

Interview Log**Interviewee:** Sam Turner**Tape #:** OH148**Interviewer:** Kelly Feltault**# of Tapes:** 2**Date:** May 10, 2000**# of Sides:** 3**Location:** Bellevue, Maryland**Topic:** Crab Picking Project**Corresponding Photography Log #:** Turner series**Comments:** Phonetic spellings: Deshields

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: All right. If I could have you say your full name for me.

S.T.: My name is Samuel E. Turner, Senior. Boy, I hate it around here. I'm trying to get some of this mail I've been getting.

K.F.: And when were you born, Mr. Turner?

S.T.: I was born 1912, April 28th.

K.F.: Here in Bellevue?

S.T.: In Bellevue. Wasn't born in this house. When I was born, around this was all field out here.

K.F.: Oh, it was?

S.T.: Yeah, well it's some places been built in the last few years. This here house I just put this one, I just built this one here.

K.F.: Well what did Bellevue look like when you were a young boy?

S.T.: Nothing to look like. It had a whole lot of two story, two-story buildings on it. And this coal was here. And mostly black people lived here, no white people lived here. They just been moving here lately, you know, 'cause it's a nice property.

K.F.: Right. It's waterfront.

S.T.: Yeah. And, you know, it's water. They had -- they tell me they had opportunity to own all this property. The owner across the creek there, they got (indiscernible), that what they tell me, called Clay Hope. This was a field, 60-acre field. That what they tell me, I don't know. Sixty-acre field, and they gave it to the few black people then that was around here. And instead of going settle down the water, they settle up in the middle of the town. So most the waterfront property around there belongs to the other people. I just got this here in 19 -- we bought here in 19, it's been about 1940 or something, along in there. No, near 30's.

K.F.: The 30's.

S.T.: Yeah. We bought here in the 30's. During the depression time. 'Cause I went away to what they call CC Camp. You ever heard anything?

K.F.: No. What is that?

S.T.: The right name for it would be Civilian Conservation Corps. It was one of the programs that Roosevelt set up.

K.F.: Right, during the depression.

S.T.: Yeah, during the depression time. And he took the boys, when the family wasn't working, and put 'em in this camp. Best thing ever happened to 'em. And the men had what they call WPA.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I doubt -- you ever heard of that?

K.F.: Yeah, I heard about that.

S.T.: WPA had around here digging ditches. And they send us away to the forestry place. I went --

K.F.: Oh, you did?

S.T.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: Well what did you do at the Conservation Corps? What was your --

S.T.: Well when I was in the Conservation Corps, they watched forest fires, and clean up the tree -- you know the, what they call the -- Skyline Drive?

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

S.T.: They built that during that time.

K.F.: Right. Did you work on that?

S.T.: Yeah. Yeah, I was out, I was down there in Virginia, camp in Virginia there. And Skyline Drive, you go all the way down North Carolina somewhere.

K.F.: And what was the camp like?

S.T.: Well the camp just like an Army camp. It was good, good. Best thing ever happen. Ain't have no whole lot of trouble, drugs and all that stuff. You had that mess then. Best thing ever happened to the -- it was the best thing to happen to the people, I guess they call us poor then, but we didn't know it. We were in poverty level. We didn't know nothing about no poverty. I never know a day we went without something to eat.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Family there, wasn't a whole lot, wasn't a whole lot of single families like it is now either. Most families had a father and mother. And --had a problem with that either. But now seem like gone haywire. Don't know what going to happen to it.

K.F.: Well in the CC camp, was everybody in the camp African American, or was it --

ST.: No, no. Well, I believe it was. Yes. Well at that time, we had -- you ever hear of Mr. Jim Cook?

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

S.T.: He pretty -- then. But I think I remember all of us in that camp were African American, yeah. Oh, it didn't present no problem. Of course, we come out of society like that, and went in there and kept this perpetuated. Wasn't no hardship or nothing. Be glad get something to do, I guess.

K.F.: Yeah?

S.T.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: And do you remember how much you got paid when you worked there?

S.T.: In deed, I do

(Laughter.)

S.T.: The wages were a dollar a day. But you had to send most of that home to your parents 'cause they was the one that really send you out, got to help them out. But I was a little fortunate in that I was a high school graduate back there in the 30's. High school graduate probably rated more than college people is now. I think they had a whole lot more, I'm not saying nothing against you. I think they had a whole lot more sense than a lot of these college dudes I meet out here. And if you're a college graduate -- I mean high school graduate, you were the, you know, I guess they considered you educated or something. I don't know. But we had -- 1930 at Easton High School. And so I went in CKC camp. By me probably had more -- I guess hardly education. And, you know, average one in there. Because they didn't come tell you to go to school then. High school, you had -- when I started high school, I had to pay my own way.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: And how much did it cost? Do you remember?

S.T.: Yeah, I remember that too.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: The man to commandeering a car sometimes charge \$2 a week for, you know, transport you up there to the high school. After a while, they changed that. Then it was long before they had room for everybody, it was free. But you wasn't compelled to go. After you got 16, I don't know, you just quit. Ain't nobody bother much. And school didn't last 'til about May. Yeah, yeah. Didn't have no school right up until June, all that kind of like that, didn't have that.

K.F.: So the high school was in Easton?

ST.: Yeah, yeah, Morton High. I heard other day talking about tearing it down. Get ready to put a -- they got a new Morton there. I'm talking about the old Morton, the one I graduate from. It's an old frame building, two-story building. And they're getting ready to -- I heard gonna tear it down, put complexes up there, you know, where the people, you know, these projects.

K.F.: Right, right.

S. T.: That's what I heard. I just heard that yesterday. I think a lot of time that old building almost old enough to be condemned. I don't remember when it was built, but I do know my wife's people went there. And it had to be built around 1900, in that span. And about -- they got up there now, they got now, they got people staying up there in it now from what I understand.

K.F.: Well how long were you in that C.C. camp, in the corps?

S.T.: I was in there, I was in therein -- we went in there, I graduated in '30 from high school. I don't know the exact date. I think it's '32. When did Roosevelt get in there? I didn't go there before Roosevelt got there.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: But he was the, you know, he was a different president at that time. We had the crash in 19 -- when was that? Had Hoover in there. I don't remember the year. When Roosevelt got in behind him, whenever that was, in them following years. That's when it happened. This where all this here civil, this here social legislation some out of, out of Roosevelt. All of it. Every piece of it.

K.F.: How did you feel about that?

S. T.: What?

K.F.: About that legislation that Roosevelt passed?

S.T.: I thought it was pretty good. It be a lot of -- if it hadn't been for that social legislation, a whole lot of people be suffering. What do you do? Before that, before they had that social legislation, they had a place called Adam's House. You ever heard of one? Adam's House. That's where they send people when people couldn't take care of 'em or didn't have all their marbles, something like that. One over there in Oxford. There's a road over there now called Adam's House Road or somewhere. The building's gone, it's been gone, but that's where you send people. But after Roosevelt and them got into that social legislation, they didn't send 'em no more to find people. They gave 'em a check or something. We never got none down here 'cause this town was pretty well self-sufficient. We had this river out there, and we always could take care of ourselves.

K.F.: Right. So what did your father do?

S. T.: My father was a waterman. He was the captain of a schooner.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

ST.: Yeah, he was the captain of a schooner. And he just run back and forth to Baltimore to run freight.

K.F.: So he owned his own boat?

S.T.: He didn't own the boat. He run it for a fellow by the name of Valiant.

K.F.: Okay.

ST.: Hell, you said you're Maritime Museum?

K.F.: Yes. John Valiant.

ST.: Well that's the same, that's the same family.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: But I knew him, I knew of him. But I knew his father. His father was about, you know, in my age.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I knew the whole family.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I knew the whole family. And he started that business down there.

K.F.: They had a huge tomato canning business.

S.T.: They had a huge everything. Somebody told him one time he owned about half of Talbot County. That's what they told me. I don't know. Everybody talk, they had farms and tomato houses. He's quite a bit -- he wasn't no college boy either. He did quite well for his self. When they had that NRA, you don't know nothing about that either, do you?

K.F.: National Recovery Act?

S.T.: Yeah. You know that?

K.F.: Yes.

S.T.: When they come by, that's what killed him.

K.F.: How did it kill him?

S.T.: Huh?

K.F.: How did it kill him?

ST.: Well he had to make up all that back money that he wouldn't pay those people. That what killed him. All this money because he -- when he started, they didn't have no government regulations, all that. He had to pay back all that back money. That pretty well done him in. Wasn't (indiscernible). When they got done with him, wasn't much of him left.

K.F.: Now where was the plant located here?

S.T.: Down here. That whole walk down -- you ever been down to the ferry?

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

S.T.: That whole place down there, owned that plant. Whole place. Wasn't none of this stuff down there what you would see. None of it, wasn't none of it down there. They had a shell factory there, a fertilizer factory there, tomato factory there. What else did they have? Had canned, canned spinach, string beans. What else? Tomatoes. I don't think they canned any corn.

