

Interview Log

Interviewee: Kitty Baxter

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Interviewer: Kelly Feltault
Ceres Bainbridge

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Comments:

BEGIN SIDE A

K.B.: I don't have to do a speech.

C.B.: No, don't be nervous.

K.F.: Let me have you say your name.

K.B.: Kitty Baxter.

K.F.: Okay. And can you say the date for me so I can check this? It's the 21st, isn't it?

C.B.: I think so. You could ask a easier question.

K.F.: The 21st.

K.B.: February the 21st.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). All right –

K.B.: 19 –

C.B.: 2000 –

K.B.: 2000.

C.B.: And one.

K.F.: Okay. And where were you born, Kitty?

K.B.: Georgetown, Maryland.

K.F.: Georgetown, Maryland. Okay. And when? Can I ask the year?

K.B.: 1924.

K.F.: Okay, all right.

C.B.: You want to wait a second till this recording –

K.B.: No, no, no. I just want – yeah, I just wanted to make sure it wasn't my son from South America.

K.F.: Okay.

K.B.: I always pick up when –

C.B.: Sure.

K.B.: -- when he calls.

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

K.B.: Well my mother was a homemaker.

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

K.B.: And my father was – well he managed, had an asparagus farm, and he managed it. We didn't live on it, but he was always into some sort of agriculture.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Okay. And did you grow up on a, on a smaller farm, or –

K.B.: No, in town.

K.F.: In town. Okay. And what was Georgetown like when you were a child?

K.B.: Well Georgetown is a little town up the Sassafras River with a bridge across. It's 213, which is the main drag going north-south. There were probably 10 or 15 houses, and they were all family --

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: -- on one side – and then on the other side were the granary, the boats, boatyard, a fisherman. We only had one fisherman on the Sassafras. That's about it. Oh, a one-room school that my mother had attended up on the top of the hill.

K.F.: Okay. And what were some of the childhood activities that you remember around the Sassafras, growing up on the Sassafras?

K.B.: Going out in the rowboat, crabbing.

K.F.: Now did your family own that rowboat?

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

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

K.B.: When I was little. Sailboat later.

C.B.: How did you crab? How did you catch crabs?

K.B.: Well we had a ball of string, and we went to the grocery store, which was not in our town. We had to go out to Galena, which is a mile up the road, and we asked the grocer for chicken necks. We tied the chicken neck on the string, and put a rock or whatever we could get on the bottom, and we just put them over the rowboat, dipped up the crabs. I don't remember what we did with them, because we never picked crabs up there like they do down the shore. The man came once a week with a can of crabmeat, and fish from down around Rock Hall. And we never – I don't know what, I don't know what we did with those crabs. I guess that's the one thing I don't remember. We never picked them. That's for sure. Unless we took them home and they were picked, and I don't even remember that. It was more the fun of going after them. Maybe we gave them away.

C.B.: Maybe somebody bought them?

K.B.: Well they didn't buy them. They were everywhere. But there probably were people that took them from us. You know, the black people that worked for all the family, you know. Maybe they took them home. I really don't remember. Seems crazy because I remember a lot of things, but not about what we did with the crabs after we got them. And we didn't catch fish. They were just little minis and things like that. You had to go down towards the bay to get the fish.

K.F.: Okay. And you mentioned you had black people working for the family. What did they do?

K.B.: They were the cook, and the cleaner, and whatever. Yes. Everybody had a black woman, and we loved them. And they all lived outside of the towns on hills. There was a few over across in Fredericktown. See, it was Georgetown on one side of the Sassafras, and Fredericktown on the other side. And there was a little black group up on the Fredericktown side. And then in Galena, the town a mile away where the schools and everything were, there was Mount Olivette, Olivette Hill.

C.B.: Do you remember your lady's name?

