the (indiscernible) boat, they got that up to the museum, haven't they? The old (indiscernible).

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: Is she the only one they have -- or do they have any more?

K.F.: I think that's it.

H.B.: That's all they have.

K.F.: Yeah.

H.B.: I knew those guys, sold oysters off 'em.

K.F.: Oh, really?

H.B.: Off of that boat.

K.F.: Do you know anybody that used to cook on it?

H.B.: No, I didn't know the cook. I knew the captain, but I didn't know, I didn't know -- I didn't know none of the crew. But his name is Arthur Parks, the one that owned it. The name of that boat was the Rosa Parks.

K.F.: Right.

H.B.: I bought oysters off of it, but I didn't know the crew. I used to buy a lot of oysters over at Cambridge. I had a good business going at one time. But I've got old, and I lost half my family, and I don't care for it no more. I just piddle around now. In other words, this is a piddling business. I lost a daughter and a wife the year 1990. Two people. And then business didn't mean a whole lot to me after I lost them. Sort of a hard thing to shake off.

K.F.: Yeah, it is.

H.B.: I hope you don't face that.

K.F.: Well I hope I don't either.

H.B.: Do you have children?

K.F.: No, I don't have any yet.

H.B.: Well you'll have some later on. You don't want to get too many 'cause they're expensive.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: That they are.

H.B.: Don't get over, don't get over two no how. My granddaughter, she has one, says she's just gonna settle for the one.

K.F.: That sounds fine.

H.B.: And her mother told me last night said she told her said don't get no whole lot 'cause then I don't want to have to work for 'em.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Now, Delaney, do you teach your daughters how to pick crabs?

SPEAKER: No, I don't have a daughter.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

SPEAKER: But I have nieces that pick crabs.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: They used to. Some. But they work, you know, they pick some. And I had a niece that picked -- and she could pick a crab, but she don't like it. She don't like picking crab. She graduates from college the year 2000.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

SPEAKER: -- she went. She don't like -- work, you know. This kinda work.

K.F.: Well what do you like about it?

SPEAKER: Oh, I love to pick crabs.

K.F.: Yeah?

SPEAKER: I love it. Always did.

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

SPEAKER: I just like it. I just love to pick. I just love the, I love the money, and I love to pick. I just love to pick crabs. I always did love to work in seafood.

K.F.: Yeah?

SPEAKER: I love shucking oysters. Yeah.

K.F.: Which one did you like better, shucking or picking?

SPEAKER: Well I like picking the best because shucking oysters, I love to shuck too, but I shuck for my breath and that's no good for you.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: You know when you (indiscernible) oyster --

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

SPEAKER: That's no good for your heart.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

SPEAKER: Hard on your heart.

H.B.: It's hard work shucking oysters.

SPEAKER: See I -- I shucked from my chest. But I shucked a long time. Yeah. Shucked oysters a long time. Yeah. I shucked oysters in the winter, picked crabs in the summer. And then back and forth. Yeah.

H.B.: I'm going on the love boat cruise in January.

SPEAKER: One thing about it, it's piece work.

K.F.: Right, right.

SPEAKER: You work, you know, I did work in a plant, at a plant in Jersey in 1975. I left there -- it's nothing like -- doing piece work, one thing when you work, you know, and if you don't work, they don't pay you. If you work on a job and they don't see you working, you get fired.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: Right. So that's -- I like piece work. When you get older, it's more like for a person when you get older anyway, piece work.

H.B.: Don't you get older. You stay young.

SPEAKER: Most of these plants --

K.F.: -- let me know.

SPEAKER: You couldn't do it anyway a certain age.

K.F.: Really?

SPEAKER: You get a certain age, these plants won't hire you. No.

K.F.: Well now when you started, you were younger.

SPEAKER: Huh?

K.F.: When you started, you were a teenager, very young girl?

SPEAKER: You mean when I started this?

K.F.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Oh, yeah. I was very young. Very young.

K.F.: Now at that time, were there laws against kids coming into the crab house?

SPEAKER: Oh, no, no. You go in -- when it was in Crisfield, they had children in there from 10 years old on up, and maybe a little younger. Learn how to pick crabs. And most all those young people in Crisfield, they can really pick crabs.

K.F.: Right.

H.B.: Wasn't no law then.

SPEAKER: Wasn't no law. Just go in at any age. And boys picked crabs too.

K.F.: Yeah?

SPEAKER: Boys learn to pick crabs in Crisfield. It's so many in Crisfield pick crabs as fast as some of the women.

K.F.: Well how come the women stayed with the picking then, and some of the men, or most of the men stopped picking?

SPEAKER: I guess they figure some men, some of 'em, you know, when they were young and in school, and after they got older, they got other jobs. 'Cause my cousin picked crabs.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: And then he's (indiscernible) over here at -- Lane. He grow up and stuff, then he changed over. See I guess he's been working it all his life, you know. So that's where he passes (indiscernible) in there. Different things, some people like the change. And like these younger people, they don't like this. They don't like it. They're good at it, but they don't like it. Yes, sir. 'Cause I got a niece and she's really good at picking crabs. And I asked her, the other -- but she didn't really like it. But they're both in college. Both of 'em in college. Yeah. One just started, and the other one comes out in 2000. When you get a certain age, this is hard for you to do, you know. You know, at my age, I couldn't get no job nowhere.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: Nothing to do but piece work.