K.F.: Did they process any seafood there?

S.T.: Huh? Oh, yeah. They processed. Old Man Valliant, he's very energetic. I believe he put some oysters or something down there one time. He used to pick crabs down there. He took in all of it. He had a big business going down there. I believe, I believe he had an education, he could become a -- he could have become a big fellow around, but

he's just us. Just plain school, you know, just grammar school graduate. And he had his background that should propel him up there. And he had the boys, he had two, had some boys down there.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: He didn't show them the --well he didn't know a whole lot to show `em. That is, he showed `em how it was doing, but he didn't have the expertise to carry on a large business like that.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: And consequently, it failed. He lost his mind almost.

K.F.: Really?

ST.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: Well what happened to Bellevue after that? That factory closed down `cause didn't most of the people in the town work in the factory?

ST.: Yeah. Some of `em worked for us.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Lot of `em worked for us.

K.F.: Now when did your plant open?

S.T.: Huh?

K.F.: When did your plant open?

ST.: Huh?

K.F.: When did your plant open?

ST.: My plant opened in 19 -- I had just come out the CC camp. Back in the 30's, early 30's. That's when we went shucking oysters.

K.F.: Okay. So you started out with oysters then?

S.T.: We started out with oysters, yeah. Only industry around here before that.

Probably Valliant wasn't going to let none in here no how. It had to come by him, and wasn't about to. Wouldn't let nobody compete with him around here.

K.F.: Well how did you start your plant? How did you get your money to buy the land and to build the --

S.T.: Well it wasn't a whole lot of money. Money wasn't a big idea, wasn't a big thing then. My father, he handled all that, my father, he got the money together. And I got it from CC camp. That's where I got it from if you want to know.

K.F.: Okay, okay. So you saved your money --

S.T.: I sent the money home, my mother saved the money, she never spent it.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

S.T.: She never spent no money. She saved the money. This ain't the place. It was two acres over there, didn't pay but \$1,000 for it at the time. That was a lot of money then.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: \$1,000 whole lot of money.

K.F.: Still a lot of money.

ST.: Ain't no money now. But it was a lot of money then. `Cause we pay -- every six months, \$100 every six months -- \$100, that was me and my father both working, and we didn't have \$100 -- six months, we didn't have no \$100 to pay on no note. Down in St. Michaels Bank.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Yeah. St. Michaels Bank was very nice to us down here. Mr. Wilson Harrison, he was, he took over behind Mr. Martin -- so most everybody down here build their homes, that bank, you know, helped them out.

K.F.: So when you started in the mid 30's, what was the name of your plant then?

S.T.: I had a thing on my table about that. It was BMA Turner -- there it is.

K.F.: This one?

ST.: That's going to be a souvenir. See that thing there? See what's on there.

K.F.: Turner's Crab Meat.

ST.: Yeah. Doesn't look like any other top, do it?

K.F.: Huh-uh (negative).

S.T.: You ain't going to find one like that nowhere.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Not even the ones I make now. But you see it on there, Turner's Crab Meat.

Look down the bottom of it where the company is. What does it say down there?

K.F.: W.A. Turner and Son, Incorporated.

ST.: W.A. Turner and Son. There was five of us boys, but I was the only one here.

K.F.: Oh. Where were the others?

S.T.: Away in school, somewhere. They were here when all that were going on.

K.F.: Yeah?

ST.: No. When we started that place, we started this place all from scratch, nothing. And Turner and Son. But of late here, someone decided -- my older brothers that got it all. He didn't get nothing. That is -- he wasn't even around here when we had -- really had it rough. It's not like it used to be. Before that, business was never, you had to hustle like for your business. I mean you had to go out all over the place.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: All over everywhere. Nobody did nothing but me and my father. And I went to up and down -- one time I went up there, one time I went up there and I got '28, '29 Ford pick-up. Man sold it to me. I didn't know. The thing wasn't right. Cop picked me up, put me in jail.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Yeah, put me in jail. Something, the tires wasn't right, something. I don't know what it was. I didn't know nothing about that kind of stuff. And I was going to Delaware, up there to Wilmington. 'Cause we, I used to go around, and my father would go around sell crab meat places like that. It ain't like it is now. Ain't no problem now. Got more stuff than you can produce. But it ain't been always like that.

K.F.: Right, right.

S.T.: I don't think people pay too much about who packs it now like it used to. You got a good product, they're going to buy it. I don't care who packs it up.

K.F.: What do you mean they don't pay attention like they did back then? How --

ST.: Any of 'em, you know, back there then they had --you know how it is, you know how it is. Pay apart --wasn't very --wasn't none of us in that kind of business. Wasn't none, no few, nothing. I think Jewitt about the first one that got in. He done real well 'til he turn it over to his boy, Elwood. He sent him to school, got education, he come around there and that was the last of the business. I find that happen mostly in black business.

Time you turn it over to your smart college boy, that's the last of it. And I'd like for you to tell me why.

K.F.: I don't know.

S.T.: I can't figure it out. Huh?

K.F.: I don't know.

ST.: All right. Now Jewitt was twice bigger than we were. I mean twice as big.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Jewitt had a big operation. And that building over there and that -- you know. See getting -- got in there working against him, and the first thing you know, he had a whole lot of education. I guess he thought everybody was a damn fool, that's what most of these young people, think everybody's a damn fool if you ain't been to college like they has, like they want to rip you off or take advantage of you.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: And the first thing you know, he has lost every, Jewitt got so he couldn't do no business. And the last thing I heard of him, he's out there parking cars in some -- in Jersey or somewhere. And he had opportunity to be just as -- he had opportunity to be just like all the packers here. He had a fresh start and all that stuff. But they don't see it. They don't see. I can't -- I been trying to -- I got three boys and a daughter. And, boy, they -- well I have problems with `em cause of all of `em in school. And by them going school, they think that they know everything. And -- take somebody's been in business long as, you know, as I have, you know, you can sit down and talk to you. I can sit down and talk to you, and tell you if you know anything about a seafood business. And they come out of school, they don't know nothing. Don't know nothing. Want somebody to think they know. And you let `em take charge, ain't going to be no business. Going to sell what you done got together and use it for their own. After a while, nobody ain't going to have nothing. They ain't going to have nothing, you ain't going to have nothing, ain't nobody going to have nothing.

K.F.: So you and your dad had a hard time selling your product because nobody wanted to buy from --

S.T.: We had a problem. He sold it, yeah, but he had to hustle. Ain't nobody running down here beating your door down buy your stuff You got to get out there and hustle. Same way as now. It's a good business, it's a good business out there, but you're going to have to get out there and hustle for it. It's a good living out there. A lot of seafood business gone out of business all around the state. Of course, you're going out of business. You can't do no business no way in 1999 like you did in 1950. You can't do that. And it just can't be done. Of course, we started off doing nothing but shucking oysters. My father did that. I was in the service. I wasn't home then. My father built all that place up over there. I didn't do that. I was in the service, I come home and I jumped in there, and he didn't -- to run the place. So from then on, we started the crab business. My father did that.

K.F.: What made you decide to get into the crab business?

S.T.: Well why he got in the crab business -- wasn't nothing else to do. Was no work around here for nobody to do. My father was the kind of fellow he was very entrepreneur, he always like to do things. You don't remember used to be a shirt factory down St. Michaels, do you?

K.F.: Yes.

S.T.: You do? I remember onetime, he was going to start one of them. One time, he went in -- black people work there. You probably don't know that.

K.F.: Really?

S. T.: Yes.

K.F.: Wouldn't like --

S.T.: Just like -- I mean -- St. Michaels, just like all the rest of this business around here. But my father say well, we'll build our own shirt factory. He couldn't get none of these fellows around here to go along with him. So he got in the oyster business. And him and I started that. Wasn't no money in it either. Wasn't no money to be made. I remember working a whole year. Many years I worked I probably saved a little money during crabbing season (indiscernible). But that's the way it was. Stayed that way 'til things turned better. So before he died, he come in doing right good. Of course, that plant has made money. But they didn't make it on what these young ones did. 'Cause people come around here and I guess all they knew -- don't know about my brother John and all of that. They don't know about the struggle we have, he has made money, 'cause he had about 40 some, had a bunch of people over there working. And not only that, most all the children went college in -- that's where they got the money from, over there, over there in that crab house. Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: Do you remember some of the crab pickers that worked for you?

S. T.: I remember all of 'em.

K.F.: Can you tell me about some of them?

S.T.: They went away, most of them go away to see after they pick crabs, nothing new around here, they're just like they see seafood -- ain't nobody want to fool with oysters and crabs. But there's other businesses they can get inside that, if they're as smart as they think they are. They can go and do something else.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: So they didn't comeback and want to pick crabs. I don't --nobody picking crabs or shucking oysters either. But you're all so smart, why don't you go out there and find something else? Other people do it. But you know what they want to do? They don't want to do that. They want to go work for Food Lion, A&P or somebody. Ain't nothing wrong with working for those people. But when you got a base to start from, then you could stand -- like in this here industry that I'm in. My brother, my brother, I had a brother named John. He took over running that place. That place is over there now. I don't know if you've ever seen it. It's about to fall in.