K.B.: Well you can go up to the cemetery right now. I was up there about a month ago with Bob because I'm a trustee of the Georgetown Cemetery. I'm now the oldest one that has taken over the cemetery. And we went up to Olivette Cemetery and I could identify all of the graves. Lucy Harris that worked for my great-aunt; and Mary Green; Jim Benton was the gardener and the chauffeur for my great-grandmother. She got in the back seat of a big old Buick, and he chauffeured her around. And then Hackett, who had taken care of my mother and was there taking care of all of the children in the neighborhood, the family ones, you know. He rounded up, I guess, all of them and took care of them. And that little place is almost the same as it was. There's a few places built up now on the water, but there's still some of the original houses. And across the road on the water where the granary was, a lumber yard that my great-great-grandfather had. In fact, Maritime Museum has a model of one of his ships. They're going to restore it.

K.F.: Oh.

K.B.: He had five big ships, and they went to Baltimore, and they picked up all the grain and tomatoes and wheat as they went out the river. And he ended up, when he died, he had 40 farms on the Sassafras.

K.F.: Wow. And what were they growing, just the tomatoes and the usual –

K.B.: Wheat, corn.

K.F.: Oh, for market.

K.B.: So they would take the wheat to Baltimore. I can remember watching them when I was a child filling up the boat with baskets of tomatoes, and they went down into the bottom. We had great activities, didn't we? (Laughter.) And then we, in the granary – have you ever heard of the granary up in Georgetown, Fredericktown?

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

K.B.: They call it Georgetown. Famous. It was made into a restaurant in 1945 or 6. And they left the bins and just, you know, sanded and shellacked the whole inside of the granary. And then they had like one or two tables, or you could put them together, and it became very famous because everybody in Wheelington, Philadelphia and all the boat people ate there, and we went there as a young – I was in college at the time, but we'd go home for the summer. But I can remember them putting – and we'd play in the wheat. Then we played in the straw stacks when they thrashed the wheat out in the field, you know. Got – they got straw poisoning.

K.F.: What's that?

K.B.: It's like poison ivy.

K.F.: Oh, makes you red?

K.B.: All over. 'Cause you slid down the hay stacks. I mean that was, that was a game. That's what we did. And we played marbles and hopscotch, and games inside, pick-up sticks, you know, Parcheesi.

C.B.: Jacks.

K.B.: Jacks. Yes. I mean that's what we did. We didn't watch – well there was no television. So –

C.B.: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

K.B.: One sister.

C.B.: So just two girls, two daughters.

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

C.B.: When did you get the sailboat? When did your dad bring that home?

K.B.: Well it was my grandfather. Well, my youngest aunt had it first, and then she went off to school, and we got the sailboat. So we sailed, and we just went out in the harbor, and we turned over. It was unreal. We just had a good time. It sounds silly, I'm sure, nowadays, but we had a ball on the sailboat, turning over and then back up like they do the Log Canoes now, it always reminded me of that when I went, but the day I was married, 1946, my cousin had come from the service, and was down and he came from Chevy Chase over near Washington. And he said let's go sailing. I said sure. So we went out sailing. My grandmother was hysterical sitting in the window looking out with me in the sailboat, and she knew we always came in wet, on the day of my wedding, I was being married at 4:00 or 3:30 or something like that. We just had a really good time. We were always happy.

K.F.: So you guys taught yourselves to sail then?

K.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Oh, yeah. You just learned because you were always in the boat, and you saw it and it was called a sneakbox. It had sort of a top on a lot of it rather than the little open boat that they had many times like that.

K.F.: Now how many other people had those kinds of recreational boats in that area?

K.B.: Not too many. There weren't that many of us. The Duponts bought a farm, the first one down the river from the granary. And they had a big boat that sat out there, a yacht, because there were yachts in there in our little harbor. Maybe 15 when we were sailing in and out of them. And the Duponts had a, I was much older, the grandchildren came down, and one of them had, what did she call, Chris Craft, the shiny, but they were a Dupont. We were never spoiled. You know, we were well taken care of, but there weren't a lot of things. We made our own fun. And, you know, around the river shore, that was our favorite because we got away from all the family.

K.F.: What did you do around the river shore?

K.B.: Well when we got to be 10 or 12, I can remember smoking. And we'd pick up milk bottles. This is terrible. Don't ever tell anybody. We'd pick up milk bottles around the shore. This is the farm that is now in conservancy. And we could take them over to Fredericktown to the post office, and there was an old, old man, you know, like up in his 90's, and he would, he would take our milk bottles and give us a nickel, I think it was, and we would buy a pack of Wings that were 10 cents a pack in those days.