H.B.: And she's got work, but no man home 'cause she eats too much. So there you are. She's gonna have to work.

K.F.: Well I think we all have to work. There's no getting around it.

H.B.: You ain't gonna get by it.

SPEAKER: I'm getting up there in age.

K.F.: Now what do you remember about the relationships that you made in the different crab houses and the friendships that you had?

SPEAKER: Oh, it was good.

K.F.: Do you still have some of those friendships?

SPEAKER: Oh, yeah.

H.B.: No. I'm not no friend to her.

SPEAKER: You know what? All the bosses I worked for were nice, very nice. And but they all not living, you know.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: But when they die, we've all show good friendships. Nice people. Always worked for nice people.

H.B.: You tell her -- I carried her down to her house, and her (indiscernible). And the (inaudible) said if we could find the -- we'd like to (indiscernible). And I was about to fall down and break my neck (indiscernible).

SPEAKER: Yeah, they'll take care of you.

SPEAKER: Yes, in deed.

H.B.: I don't have no one to (inaudible.)

K.F.: Pardon me?

H.B.: I don't have (inaudible.)

K.F.: Well that's always good.

H.B.: Right.

K.F.: Well what do you all think is the most important thing for someone to know about this job?

SPEAKER: Huh?

K.F.: What do you think is the most important thing for someone to know about this job?

H.B.: Right now, right now I'd say don't get into it. (Laughter.)

SPEAKER: Well I'll tell you. I think it's nice for everyone to learn everything and work on it. Because regardless, you don't know what you're going to have to come to, see. A lot of times you can go to school and you can get your education, but then you can't get the job you go to school for to get your education.

K.F.: That's true.

SPEAKER: So it's nice to know more than one thing.

K.F.: Right.

H.B.: Ain't nothing wrong with it.

SPEAKER: So that's -- huh? You got to know more than one thing.

K.F.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: You got to learn it all, try to learn it all. Then you will not, you know, you can do anything. You say well I can make a living doing this. I know how to do this, I can go ahead and make a living. That's the way I come up.

H.B.: Does your husband (indiscernible.) -- a big dinner?

K.F.: Not really, no.

H.B.: Don't he?

(Laughter.)

H.B.: Uh-oh. You tell him he better start doing it or he's gonna lose you. Waldorf had a big -- doesn't it?

K.F.: Pardon?

H.B.: Waldorf.

K.F.: I don't know. I've never been to Waldorf.

SPEAKER: Waldorf, Maryland?

K.F.: No.

SPEAKER: I used to live over there.

K.F.: Oh, you did?

SPEAKER: I know where -- I lived over that way. Waldorf, La Plata, Maryland. Just go right on up right side up to Marlboro, you know right there?

K.F.: Yeah, I know where they are. Just never been.

SPEAKER: You know where all them places is?

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

SPEAKER: St. Mary's County?

K.F.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: I know about all that too.

K.F.: Yeah. Where were you born?

SPEAKER: Huh?

K.F.: Where were you born?

SPEAKER: Smyrna, Delaware.

K.F.: Smyrna. Okay. Well --

SPEAKER: But see I lived in places. See, I lived there. I lived over to -- over there was my father's home.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: See and my mother was from here.

K.F.: Oh.

H.B.: What was the name of that place down from Waldorf?

SPEAKER: From Waldorf? Waldorf there's La Plata. You go Waldorf, then you hit La Plata. You come on down from La Plata, you hit the west side, then you hit Newberg.

H.B.: Newberg?

SPEAKER: Newberg, west side. All them places coming right on down.

H.B.: And where did you live?

SPEAKER: I lived --

H.B.: In Newberg?

SPEAKER: No. I lived -- you turn north, you go down the west side, Thomsonville, (Indiscernible), Rock Hall.

H.B.: You lived Rock Hall. Yeah, I know where that's at.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

K.F.: That's it for the day? Well if you all don't mind, I'm going to take a quick picture of you all cleaning up. I'll get a picture of each.

SPEAKER: Okay, okay.

K.F.: What's your mailing address, Mr. Bozman? I'll just send you copies.

H.B.: Pardon?

K.F.: What's your mailing address here?

H.B.: Upper Fairmount, Maryland.

K.F.: Pardon?

H.B.: Upper Fairmount, Maryland. Fairmount is F-A-I-R-M-O-U-N-T.

K.F.: Right.

H.B.: Maryland's M-D. And the box number is 195, and the zip code is 21867.

K.F.: Okay.

H.B.: And that'll get me.

K.F.: All right. I'll send you some copies.

H.B.: Gonna get your picture.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Well now what's it like working in a smaller crab house versus some of the bigger ones you may have worked in?

SPEAKER: Huh?

K.F.: What's it like working in a smaller crab house versus some of the bigger crab houses that you've worked in?

SPEAKER: Well it's coordinated, you know, like some people like to be with a crowd, some like to be --

K.F.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: But I like it here. I like this. You know, where we don't have too many people --

K.F.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: And we all get along fine in here together. It's nice.

K.F.: All right.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)