K.F.: No, I haven't seen it.

S. T.: Yeah, you go over there.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: Me and my father built that. Now it done fell in. He wouldn't put no money in it. He wouldn't invest no money back in it 'cause all his money put in General Motors and everybody else, you know, big industry type. Wouldn't put nothing in his own business. And consequently, it didn't progress. And now it ain't no more. He'll never come. And that's the reason. He's worth a million dollars when he died, from what I understand. He was actually worth a million dollars. Actually worth a million dollars in stocks and all that.

K.F.: Right, right.

S.T.: And that's a lot of money at that time. But he wouldn't invest no money in that place. And that's where he made his money. That's where he got his basis from, me and my father started there. Of course, the money looked good, but you got to invest in something. He didn't invest -- what they doing, just picking crabs, and the crabs got bad, he want to quit. Pick up his marbles and go home. And that's where he got his marbles. But that happens so often among our people. I don't know what's wrong. I doubt, I hope they'll wise up. But, boy, I don't have much faith in `em. The ones that ought to know couldn't do better than that don't. Like I'm, I'm right at the -- I'm right in it, up to my eyes in it. I know what they're doing. I know what they do around here with me. And this here gang I got round here, when they -- got a boy named Edward. He's got a degree in something. He got a degree, I think it's a science degree. And I think his wife teaches, something. Anyhow, they got a good education. So the seafood business want, seafood business, you know it's been bad the last few years, last year.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I tried to get him to diversify out of it, try something else. I -- try doing other things around here. And I had -- but I'm 80-some years old now. I'm tired. I want to get out the mess.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: And instead of them doing that, they want to sell out. Want to sell the whole business and let that be the end of it. Maybe that's why they're talking to you, Mr. Deshield?

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Yeah, he's interested in this here black entrepreneur, something, I don't know. And it's a lot to be told, it's a lot to be told if you only knew what to be told. `Cause they got the idea that only black folks make any success ones playing basketball, baseball. And that was a very small percentage of it.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Very small percentage. There's other things they can do besides play basketball. Lord knows I ain't playing no basketball, baseball. I don't call myself successful either, but from a lower beginning, all this property I got around here worth a half a million bucks. You don't get that by being stupid.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: But that's what my children think. You got it **all** by being stupid. Somebody just poor --he ain't have no sense though. They don't recognize --they know it all. And that's where them and I don't agree. They come up --I got a daughter too. She's a jewel, she is. She went --got a lot of education too. She went to Oberlin.

K.F.: Oh, good school.

S.T.: Out there in Ohio. She teaching out there somewhere close by now in Indiana. What's that big city in Indiana? That big city?

K.F.: Indianapolis?

S.T.: Indianapolis. That's where she teaches school out there. She's got a job out there. I'm going to try to get her to come home. Of course, there ain't --no money around her for probably what -- money ain't the problem. We got problems around here, we could do -- she could do more with than you could with money. Got bad drug

problem around here with our young folk. And we ain't doing nothing for `em. I mean the church, I'm in the church. I know what's going on. I know what's going on with young people. They don't want nothing. They go out here and get in these drug problems. Give `em two or three years where they come out, go right back in it. They don't know nothing else. What else they gonna do? They don't try to turn around or nothing. I think the church ought to have a program where they take hold of these people and do something with `em. That's why I'd like for her to come home. She works for young people out there in that capacity.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

S.T.: Yeah. If they sell this place like they're talking about, she had whole resources of it put in. I mean I don't need no money -- I got enough money to live on. I get some pension from, you know, I was in the service. I've got enough to live on.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: That's all I need. Eighty-eight years old, what you need money for? Some woman take it.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: So that's what I'd like to see her do, but I don't know. She probably will do it. She's the only one don't think like them boys. She's the only one. And she calls me up often. She ain't call me up this week. She tells me says, daddy, hang in there. I said what's wrong with these boys? She says dad, I don't know. I give `em up. She done give `em up. She can't do nothing with `em. Ain't nobody -- ain't nobody, ain't nobody understand. I ain't found one person yet understands. I had a person say to me this week or last week, it ain't been that long ago, say what they -- oh, it was the doctor. Tell me what he think it is, what did he say he think it was that they think that I'll probably die and they wouldn't get the -- they wouldn't get the, you know, wouldn't get what's here, you know. I mean -- I say they carry things out, I got a will made out right over there, a will made out, every one of `em share and share alike. So it couldn't be that. He was fishing. He didn't know. But they try to rush this thing before I even die. I ain't dead yet. They want to collect before I die. Yeah. They want to collect before I die. Ain't dying fast enough. I ain't gonna die 'til the Lord says so either. They can get as mad as they want.

K.F.: Well, Mr. Turner, who were some of your early customers when you and your dad were just starting this business?

S.T.: When my father started, he wasn't -- he wasn't nothing -- they sit around here with the white folks, you didn't have no problem. We got along fine. I didn't have no problem. I used to go around, I used to go around, I used to travel all over the United States when I first started business -- I used to go. I was making the kind of money I could afford to go. And sometime I met, I remember one time a woman come to me from California. Come tell me how bad she heard things was down here in Maryland, the white folks and black folks. I said listen, lady. I said I live down here. I don't have no problem with the white folks. I have my problem with my own folks. That's where I have my problem at. I don't have no problem with them. They said what they do to `em and all that. In some cases, they do do that, but we didn't have that. We out there on that river. You got a boat, you go out on that river working, you're on side of me, and I'm on side of you. Your oysters, what you catch is yours and what I catch is mine. We ain't got no, we ain't got no -- back there in that time you didn't try to run each other's women and

all, didn't have none of that problem. So we got along fine. Wasn't a whole lot of stuff in there. And so well you go around, you come back you know they hear a lot of tales from around here about Maryland.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Especially on the Eastern Shore, we have some bad incidents over here notwithstanding, but it ain't been as bad like a lot of `em say it was. I know a lot of friends I got, the white friends, they'd do more for me than any of the people I got. I don't have no trouble with them. No trouble. Save me from my own people.

K.F.: Well who were you guys selling your oysters to when you first started? Was it grocery stores or --

S.T.: No, we sold `em to -- when we first started, it wasn't no grocery stores or business, you couldn't handle that kind of business.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

S.T.: `Cause you have to sell `em in gallons or pints, and you had to wait for your money. You had to, you know, a lot of --you had to pay for this stuff. Well we didn't have that. So we had to sell them to another packer, and he's selling `em in five-gallon cans. He repacked them.

K.F.: Oh, who did you sell to?

S.T.: Well I sold to a fellow -- my main order we were selling for in Baltimore named Johnson. I think he later gone out of business though. He used to buy a lot, a lot of oysters. I mean he'd buy -- I used to shuck 200 gallons a day. That was a lot of oysters for a small house like I was.

K.F.: Yeah, that is.

S.T.: But it got down to -- it got down to a point where you sell them by the gallons. You sell them by five-gallon cans. How things change. You got to use your head, you see things change -- next thing it was in the gallon can.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Now I don't even sell no oysters in no gallon cans.

K.F.: Are they pint cans?

ST.: Pint cans. I have a top on this table here somewhere, gallon with a top on. But I don't make no practice going around here looking for no gallon orders.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Looking for no gallon. Don't even want none. And it's a big market out therefor them pints. I mean a large market. And with this internet and all this mess, it's all over the United States. Gosh, you could go sell oysters anywhere in the United States. I have all this here certification and all this stuff about this -- all them, I'm certified for sell oysters anywhere in the United States. And them boys like I got, they're so smart, why don't they get out there on the road and go out there and draw up some business, take some of what I did or had done. But anyhow, but it's a market out there. You know, since this -- what they call it, Catholic (indiscernible) -- what faith you belong to?

K.F.: Catholic.

S.T.: You're Catholic. Well this (indiscernible), you know a lot of churches are doing that.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: A lot of your Catholics are even going to it.

K.F.: Oh, yeah, they are.

S.T.: Well some of these churches I know there were 18, 20,000 members. Bless the Lord, you got Catholic -- you can sell, I can sell oysters cheaper than any sells them. And cheaper to `em than anybody sell `em to `em and fresher than anybody sell `em to `em. I even sell `em for -- and sell a good price, whole lot cheaper they're going to get `em to the grocery market. And they could buy things, get `em shipped a certain time, you know, and all that stuff. It's a gold mine out there. I mean a gold mine out there in that place too, I mean you got to get out there and work. Ain't nobody coming down here and look you up. See out there, all down this river, I got oyster ground out there.

K.F.: Oh, really?

S.T.: A whole lot of it. And you know, right now, P.T. Hambleton, you might've heard of him.