K.F.: Those were cigarettes?

K.B.: Cigarettes. A whole pack of cigarettes for 10 cents. And then they were 15 cents when I learned to smoke in college. Cigarettes were 15 cents a pack.

C.B.: So then you'd take your cigarettes from the store that you bought –

K.B.: And we'd hide over in the shore and hope the smoke didn't go up anywhere, parents or anybody could see us. I didn't like it at all. You choked, you know, but there was always those that talked you into it. Don't be a sissy or what have you.

C.B.: So this was with your little gang of friends that were from –

K.B.: Well mostly cousins. You know, we were all cousins of some sort, actually, because when we went to school, we were friendly with everyone. But it was either mostly cousins or else tenant farmers children. And we were really good friends, but we never – weren't close enough to associate. But when I was a little older, we moved in town because my grandfather died, and my grandmother came to live with us. But we still played with cousins. Might be a few neighbor children, I mean neighborhood children, but not many. It was really – we'd remind you of what you read about the Kennedy's, you know, they're all family. There's so many of them. It's clannish. And I think I grew up the same way.

C.B.: And did your parents both come from large families then, all these siblings –

K.B.: Not particularly. My mother was one of four, and my father was one of four. And my father grew up on a farm. My mother grew up in Georgetown. And I was born in my great-grandmother's house. I was in the birthing room where my mother had been born and my grandfather. Strange stuff to tell you all, isn't it? (Laughter.)

K.F.: It's fine.

K.B.: But it was all family.

C.B.: Did you have any pets?

K.B.: We had lots of dogs. But they were always in kennels. They were never allowed in the house because they were either hunting dogs, beagles or Chesapeake Bay waterdogs. You know, they all smell. And they were never allowed inside.

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: When I was a child, and my mother or my grandparents, no animals inside the house. They were always out.

K.F.: So I guess who in your family then was hunting or working the dogs?

K.B.: My mother's side of the family were big; they went down to the end of, on Ordinary Point which is down on the bay, the end of the Sassafra River. And my grandfather went down there during the fishing season, whatever that was, and they had, they have a shack there where they stayed. And if you went – and then you went hunting for the wild ducks. We didn't have geese when I was little. They were all wild ducks. The geese came, I was married, I think, by the time the geese came. All wild ducks. They used to bring them home, and by my great-grandmother's house, there was the meat house. Everybody had a meat house where the hams hung and all that. And they would string the ducks up on the outside on strings. You've seen pictures of them, particularly at the museum.

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

K.B.: Yeah, well that's the way I remember things. Mary Green, and then they would kill hogs, they'd bring them up from the farm, the things, and she would blow up the intestines of the pigs, I guess, because it was sausage and hams and what have you, and for us children, and make balloons out of them. And we would jump on them and pop them. (Laughter.) Can you believe that? It's the truth, though. That's the way it was. And there was always a summer kitchen because you never cooked inside. It went out the door with brick and a roof and then the summer kitchen, because it was a big cook stove. And the one across the street had lattice all around it. We played hide and seek in the boxwood, great big boxwood. Little strange, huh?

K.F.: No, it sounds quite nice.

K.B.: And we made mud pies. That was our favorite. And we used to break the duck eggs and put them in the mud pies because it would – when the sun got them, it would harden them. And we played with – my cousin right by the kitty night house, they all loved cats, and they were – oh, the famous tabby cat like, you know, spotted – I mean –

C.B.: Calico. Calico?

K.B.: Not orange, but just black and gray and – I think – what they were called, but like a tabby cat. Anyway, she would have kittens, and we pushed them in the baby carriages up and down the lane. We picked buttercups, which we called it buttercup lane, and played buttercup. (Laughter.) I don't know what else.

C.B.: Well how – where did you go to school?

K.B.: We went into Galena, which was the little town. There was two stores, and the filling station and the pool hall, and the bank. Still bank in the same bank 'cause it was a branch of the Chestertown Bank, which is right up the street here, half a block. My aunt was a cashier at the bank in Galena. So I've been in the Chestertown Banks since I got my birth money.