K.F.: Yup.

S.T.: Well he's a friend of mine, a good friend. He's got some boys, go down there, we done shoot the bull. And he's taking up his own oysters now. And getting 30-some dollars a bushel for `em, at least what they said, 25, \$30 a bushel. Look, over this winter, there's plenty of oysters out there on the natural barge. You go get them put `em on -- you ain't got to put by 10 can, 12 bushels per day and take `em up now and just like going to the bank drawing money out. And they're smart. Ain't got sense enough to see that. Just like going to the bank getting money. That's just local around here. I don't know what to do if -- another thing about Maryland oysters, none better. Oysters, none better than Maryland oysters. You can sell `em all over the world almost. It's a gold mine out there, them boys. But they want to work for Food Lion. And they're getting, what are they getting, \$7 per hour? Ain't getting much more than that. That's what they want to work for. I could pay `em more than that except they'd be around here helping me, but they won't help me do nothing.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: I can't figure `em out. Maybe Lord got it figured out. He's doing this for a reason. He's really doing it for a reason. I can't figure it out, but he's doing it for a reason. I don't believe Lord put nobody all through this mess just for the fun of it, `cause it damn sure ain't no fun. It ain't no fun. See all those boats down there? You can't see `em. One down there --

K.F.: Yeah.

ST.: And one -- I built those boats. One or two I built.

K.F.: Now when did you build them?

ST.: I built them back in the 70's, `69, `70. That ain't all I built. I built more than that. They were very good boats. To build a boat like that now would cost several hundred thousand dollars. `Cause the wood be -- you can't even get the lumber now. When I built them boats, I was paying around 40, 50 cents a foot for a foot of lumber. Now you can't even buy this stuff.

K.F.: What kind of lumber is it?

S.T.: It's fir. Can't even buy it. I want to restore those boats and put `em up on the shore. See that black thing down there with them poles on it?

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

S.T.: That's something new. Tom -- what's the man's name? He said he wants to take a picture of it, he might want to use that for the museum. That's not an ordinary thing like you think it is.

K.F.: What is it?

S.T.: Something to haul boats out, but it's not like the ones you see round to the marinas.

K.F.: Like at the railway?

S.T.: It's not like that. I made this myself.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

S.T.: And I can take a boat out with it. And it's a redesign. I made one before. I used to take my boat out, haul my boats out with it, but this is redesigned, this one is better. And I'd haul a big boat out. Them boats I got is 50 feet long. I could haul `em out with the clam rigs on `em.

K.F.: Oh.

S.T.: And them clam rigs are heavy. I could haul `em out with the clam rigs on it. That's built that way. I don't know what you want to do with it now.

K.F.: So tell me about the days you worked on the water.

S.T.: Well that's what I did. I tonged. I tonged oysters. Tonged. Come to shore and work with my father. It wasn't nobody around there but him and, him and I, and a fellow by the name of Earl.

(END SIDE A)

(BEGIN SIDE B)

ST.: I was out in the river, and he's the one helped my father build the place.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

S.T.: And he steamed crabs in there -- a tin, tin cylinder, made. And he's there before with slabs. You know what slab is, don't you?

K.F.: I don't know.

ST.: Stuff that comes off wood, comes off the lumber.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: Just scrap lumber.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I'm trying to tell you how that place come about.

K.F.: Yeah.

ST.: Then you come, some squirt come around here wants you just to get rid of it like ain't nothing happening. That's what I mean.

K.F.: Yeah. So you had steamers that you had wood fire then?

S.T.: Yeah, yeah. It had wood fire. But soon got next thing you got the automatic -- everything very modem now, but it ain't always been that way.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Got a new -- in fact, over there, plant over there to my crab house over where -- around here, got two steamers over there, got a high pressure and a low pressure. And I got, used to put `em in usually retards, them big things. But mine, my thing is something like a real, you know, you shove it into a tong.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

S. T.: That's the way they used to do it, and they got away from that and went back to this here baskets again. Now back and I got mine made out of stainless steel. And they work for -- you shove `em in there and they steam `em up pretty good.

K.F.: Now where did you get all this equipment? Did you guys have to build --

S.T.: Yeah, I built most of the stuff. Most of the stuff I had to build myself. I didn't have all that money either. Everything I need I build it. Anything I need for the plant I would build it. And the boats and everything else, if I need something real bad, that didn't stop me. I just go on and get it built. I couldn't borrow, couldn't borrow that kind of money.

K.F.: Why not?

S.T.: I don't know. At the time, I guess it didn't look, didn't look too promising. But I borrowed a lot of money from the government too.

K.F.: Really?

ST.: Yeah, a whole lot of money. \$300,000 one time. I paid `em every dime.

K.F.: Well when did the plant go from Turner Seafood to Bellevue?

S.T.: Sixty-nine, I believe, Sixty-nine. That's when I built this new building over there.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: I was over there with my brother, and him and I couldn't make it over there. `Cause he had the idea he didn't want to -- nothing -- (indiscernible) -- and I had different ideas. Not only, he had no children. See, I had four children.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: That made a big difference. He had no, he had no -- he had no future. All he could see was then and now. All he look at is his bank account. But if you got children, you think of life a little different. `Cause you want to do something for them. `Cause you know you ain't going to be here forever. At least I know I ain't. And you would like to put `em in a position where they can, you know, they can help along. When I come along like this, I couldn't get -- my father -- I'm not holding against my parents anything, but they just didn't have it. Wasn't no money around at that time.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: Wasn't no money around. Oysters around 25,30 cents a gallon. That wasn't no money for no oysters. Now the same oysters are 40 some dollars a gallon. So your parents didn't have, they did the best they could.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: They did the best they could. And nobody --they give you everything they had. They did the very best they could. And the children now --did the best they could. I mean they say -- I know, I know at times your parents which it was done different, but thinking back over your life, the children, they weren't so bad. They had a lot of respect for their parents. Now they don't have no respect for `em, don't have no respect for `em. Don't have no respect for the bible, and you get respect for bible, you respect for everybody. Your parents, God and everybody else. So this way it come down. And that's what bugs me when I get talking to `em. Of course, I know I make a lot of `em mad. And they know more -- they could pick out the bible what's true and what ain't true. And I ain't been that good yet. I don't know how good, maybe you're good enough to do that.

K.F.: What, pick out of the bible --

S.T.: Yeah, what's true and what ain't true. You that good? Well I got some smart boys. They can pick it, pick it out. That put me -- now what you think about honoring your father and mother? You might not think that's true. You know, you start that mess, you're on thin ice. So education, they got some education, boy, they're smart. And that gets me mad with them, they get mad. You see what's going on. Everybody mad everybody. Of course, the Catholic teaching and all that stuff But you know a lot of nominations here don't even teach that, virgin birth. Couldn't happen, they say. How they know what could happen back there then? I got an answer for them too.

K.F.: What is it?

S.T.: I'll tell you. You look at the fourth chapter of Job. You read that. And start at the first word. See what that say. I think that -- if you believe the bible now. Now you don't believe the bible, don't you read nothing.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: But you read that and see what that say about the situation. Most of `em that have come up -- they ain't looked at no bible, and I know it. Time they open their mouth, I know they ain't looked at the bible. Light on both feet. I just fool enough to believe what's in that book. I don't understand. I just believe what's in there is true, tell you the truth. I don't understand a lot of that mess in there. That thing that I can't even program that.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: I can't program that, this date and all that. They got all that mess and I can't program. Now I'm going to figure out how God made this world, all this mess up here. But them boys smart enough to do it.

(Laughter.)

ST.: So you know they got a problem with me. I haven't told you about we started shucking clams too.

K.F.: When was that?

S.T.: That's something else I went into. I'm the only one around here net around here. I made money in that. You ever hear of Fletcher Hanks? Quite a -- he's an old --

K.F.: No.

ST.: He's the one really started, got -- dredge, at least his credit was getting it, but he didn't really do it. I went out California, Seattle, a government -- stayed out there a week, about that mechanical dredge. He didn't, he wants to make out he invent it. He didn't invent it. He never invented it. And by digging into it, they find out he didn't invent. So these beds around here were virgin. Oh, you catch loads of clams. I remember one day I went out one time, I caught 50 bushel my own self By myself. And you bring `em in here, shuck `em down there. And wasn't getting but \$2 a bushel. You know what they bring in now? Eighty-some dollars, I think.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Yeah, that's what I heard somebody say. But times have changed. There was money in that too. I built this house when I was shucking clams.