K.F.: What is birth money?

K.B.: Well you know how when you're born, they get – a lot of people, there weren't stores to go buy stuff. Do you know what I mean?

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

K.B.: We were given money, and it was put in the bank.

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

K.B.: And we had bank accounts. And particularly since my aunt was cashier of the Galena bank.

K.F.: I was wondering if we could back up to the summer kitchens. It made me think. Do you remember, like were Sundays big family meal days or –

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

K.F.: -- have big meals?

K.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Sunday dinner was, well you went to church in the morning, so you had breakfast, church, and then you had dinner in the afternoon. And you always had something special. You won't believe this one. Chicken. Baked chicken or baked Muscovy Duck were Sunday meals. Picnic food was fried chicken in big cans that we took down to the beach to swim and eat all the fried chicken you could eat. Oh, so good.

K.F.: Now the fried chicken, was that only like a summertime food really?

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

K.F.: Yeah.

K.B.: Yes. And then you had baked chicken in the winter, and the baked Muscovy Duck. And then during the – during the week, we had steak. Used to get so sick of steak and pork chops because they came from the butcher at the grocery store, things like that. Oysters. Lots of oysters. They came up with the oysters in oyster seasons.

C.B.: How would you have them fixed?

K.B.: My father wasn't particularly fond of oysters. So they were usually fried. Fried oysters. He didn't – but my other side of the family, you know, raw oysters. It's funny, whether you lived on a farm and grew up on a farm, you ate different than if you were in town. So one side of my family was one way, and we always had oyster stuffing in the turkey. Mary Green was the cook at my grandmother's. And they had a ladder that went up against the wall in the daytime, and then it was put, she would crawl up there. That was her bedroom. And sometimes we'd get there, and she hadn't put her ladder up, or she'd be up there, and we'd run out there. We loved all the, all the help were just like your very best friends. And we'd climb up that ladder and like sneak up like she couldn't hear us. (Laughter.) I mean they were the activities we had. And then, of course, we got to go to the city and visit cousins up in Jersey and Philadelphia. We went on weekends to visit, you know, relatives that lived in the city.

K.F.: Okay. Can you tell me more about the yachts that were there in Georgetown when you were younger?

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

K.F.: We're trying to put together sort of an understanding of when yachting really –

K.B.: Started.

K.F.: -- became a big thing on the bay and who were some of the earlier folks with yachts and what they were doing.

K.B.: My grandfather started a boatyard in the harbor there at Georgetown for my uncle, he was a young man, it became the Satcher's Boat Company. And, you know, it really did flourish. And there were probably 15 or 20 boats there in the very beginning, and there was just a couple little piers that people did it. And the doctors, they'd all come down and just park. They were mostly doctors from Philadelphia, or New Jersey like Haddonfield and Morristown, some of those bigger suburbs. And they came down on Friday night. And we would help them carry, I can remember one of my cousins was over on the waterfront. He worked for my uncle in the granary. And he had a lot of children, lived right on the hill, and he put out a little pier, and they loved it because you were at the top of the hill, and you had to go down the hill to the pier. So we would carry their bags for them, all their luggage, you know, little, little bags. Not great big things. And they'd give us money, you know, quarter. Big money then. Didn't get a nickel, we got a quarter from them. And they would, they would row them out to their boats. And my recollection is very few went out. They just sat on their boats and drank and had parties. And there was not much traffic. I mean there was some, and they'd go out once in a while. But it wasn't the stream like it is now of just boats. And now they're having quite a problem with the shorelines because of all the boat traffic. And then they were yachts. They weren't sailboats.

K.F.: Well what did the yachts look like?

K.B.: Well they had the bow, and then a cabin where the steering and everything was, and then you went underneath, and they had bunks and a mini kitchen. And then they had bench seats all around the backs that they'd sit out there. And they were just – and they used to go down the river. And my, I can remember my uncle entertaining us later, years later, with the boat people. They didn't know what they were doing. I mean none of them knew how. And they would come into the boatyard to the pier to get their gasoline, gas up, and they'd come straight up and hit the pier. I mean we heard so many stories. When I moved back here, 'cause I was gone for 35 years and came back to Chestertown, and I had all the – they were all much older, so I used to have all the family dinners, and he would just entertain us on some of the tales that –

K.F.: Can you share a few with us?

K.B.: Well he was usually called about every Saturday night about two a.m. They were stuck on a sandbar. And he'd have to go and get his men up that ran the service boat. It was like called two blasts. You know, 'cause he had to be two times. And then there was another little boatyard and they had three blasts. And there was a yacht club out at the end of the harbor where the granary was where they kept the boats. But it was the very beginning, actually, of the yachts coming in in Georgetown. Now we're – and we got all the people from Philadelphia. Of course, there was no Bay Bridge. I don't know how they got all the way down to Cambridge. I went to Pocomoke City about a month ago. I thought I'd never get there. It's a long ways.

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

K.B.: Are you from down there?

K.F.: I've been down there many times. It's a long drive.

K.B.: It's the end, end. And we never felt isolated because we were only, what, 30 miles from Wilmington; 55 or 60 from Philadelphia, maybe not even that if you were going to the suburbs. And we drove around to Baltimore. There was a boat in

Tolchester, but that was a long ways down. I remember and have seen pictures of my grandparents. They had went to Tolchester. Have you ever heard of Tolchester?

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

K.B.: And they had a boat that went to Baltimore. But it went over one day and came back the next day. Those that wanted to shop in Baltimore, ladies who didn't drive would take the boat over and spend the night in Baltimore and come back. In my grandmother's era, they did that. We had trains. You could get a train in Middletown, Delaware, which isn't far from where we lived up there. We were like 10 or 12 miles. And my grandmother and grandfather went to Niagara Falls on their honeymoon. They were married in 1900. And they were taken in a horse and carriage to Middletown, Delaware, where they boarded the train. Now don't ask me. I'm sure the train didn't go straight to Niagara Falls, but can you imagine a jaunt like that? And my relatives came up from Florida to visit. They were – she had married a native of Florida, and she came up on the ship into New York Harbor. And then she would rent a car and drive down. Big – like a cruise ship. I'm sure not like what they have today. So we had good transportation, and nobody realized how ancient it was, you know, in those days actually.

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: And they had a big amusement park up the head of the Sassafras River all the way up to Fox Hole in my grandmother's day, and I have pictures in a buggy with the fringe around it with the horse, and that's how they went down there, and they had amusement park, and picnic park, and she had my father in her lap. So it had to be like 1903 or 4, 1903 or 1904.

K.F.: How long did that stay open, do you know?

K.B.: It was gone by the time I came along. It was abandoned, and we used to go with, my father had Polish people that came every summer from Baltimore to cut the asparagus. And we didn't live on the farm, but he always managed it, and he had a tenant farmer there. And the Polish people were just really friends of ours. They worked in the shoe factories in Baltimore in the wintertime, and then they came over. And we had, we called them the shacks where they lived. And they would take us down this old road, used to be the amusement park. It was just filled in like a ravine like, filled with raspberries, and we'd pick raspberries. That was fun to do all those things.

K.F.: And was it just one Polish family, or was it several –

K.B.: Well there was one Polish family that was there, and the youngest one ended up – they moved to, from Baltimore, they liked it so much, and they bought a little house in Galena next to the grocery store, and did shoes. Because they evidently worked in the shoe factory in Baltimore. So they'd bring all the shoes down, and they'd sell them to the black people that lived on Olivette Hill. And Mike was the son of this older man that had been there even when my grandfather was on the farm, my other grandfather. And they would invite us in. We'd go down there, and they used to give us a quarter. And that was just unheard of. Nobody else gave us a quarter. We got a nickel or a penny for penny candy. But they would give us a quarter, and they were so nice. And they would make bread in big like tubs, like a galvanized tub, and she always wanted us to eat it, and we were afraid to eat it because it was different from what we were used to, but they just loved us, and they were so kind and so good. And they packed the asparagus, and then they'd go back. But then they ended up staying the summer. The family that was always

there for years, and years and years, and daddy had two, three of them on that farm that – Sam and different ones like that that came back and lived there to get out of the city, I guess. So different when you compare the Eastern Shore today, and everything that goes on around here, and the people.