K.F.: Wow. Now who would shuck the clams? The same people doing oysters or --

S.T.: Oh, it was the same people, Tidewater people. They all -- it was Maryland Resource, so they had charge of all that. So it was police, but they got it down now that they ain't, they ain't -- they got it down to nothing now. They're only catching what they

call razor clams. They use them for put in crab pots. And then I, when I was crabbing, you couldn't catch a razor clam. You move the places -- get up and go somewhere else. Now it's just the other way around. They say crabs like them -- do crabs, that's what they -- clam, fish. But I ain't out there. And I had three of them things one time, three (indiscernible). I know we had three, then you had to build `em yourself `cause you couldn't afford to have no three clam racks. I had three big ones. We'd catch a lot of clams. I made good money. I ain't complaining about nothing. I think the Lord's been awful good to me. I go to the hospital for, go over there a good while. And they thought I was going to die. They give -- I had a car, give that away. I think they're messing with some of my legal papers too. That's what the trouble is too. And I don't know nothing about it. But I'm going to find out about it. And he got all that straightened out. I mean after I come back, didn't die, I got better. I been out three or four years now. And I been over that place over there 14 months by myself. Nobody over there but me. Boys ain't even -- don't raise their hand to do nothing. Fourteen months. I came out pretty good somebody's near about dead.

K.F.: So are you going to pick crabs this summer?

ST,: I'm not -- I don't know what I'm going to do. I sent the health department yesterday told that woman to stop -- she been here a half a dozen times, I ain't never home. I ain't never home. So what I want to do come here and tell me what I got to do. I want to get the plant ready. It's a new plant. Ain't much to be done. Just clean it up, paint a little bit. I'd like to keep this place open `cause of eventually some of the children might take hold. Somebody might want to buy it. I could take this place right now and make money out of it. I could make all the money I want, make a good living. Make more you're gonna make at Food Lion right there in that place now. See that, see down there, that's where they shed peelers down there.

K.F.: Down --

S.T.: See that shed down there?

K.F.: Oh, where that shed is. Okay.

ST.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). P.T., he sheds a lot of peelers too.

K.F.: That's pretty much all he does is --

S.T.: Yeah, crabs, he buys crabs. I go there quite often. `Cause I was getting a lot of stuff from them, crabs. But I'm not going wholesale and picking crabs, `cause that don't make no sense. I'm 80 some years old, I'm gonna take on that by myself, nobody to, nobody to do nothing but me, turn around, lay down and die, they're going to be scrambling over **me**. I got more sense than that. I might be old, but I ain't no fool. (Laughter.)

S.T.: If they want to go there and work it, I'll do all I can to help. If they want to do it. But if they don't want to do it, don't think daddy going over there making their dime. I ain't got no wind. Eighty-eight years old, I ain't got no wind? If you live three or four more years, that ain't very long. That don't make no sense go over there and knock yourself out. And here they're sitting around holding hands -- make out -- fill it up.

K.F.: Now do you remember any time when the unions came around and were trying to organize --

S.T.: No, they never fooled around here.

K.F.: No?

ST.: Ain't nothing around here to organize. How they gonna organize? They can't organize that river. Can't organize that river. Can't tell them crabs when to bite, when not to bite. They tried to organize a lot of industry around here. I don't know no places around here to organize, tell you the truth.

K.F.: Yeah. It was back in the 40's they came around.

S. T.: Oh, yeah. It was a wave of that. And now it's gone all away. They probably swing back and forth. You know, a place like General Motors, I can see that, yeah. But I don't see where they can have, I don't see where they can organize around here. Ain't enough people either. It takes a lot of people, you know, pay all them bosses and all that. Ain't people. Ain't people on the Eastern Shore much less, you know, around here. And industry goes from Rock Hall down to end of the bay. Of course, you go across the bay, that's about the end of it. And what they would do, I guess, is they try to organize. I don't know what they do. I guess they let `em do what they want. A lot of these people around here, they pay `em pretty good. Now I understand crab meat's bringing, I think they said they get \$2 and a half a pound, something like. The workers around here do good, shucking oysters and all. They do all right.

K.F.: Who were some of the fastest crab pickers you ever had working for you?

S. T.: We had one or two particularly fast. I ain't fool with `em. I mean they knew what they did over there. I mean I never took no hand to hand on what they were doing, you know. But some of `em were pretty fast. You find a lot of `em fast crab pickers, your meat has a whole lot of bones in it. It's full of bones.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: I got a lady that picks crabs for me sometime, six years going on. Just some pick to eat. Man, she don't have no bones in it.

K.F.: What's her name?

ST.: Her name is -- she's -- her name is Mildred. And she just picks crabs sometimes. You know, like if a crabber wants to pick a bushel out for save home, he get her pick it for him. And she have, she'll pick it out for him. Your husband a crabber?

K. F.: No.

S. T.: And she'll pick it out for him. Don't have no bones in it.

K.F.: What's her last name?

S.T.: Mrs. Holmes. That's what I call her. She'll pick it out sometimes. It's hard for -- you got a bushel of crabs, carrying `em down, she'll pick `em for you.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: And that's something else I had, I thought it been a good idea. I gonna tell the Governor about it, Governor Glendening about it. I was on a commission with him. And he was going to -- I thought that would've been a good idea. We don't have no pickers come around. Most our pickers are old. They don't come around, come down here like they used to. I always thought they could fix up -- you seen these -- the library that go around on wheels?

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

S. T.: Yeah. They could fix up a sanitary cart and do that, and carry it around certain towns or certain -- and they have people there, old people want to work. You get a whole lot of crab meat picked that way. `Cause they could have it just as sanitary on there they could in, you know, a home.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: Yeah. And I gonna tell Governor about it, but I never got a chance. But I think that be way -- but now you're getting a lot of people in third world countries over here. Now Buddy Harrison, he got a bunch of `em down there.

K.F.: Yeah. Mexicans.

S.T.: Yeah, these West Indies.

K. F: Oh.

S.T.: I had one of `em out yesterday. He come up here and cut my grass. Come up here and cut my grass down here for me. See some days, they don't work. You know, they don't work steady. I mean they don't work steady, you know, I think our money \$6 times -- yeah, that counts up. Give `em good spending change do that kind of stuff. You say when you file this thing, you put `em in -- what do you put `em when you store them away?

K.F.: Yeah, they'll go in the library at the museum.

ST.: Yeah. Hey, hey, do you think sometimes they might make a novel out of somebody?

K.F.: I don't know. Hadn't really thought about that. We're going to use it for an exhibit at the museum.

S.T.: Use it for a who?

K.F.: An exhibit. Like a big show on crab picking.

S.T.: Oh, there's more to the seafood business besides crab picking.

K.F.: I know, but they're dividing it up so they'll be a show on oystering, and oyster pickers

S.T.: What I'm saying, if they had something like -- like a -- what they call that piece that woman wrote about slavery, Beecher-Stowe. What was her name? (Indiscernible). Well that was about slavery, we know that.

K.F.: Right.

S. T.: And it's a novel. It ain't, a lot of it ain't --she couldn't go dig up some of them people, find out exact -- but it's close enough to it to know what she's talking about.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: This is what I meant by the crab business. You ain't going to have crabs and all this stuff together, but it's all seafood.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: It could be close enough -- give a little leeway there, you know, you ain't got to go prove that I caught 40 barrels of crabs one day.

K.F.: Well what would be the stories I would have to include from you?

S.T.: Well I know anybody that's got something that counts that just might be beneficial. That's what I mean. I haven't -- other people in the seafood business, they don't have to be old as me either.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: They got a story to tell that be of interest. `Cause I got a testimony. Mine's past a story. I got a testimony. Because this is a trend going on among our people that if you don't be (indiscernible), it's going to be the doom of `em. It's more than just -- it's a testimony. All --

K.F.: What testimony would you like to share with me?

S.T.: I mean it's a whole thing. Put it -- my daughter, she comes, course, she's a writer. She writes all that down. I would sit down and tell her, she'd pick out what should be said and what should not be said and all that kind of stuff. She might do it. You see a lot of people writing a whole lot of books on that stuff. Whole lot of books didn't help nobody. You know what I mean?

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Every book written there about something personal don't mean nothing to nobody. But some of these things are life stories. Life stories. Now a lot of stuff --crabbing now. Coming in awful early. It's a lot of things that -- it's a lot of testimony there that if I knew, if I'd known say 12 years ago, if I had heard about it, I'd been on the -- but you ain't think about your children doing that kind of stuff. You know what I mean.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Some things you'd be on the lookout for. You won't wait 'til you run in this great big thing --then you find you're all messed up. Then you start what I should've done. I mean it's a life story. It ain't something fictitious. It's a real life. You ain't got to make it up. A lot of this mess I think the writer makes it up. A lot of it ain't half -- I wonder why they get it printed. They print a whole lot of stuff don't do nobody no good. Like an old soap opera. You're working, you can't --what they call `em, Edge of Night. Somebody slept with somebody's wife. Who the hell cares who slept with who? I know I don't. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well what do you think was the hardest part about working in the seafood industry for as long as you have?

S.T.: Well the hardest part. The hardest part about working in -- you've got to have cooperation. In your, in your -- what you're in, you've got a boss, I'm quite sure.

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

S.T.: Before you get in there, you come up -- say I want to do this this morning. Your boss got something else for you to do. Now how long you gonna be around there, you come up there overruling your boss? That's what I mean. They should get ahead there. Get together and talk about this stuff, have a common goal. Not come up here, I think you ought to -- I'll do what you say if I think you're right. That's -- that ain't no way to build cooperation. Ain't no way to run nothing. `Cause I know when I was in the service, we didn't think -- I called the man tell me he'd go there, I said -- I'll go wherever I think, you're right. Where you think I been at? Well that's the way they think. But you got to have a head, got to have a head anywhere. You don't have to be right all the time either. Most times, a lot of times they're not right. Ain't nobody said they're infallible. But it's got to be a head somewhere. You got to have a head somewhere. You got to start. Got to have a head. And if you got two heads, you got a monster. You got one head, you might can make out with it. But if you ain't got no head, you ain't doing -- just as well go home, go somewhere.

K.F.: Right, right.

S.T.: Yeah. So this is the way it is. But there's a lot of places you don't -- a lot of times they don't want to accept authority. This younger generation's like that. They don't want to accept no authority. But it ain't that. It ain't that way. You got to accept authority. Somebody -- you accept for somebody. Don't accept that problem from what you do, you accept it from the circumstances. `Cause you're going to run into something

that will make you stop. It's several books written out on it. I got a book here written on a black sailor, just nothing but the black sailor, you know, on the tall ships?

K.F.: Right.

ST.: Yeah. I seen a book on it, I bought that book. And it's -- I haven't read it, but you know, I read enough to know what it's about, and it's quite interesting, just for what the blacks have done in it. And it might be a good idea for whatever Deshields is telling me about some of the blacks, some things done here, it's a whole lot of exhibits around here, I mean a whole lot. You can't even count, I mean a whole lot. It's enough to fill a book up, you know. It's enough to draw somebody's interest. They did that back there then, they do that, they do that, and then you start putting things together, you know.

K.F.: Right. Well that's what we're trying to do with this crab project because there's nothing really written down about the crab industry.

S.T.: That's right, yes.

K.F.: And the packing houses.

S.T.: Yeah.

K.F.: That's why we're talking to people like you.

S.T.: This is -- far as I'm concerned, this is the last of `em too. This is the last of the, this is the last of this breed. Ain't no more come around here. My children ain't interested.

K.F.: Well when you pass away, what are we going to lose?

ST.:T. All this, as I know it, will be gone if it's not recorded. It won't be none of that left. A lot of evidence of what I've done will be here, and a lot of things I've done will be here, but it won't -- the history then goes, what they say, somebody said the evil that men do live out, the good buried with them.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: That's what they say. They'll probably bury the good or evil. I doubt you'll hear about that, how bad I was, all that stuff. Yeah. But you ain't seen nothing. I got a whole mess around here sometimes.

K.F.: Well that's what I want you to tell me --

S.T.: Yeah, I couldn't sit down, I couldn't sit down here and tell you that. It had to be collected over a period of time. I got something right here, I got something around here -- you ever study the bible?

K.F.: Not a lot --

ST.: Not really.

K. F.: No.

S.T.: I got a -- bible to tell you the truth. You know like you and I be sitting down here talking, if you was a preacher, you was preaching to me, I got a -- I could take down there, I wouldn't have -- everybody can't do this shorthand stuff, but I could mark it off, and when you get done, the preacher, I tell you everything you said, everything that's important that you say. I got a system like that.

K.F.: How did you come up with that system?

S.T.: Well I used to listen on television a lot. And I know people have good sermon and all, I couldn't remember that stuff. So I start dividing -- I've got two or three systems around here like that. Not only that, I got a whole lot of other things I had in mind. And all that mess in there, I'll get it all again. I'll give it to my daughter. She won't destroy it.

She'll go through it. A lot of stuff she can't understand, a lot I don't understand myself. And she'll probably pick out, you know, what's useful. But it's -- what I'm trying to say, it's too much stuff to just throw it in the trash can. 'Cause you don't get those revelations every day. A lot of this stuff comes in a revelation. What I mean by revelation, you know what they are, I presume. You just don't make them up, they just come. Just drop right on you just like this. You get a revelation about something. Tell you to do this, you do it this way or do it that way. Those are revelations. Like I say, you don't get that by accident. That's revelation, wisdom, you know, that's knowledge as I believe the Lord gave you. I don't think he gives it to everybody either. But you couldn't sit down here in no minute and do that. People write a book, probably take years. It'll take years.

I had to sit out on writing it and take stuff at a time. 'Cause I thought it might come to me at night. If I don't put it down my mind, I done forgot it. So that's the way that goes. But I have never heard of anything like it or seen anything like it, but I do know, it is, the revelation like that, is out here to be had. And if you put it in a book form or some kind of form where somebody could've, somebody could look it over and gather from it. Here's a book on t.v. yesterday. The Lord's Promise. Now somebody read down there through the bible, got every promise he made in there, and it is very helpful. Something if you want to look at it, you know, very helpful. Now it took that man a lot of time do that. But far as sitting down to tell you, how you gonna tell a whole life story in two hours?

K.F.: Well we're really trying to --

S.T.: You might get something to go on, but it's too much --

K.F.: Right.

ST.: Eighty-some years in two hours? Just impossible.

K.F.: Well we're really trying to focus on the crab industry, about the crab industry.

S.T.: Yeah, yeah. Well maybe -- it's according to what you want to know about the crab industry. You know what you want to know? If you tell me what you want to know, I could probably tell you all I know about it.

K.F.: I want to know what you know.

S. T.: What?

K.F.: I want to know what you know.

S. T.: I want to know what you know, what you want me to know, what you want to know about it. I can't come out there in -- you want to know how many fins a crab has?

K.F.: No, I want to know about the industry, running the plant here, running Bellevue Seafood, running Turner Seafood. I really want to know what it was like for an African American man to own a business in the 40's and the 50's.

S. T.: Yeah.

K.F.: And to have employees working for him, and to see the changes in the industry.

S.T.: I done told you that. It was pretty rough around here for run crab -- run any kind of business.

K.F.: What about the 40's and the 50's when the industry was pretty decent?

S.T.: See we had improvement. Things improved, still improved, going up, going right on up. Things did improve. Now it's left to the government board. I forget the man come here sit right over there. My wife was living then. And asked me would I go serve on the board. And I told him yeah, I'll go in there. Well he wasn't the governor then.

But if I knew something about the crab industry wasn't right, he's an authority -- don't nothing about that. Just a crab, I mean ain't no big deal. And to me, I don't know any too much about it. It's probably some people in it, probably know much about it, probably more than I do. Now you want to know about the packing end of it, the health department probably give you all the --

K.F.: Yeah, but we're not concerned about the health department. We want to know your personal experiences. That's what we want --

ST.: Well I tell you my experiences. We try to keep the place sanitary as we can, and you buy, sell on the market, and you make a profit. You got to buy on the market and sell on the market. You ain't gonna buy stuff cheaper than everybody else and charge more for it than everybody else. So you got to buy on the market. One year -- I've had a year in the oyster business we could do that. Oh, you would buy on the market, didn't have to hack about no price. Whatever the market was, you paid it. If they got ready to sell you stuff, they give you the market. But that ain't always that way. You come to Virginia, and that did a lot to the oyster business, people from Virginia -- run these boats in here and run the price up. You got out here today, I'm paying \$4 a bushel, see. You go out there, he run `em up \$2 a bushel. You can't call your people say oysters went up \$2 a bushel. And I put that on my gallon. See all that kind of stuff is -- maybe people tell you that, they won't tell you that. But you couldn't do that. You had to get around that some kind of way.

K.F.: Well how did you get around it?

S.T.: Well we had to pour water on it.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: You want to know the truth. We poured water in it. And now we got so good now, they put it on the can, water added, Yeah, they put it on there, water added. `Cause they know they're gonna put it in there. They don't tell you how much, though. You pour all in there you can get away with. But that ain't right either. But what you gonna do? Man come run the oysters up \$2 on you, that'll put you right out of business, you ain't got no business. One of them things. That's some of the -- you had to do. The young ones ain't have nothing, they ain't have none of that kind of -- they're sheltered from that.

K.F.: How did you pay your employees? I mean how did that factor in?

S.T.: You're gonna pay them. You're gonna pay them, else you ain't gonna have nobody next week. So how you pay -- you're gonna pay them. So that settles that. Don't you talk about -- you want to cut somebody, you won't cut the employees.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: You don't want somebody else to take off, don't tell the employees.

K.F.: Did you ever have to lower their wages?

S.T.: You don't lower their wages either.

K.F.: No?

S.T.: You don't mess with their wages. Young people working down there, you don't mess with their money. Don't mess with my money. Else you gonna have trouble, you mess with somebody's money. Mess with other -- way they do sometimes, way they do that sometimes, they run debts, they go so far they have to carry bankruptcy. That's how they do that. But you don't mess with the picker's money, and you don't mess with other

people's money. You go like if I'm selling to a man over here and he buy my stuff, one time I -- one time man owed me \$50,000.