C.B.: How's it different? How do you mean?

K.B.: Huh?

C.B.: How do you mean?

K.B.: Well it's just so suburban, I guess. I mean very sophisticated now, Chestertown.

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

K.B.: Even since I've been here, and I've been back 25 years since I was – after we got our children educated, we came to Chestertown. My husband was born and raised in Chestertown, and we bought a big house down here on Water Street, and the kids were all gone. But he only lived three years, he got lung cancer. Hope you all don't smoke.

K.F.: I don't.

C.B.: I'm quitting.

K.B.: You better. (Laughter.) You better. It's disaster. But we came back here, and we bought that beautiful big home down on Water Street, next to Whitehall. Are you familiar with Whitehall that they're restoring?

K.F.: Oh, right. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.B.: Well we had the one next to it.

K.F.: Okay.

K.B.: And, in fact, they just sold it. And the people that we sold to, I sold to, 'cause I lived there by myself for about 15 years, and guess what, they sold their house and bought this one next door.

K.F.: Wow.

K.B.: It's like they're following me around. They're from Boston, New York.

Rhineland, New York people that moved down here.

K.F.: Well when do you recall that more yachts and like Chris Craft type recreational boats started appearing on the Sassafras?

K.B.: Let me think a minute. Immediately after the Chris Crafts were, after I was married really, or about that time, 1940's, so that was after the war. That's when it really went crazy, right after the war. And then the Chris Crafts came in, and then the sailboats. And everything was a sailboat rather than the cabin cruisers, I guess they called them, the original ones. Now there's just hundreds and hundreds of boats up there.

K.F.: What did that do to the town, though, when more people started docking their boats there?

K.B.: It didn't do anything to Georgetown. (Laughter.) Not really. Well there's some houses. Like the big lot that was my great-grandmother's where there was a cow, and it was brought up from the farm, and she had a tenant that took care of things and milked the cow and what have you, and that stopped when I was little. Probably stopped when my great-grandmother died. And then my grandfather and grandmother lived in the big house. So that lot was divided up among the children. My mother had a lot, and you know, on the water, my uncle built a house there when he had the boatyard. And then they were gradually sold to other people, and now they have great big houses there. There's a – and then they fixed up the kitty night house, and now it's been sold. But it's

basically the same there. There's a few more in part of the family's properties that they would sell off two or three acres, and there's a house there now. And then across the creek, they built up the farm that was there they sold off. Greg Neck I think they call it now, and it's quite a community. Probably has 600 people in it. And it was a farm. But it was done gradually. So it's not tracky. It's got a little bit of everything in there, from a trailer to a very expensive house with no – what do I want to say, no –

C.B.: Zoning?

K.B.: Zoning. I'm trying to – and the towns have just exploded with houses.

C.B.: Yeah.

K.B.: They're twice the size that they were. And everybody's retiring down here. You know what I mean? It's an entirely different community. When I grew up, there would be retired farmers in the town. And then the bank or the bank people and the grocery, but that was it. They were, after they got older, they came in town and built a nice little house or lived in one of the older ones and what have you.

C.B.: Did you raise your children around here?

K.B.: No. We lived in Washington, or in suburban Maryland. We lived in the District. My children were all born in the District 'cause we lived out in Chevy Chase. And then we built out a bigger house later. No, they were all raised there, but they spent every summer coming down here. So when we moved here, we had lived in Chicago for 10 years, and they were just overjoyed because they never – we moved them, and they never got established. I mean they did. They went to high school and what have you, but it was never home. They didn't seem to mind us leaving Chicago. I think it was quite a jolt when we took them out of Washington at a very vulnerable age. And they all went east to college. So when we got down here, it was just great 'cause they only came back to Chicago, which was a nice place where we lived, up in Lake Forest on the lake and what have you, but it wasn't the same as coming down here where they spent their summers and had their fun, you know what I mean? So they –

K.F.: What kind of fun did your kids have?

K.B.: My children?