K.F.: What did you do in that situation?

S.T.: Didn't do nothing, wait 'til I got it. He was a friend of mine. And he paid me, but he didn't have to pay me. He didn't have to pay me. And after I got my money, but I never, I never got that debt like that no more, never had that many in -- but that happens in business. You've been around, you know whole lot of business go -- so many business go bankrupt every year. That's the reason. They can't make their payment, and they have to go belly up. That's part of doing business. If business was like, some of 'em think going to work for Food Lion or Acme, if business was like that, everybody'd be in it 'cause ain't got no worry, all they got to do is show up 8:00.

K.F.: Right. Is that what made the seafood industry exciting?

S.T.: What? It's exciting all right.

K.F.: Always having to adapt and change.

S.T.: Doggone right. It's very exciting. I have made much as \$3,000 one week. That's when -- \$3,000 a lot of money. Yeah, you ain't -- you can go in the hole with \$3,000 too. But them young think you got to make it every week. You don't make it every week. It's very exciting all right. Hey, if you smart, you probably meet a challenge, you know, you think hey, there's other things you can do. You know like over here to Crumpton. You ever hear of Crumpton over here?

K.F.: The market?

S.T.: Where they go, the flea market or something.

K.F.: Yes, yes.

S.T.: Man, old Buddy Harrison sell as much as 100 or so pints a Wednesday. They over there today if they're selling today.

K.F.: He's selling crabmeat over at Crumpton market?

ST.: He's selling oysters, anything. I don't know what he's selling over there. But I'm gonna tell you what happened. Well he gets \$7 a pint, that's \$66 a gallon -- what them jars cost? Maybe 3, \$4. Well you got \$50 a gallon work with. Well everybody's happy. People got their oysters, tickled to death with 'em, getting fresh stuff. If you sell them same oysters in the gallon, he's getting 30-some dollars a gallon. See the difference?

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

S.T.: And you can go out there and get better mark than that if you want to hustle. So that's what you got to do. Now he can go over there on Wednesday and pick up three or \$400. And not only that, they got flea markets all up and down the east coast. You can go round there and make more money, make more money accidentally than you can around here hustling like I been talking about. But you got to work. Ain't nobody's gonna run down to -- run down and get no pint of oysters from you. So that's what it is. If you ain't, if you don't want to do nothing, ring a clock, go home 4:00, go ahead. The oyster business ain't for you.

K.F.: Right.

ST.: You got to work in this, you got to work in it. Of course, there's other businesses too. That's just one phase of it. That's just some part of the business I know about.

Crabs, same way. You can sell crabs. You can send crabs clean out to California now. All steamed and everything. And they'll buy 'em. But you got to, like I say, you got to

hustle, you got to work. Ain't nobody going to write you, tell you send me so many crabs. They ain't gonna do that. If you ain't prepared to hustle, go on work at Food Lion, but don't think everybody else want to work for Food Lion 'cause you want to work for 'em. And the way I feel about something like that, if you don't want to work for 'em, that's fine. That's fine. But don't expect me to work for 'em and give you my money. I ain't gonna do that. That makes me think you think I'm a damn fool, and I ain't gonna be that big a fool. If you want it, work for it. Now going to school, they used to -- you ever read Esop's Fables?

K.F.: Yes.

S.T.: Yeah. I didn't think they taught part of it in school now. Like the bible. You know in there, some of them things you remember as long as you live. They have one in there about this here little red -- you ever hear of that one?

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

S.T.: That's the way I feel about the whole mess too. Just find some -- you don't want to help me (indiscernible), don't you come around this house with no bread. But they want the bread, but they didn't want nothing to do with the wheat. I don't think they got taught that when they went to school. I wonder why they took it out. Old Esop's Fables. There's a lot of truth in them. Do they teach them in school now?

K.F.: No. I had a story book when I was little. My mom --

S.T.: Yeah, but that's what they -- teach in school, something like that, something really has some bearing on life, change a person's character. 'Cause a lot of these children think everybody owes them something. He had a whole lot in there about the fox and the --

K.F.: Fox and the greyhound --

S.T.: Fox and the greyhound. How the old -- getting the -- wasn't nothing but the roots, another year, he took the cock. All that kind of stuff. And them things say it better than anything else you can think of Yeah. Esop's Fables. I hadn't heard nobody quote that. I don't think they teach that. They took it out with the bible. The bible's no good, so Esop's Fables wasn't no good.

(Laughter.)

ST.: Old Esop. What was he, an Egyptian, wasn't he?

K.F.: I don't know.

S.T.: I think he was an Egyptian.

K.F.: I don't know.

S.T.: Yeah. I think that's what he --

(END TAPE OH148.1)

(BEGIN TAPE OH148.2)

ST.: -- whole lot of people. Forty some people come to me, come from all around. Some of 'em come from Crisfield.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Some of 'em still up here.

K.F.: Now if they come from Crisfield, would they just move up here or --

S.T.: Yeah, they move up here.

K.F.: -- would they just come for the summer and --

ST.: They moved up here.

K.F.: They moved up here.

ST.: Well about that time, you're talking about 35 mile an hour speed limit.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: If you had something go that fast.

K.F.: Well now what would make `em move up here from Crisfield?

S.T.: It was better up here than it was down there. That's why they moved.

K.F.: In what way?

S.T.: All -- why do you think people come from Cuba over here, do everything they can get over here --

K.F.: For money.

S.T.: It's just better living. And same people, they'll make people migrate, they'd leave here if it's better over in New York or somewhere else. People always try better their condition. That's the reason they left.

K.F.: A bunch of people moved up here from Crisfield --

S.T.: Hey, listen. This what I tell you about you couldn't think of all this mess one time. That's when my parents come up here. They moved from Crisfield up here going around from different houses shucking oysters. That's the way people did. You couldn't sit down in one hour and think of all that mess. And back then in other days, they had what you call they shuck oysters in a box, they call `em boxes.

K.F.: That you stood in.

S.T.: You stood in and get a box. Shucks, man, you had a box, you had something. That's premium, man. You had a job.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: But now, shucks, you can't even get `em in the place. Yeah, my mother and them came up here. They came up here right over Kent Island. Onetime, about seven, eight houses in Kent Island. I don't think two or three over there now if there's that many. Oyster industry gone. All you do is stay there with it. Of course, the young people don't know what struggles are. They just want to bail out, take what money they can get and leave, but old people don't think that way. They know what they put in, and anybody had to leave, but boy, they go in there swinging. They ain't going to just walk in there and take it away from `em. But these young ones ain't got nothing to lose. Ain't putting nothing, ain't putting nothing in it. And they're going to pick up 15, \$20,000 just for say I don't want to do it no more. They gonna do that. But they shouldn't expect the old people to go along with it. That's what they -- I think over there, that place over there, I think the man's talking about -- far as I'm concerned, I had a place -- I just wanted enough money for to maintain, for what they wanted for these -- money's not a problem. But they're talking about \$150,000 worth of -- well the other people buy it for that, you know, it's on the water, and it's valuable land. When I bought this place here, it was three acres and a half. Didn't pay but \$10,000 for it. From way over thereto way over there. Land just wasn't the value. The land, I bought it back in the 70's, and after I bought it, the land just shot off the map. It's that way everywhere. I remember when the DOW was 1700 points. You remember that, hear them talk about the DOW? You know, that New York exchange.

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

S.T.: Seventeen hundred. Seventeen hundred. That ain't much. Now it's up to several thousand now, right?

K.F.: Yes.

S.T.: Gone on up, and the value of the money shot up with it. Everybody making money. People got more, make more. And they still ain't satisfied.

K.F.: Now if all of your shuckers and pickers came from St. Michaels and all around here, how did they get down to the picking house? Did they --

S.T.: Oh, they find transportation. I mean back when you're talking about, we always have cars. Always -- always -- ever since I can remember, when I was -- 1926, my father bought his first car.

K.F.: Do you remember what kind it was?

S.T.: Yeah, Ford. That's all there was around here then, Ford. Yeah, she wouldn't do but 30 miles an hour. I see -- wonder where it comes from. Yeah, the first car my father bought. Of course, at that time, my grandfather bought a Hudson.

K.F.: Okay.

S.T.: She was a big car, about that --don't even make `em no more. He bought a red Hudson. I was little, so I used to drive him around.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: I had a big car to drive around in. He was a captain too of a sailboat. But things has changed a lot. It was good living around here. Every year the water was plentiful with seafood and stuff. You never gave a thought about scarce and stuff. He had nothing to think about but go out there and get stuff. But it eventually petered out. As far as, as far as they were concerned, we didn't think it was going to ever get like this. Another thing, I -- thinking about crabs, I remember when you couldn't catch -- right across the river out here, you couldn't catch two bushel of crabs.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Wasn't none out there.

K.F.: When was this?

S.T.: That was back in the 30's. That ain't been a whole lot of years ago. Yeah. I remember you couldn't catch `em, they weren't there. People weren't even crabbing out here. They'd go Western Shore.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Go Western Shore go crab. That been a long way. Been very few people. I remember that's when I started crabbing back in the 30's. I had a small boat. And now I remember, I remember when it was over, wasn't a dozen people crabbing on this river. Get that in one car about.

(Laughter.)

S.T.: Yeah, about a dozen people in the whole river I'm talking about. And you have a lay, like if I lay up in this -- wouldn't nobody come up there to get it.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: They wouldn't lay a line if they knew I laid there. But now, shucks, you got no lay. People, half of `em come down here are working, they're working in jobs all day, then comedown and crab all night. That ain't right. See they got a job. They come down there and crab your lay all night. You go out there in the morning, ain't no crabs in it. That's one of them things, you can't do nothing about it. I think the state gets so much fee for that.

K.F.: Yeah, I think they do.

S.T.: The states charge for that. They call it chicken necker.

K.F.: Yes.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Yes. They've been thinking of having them stop that actually.

ST.: Have they? I didn't know about it. I know they used to do it, come out crab all night long, you go out in the morning, he takes your line up, go on home, go back on the job.

K.F.: Yeah.

S.T.: Go sleep, or do something. You're going out thereto make a --that's all you have. They ought to stop that. That wasn't fair. That wasn't fair about that. I tell you what I'm going to do. My daughter, I'll talk to her. I'll get her, she knows quite a bit about, she's born 1945. So she knew quite a bit about seafood industry. She wrote a letter, I ain't got it now, and I'll get it together for you, concerning this crab industry. And she's trying to get some help from the state, something like. She wrote a real masterpiece of a letter, move around different ages and all. And I didn't tell her to write it. She wrote it herself. And I'll find that and let you get it. I think it would be nice to have that included in there.

K.F.: Okay.

ST.: In your writing. Because she, like she's a English major, so it's written right, and it sounds right.

K.F.: Okay. Well --

S.T.: I'll find it somewhere around here. A lot of this mess around here. When it's over, you'll have a whole, you can write a whole book on me, a whole book, I'm talking about, with all this little mess, you'll have a whole book.

K.F.: Well I was talking to Colonel Deshields, and he and I and another person from the museum would like to come over and tell you what you've got as far as artifacts and historical --

ST.: Yeah. A lot of this stuff they call artifacts, I call it junk.

K.F.: Well we'll come through and let you know what you've got.

S.T.: Whatever it is, you're welcome to it. But I -- sell this house to Dr. Deshields, not Willy Deshields. He was born in the house, I mean his mother was born in the house right over there.

K.F.: Really?

S.T.: Yeah, it's across that. I bought that for my daughter. I was going to (indiscernible), but he said he didn't want it pushed down, he wanted, I guess he wanted part artifact. The way houses were back then in the hundreds.

K.F.: Right.

S.T.: I was going to push it down, old house. And he --this doctor had wanted to buy this place. And that's been a whole year ago. So I go out to my boy, and I owed a whole lot of money then, I had some credit cards and I had some other stuff, and I was carrying the weight of the -- on this, they weren't paying nothing. And so they -- then they said they wasn't going to sign it because I had had their name put on there some kind of will or something, anyhow. Some kind of way, some kind of technical stuff. They ain't put nothing in it, ain't put no more than you put in. And they wasn't going to sign it. So the

lawyer worked with me, lawyer been down here about two or three times. It wasn't a money proposition.

I told them I didn't want the money. I just wanted to get out of all this string on it, and they could've had the money and the house, 'cause I didn't need the money. I've got enough to live on. They could have that. 'Cause if I take out all the money I put in it, by the time they come aboard, they wouldn't have much to start with 'cause they ain't been paying, I've been paying it off So -- but I understand. He went over there and told Dr. Deshields, one of my boys, he didn't want to sell it. He got 35 percent after that. That's all 'cause it's four children. He didn't want to sell it because he wanted it for one of his daughters or some of his children. I said ain't that something. He want my place for one of his children without working for it. Well you know that ain't going on -- I'd gladly give 'em a place or help 'em buy a place. Besides they all got jobs. Why I got to buy them a place? So that's the way all this mess started. They said my name wasn't on the deed. That's what they say. The lawyer say it was on there, and they said it wasn't. Some lawyer told them it wasn't on there. So had to go to court to prove that my name was on the deed. And I think they found that out now they want, they want to divide the place up, said there's enough land here, they ain't getting enough money for it. Said they want to divide the land. I'm getting all I want. I don't want no more what they're charging. And all they want to do is divide the land up. Now I think that's why I was calling, I called up today, but I don't think it's enough land here to get no, another subdivision down here. 'Cause it wasn't enough to start with. I tried to do that when I first built the place. I was going to sub-divide, put about three or four houses on it. They wouldn't let me do it. Wouldn't let me do it. Now they come along and want to start that now 'cause I ain't getting enough money for it.

How much they think they get for the place if they did that? You know, if they subdivide. They couldn't get all that money for that. They couldn't put over one house down here at the most. So they couldn't get no money out of it. So I don't know what's wrong. That's what's got everybody talking. What do they want? What do they want? That's what got all of us talking. It's not the money, 'cause I'd give 'em the money. They can come here and get the money, I'll give 'em the money. As soon as the man pays me, I say you take this part. Just give me what I paid back when you should've been paying. They won't have much then. They probably end up maybe 15, \$20,000. That'll last about a good payment on a car. And so I don't know what they want. That's what everybody's thinking. What the devil they want? I mean what they expect to get? That place over there is different. It was a corporation, their name was -- my wife's name wasn't -- I didn't have to leave that, left to the stockholder. I own half of that. I own half of that. That was the original place, that was.

K.F.: Who was your stockholder?

ST.: My children.

K.F.: Your children. Okay.

S. T.: Yeah, yeah. But I own more than that. I think they got 20 percent shares, two of 'em, and the rest of it belongs to me. So nobody know what they're trying to get I don't know, tell you the truth. I really don't know what they're up to. But it's a nice piece of

land over there. I mean, of course, if they do get that place from the museum, they would have to buy adjoining land to it more or less for parking or putting other buildings there.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. Colonel Deshields was talking about turning it into a museum.

S.T.: If he did that -- not only that, it's a place around there to make a marina. In fact, build a dock out there, out there. It could be -- down those marinas, they charge for some things, don't they?

K.F.: Yeah, you charge to dock your boat, you charge to get gas.

ST.: I'll tell you the truth. I think this place would be self-sustaining. I mean I figure they take enough money in down here selling these artifacts and putting on parties and things, I think this place would self-sustain. I don't think it would cost the state, it would cost some money to get in there, but I think it would pay for itself. And the further down the road it gets, the more it would pay.

K.F.: I don't think the state will buy it. They don't buy property --

ST.: I know, that state, they don't buy, they grant. They give grants for you or whatever you do, I don't know nothing about it. The man supposed to come down here, he's bringing somebody down, a developer down that wants it. He called me up about it the other day. He said he -- he'd buy the place and let me stay here, no questions asked, as long as I want. And then when I'm gone, he'd take over. A developer would do that. So you know somebody give you that kind of -- you know he must think some value in it. There must be a --

K.F.: Well they'll probably put a marina in and build a bunch of condos.

S.T.: Yeah, he'd do something like that. I'm not even interested in that, tell you the truth. I'm not interested in that. But I just tell you that the -- I don't know what Shields talking about. That's something -- Shields getting -- I don't know nothing about that, about the state. I don't know what part, what part the state play in the marina -- I mean like the museums and -- do they have any part in that?

K.F.: Well they can give out grants to do specific projects, but the museum has to be three years old before they give it any money.

S.T.: Three years old. Yeah, I understand. Well that's all right. Hey, if they got rid of it, if they make it -- I'd like to stay around those three years anyhow. There's a lot of things I'd like to do.

(Laughter.)

ST.: I don't want to kick that -- they ain't going to kick me out of here. I ain't going to move tomorrow. I ain't got to, so why should I be? It ain't for me -- it's down the road somewhere for somebody. It ain't nothing I'm going to get out of it. Ain't nothing I want, ain't nothing I need out of it. Like I said, I get some pension from the government, I was in World War II. And I get enough to live on. I can go out here in this river and make enough money -- crabbing. I was a very good crabber when I was crabbing. So I ain't worried about no money, money's not my problem. All I worry about feeling good. That's my problem.

(Laughter.)

ST.: I ain't worried about no money. I make all my money, I make all the money I want. But can't feel good as I want to feel, you know. And you get my age, you wake up some mornings, you might not even feel like getting up.

K.F.: Well would it be all right if I took a picture of you and went down and took a picture of the plant?

S.T.: I don't care what you do.

K.F.: All right.

S.T.: It don't make no difference.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)