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

K.B.: They, let's see what they did being here. When they were little, they took them to carnivals in town. And they went out to a lot of the farm friends who had big swimming pools then, you know.

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: And we always had Betterton. I went there when I was growing up, which was a dance, the dance hall. My mother and father went there, so Betterton was really something. It's on the bay, right as you come into the Sassafra river.

K.F.: Yeah. Now what do you remember about dances at Betterton?

K.B.: Big Band.

K.F.: What kind of big band?

K.B.: Well the Big Band music rather than –

K.F.: From the 40's?

K.B.: Huh?

K.F.: From the 40's?

K.B.: Thirties.

K.F.: Thirties. Thirties and 40's.

K.B.: Thirties and 40's. Right

K.F.: Were they, I mean like name bands that we would recognize or was it –

K.B.: Well I suppose they were in Philadelphia and Wilmington where they came from and Baltimore, but we never had Tommy Dorsey, Glen Miller or anybody like that. But it was the Big Band era. And everybody went to dance, and they were all ages.

C.B.: And who would you sit with?

K.B.: My mother and father and, you know, and we were allowed to go in a group. I wasn't allowed to date until I was 16. Almost killed me. Couldn't believe it. We could go out with a group to parties where they knew where we were going and things like that, but no dating.

C.B.: But they would let you go to the dance.

K.B.: Oh, yes. We went in a group, you know, and everybody knew everybody.

C.B.: Somebody had a car? Is that –

K.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well, at that point, you know, a couple years older, and we were allowed to go. And, of course, during the war, the gasoline rationing. You couldn't drive to Betterton. So we drove down to Miss Nan Price's farm, which was on the bay, and we parked our cars, and we took off our shoes, and we walked down the sandy beach to the dance, and then we walk back up the shore during gasoline rationing. And, of course, we knew people that had farms, and they had enough gas to do that. I was – I graduated from, I went to college in 1941, which the war – I went in September, and the war started in December. I graduated in June of '45, and the war was over in August of '45. So I was in college the four years of the war. And I had to get on a bus in Georgetown that took me to Elkton. Elkton, I got on the train, and it was sit on your suitcase in the aisle because there was Perryville where the – Bainbridge, the Navy place. Then you went to Aberdeen, and then you went to Baltimore. And then when you got to Baltimore, you got off at Penn Station, you got off the train, you took a taxi to the Greyhound bus station. And then you got on a bus, and you went up Baltimore and Washington Boulevard to College Park. Took three hours, even when you drove.

C.B.: So Betterton, you used to go to the dances.

K.B.: Oh, yeah. That was big time.

C.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). What kind of dancing did you do then?

K.B.: Ballroom dancing. Some jitterbugging. But it was a mixture.

C.B.: Did you have a special boy you liked to dance with?

K.B.: Oh, yeah. But we all, you danced with everybody. They asked you to dance. So you would dance, sometimes I guess you did two or three of the same ones, but it was more of a group type of thing.

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: And then my husband came home between the European War, and we had gone off to college together. There were three of us. The one I wanted you to look at in that book, did bob show it to you, a book on somebody I thought you might be interested in?

C.B.: A pilot? A river pilot?

K.B.: That's the girl, Robson, that – yeah, that wrote a book, writes all the time in all the magazines. Nancy Robson. Have you met her?

C.B.: No.

K.B.: Fantastic lady. No, this is a book I'm going to show you right after – it's up there on the thing. Well the three of us went off to Maryland together, and he was pinned to somebody else in a different sorority from me. And everybody started going off to war by the time we were in the sophomore year. And we met up with each other in Betterton, and he told me that he was no longer pinned to his girl, and that she had been down for a week with his sisters, and she had gone back and that was the end of it. And I said well, you know, it will all get straightened out and what have you. No, no. I got my fraternity pin back, and da-de-da, and so he made a date with me to come up and show me his fraternity pin. And we had been really good friends for years, but that was as far as it went. And we were married the next August the 3rd. Because he was home on leave, heading for Japan, and the war was over on August the 7th, and he had left already and gone to Fort Meade, and he called me up. He said can you come over and spend the weekend with my sister, because they won't let us off the base to come home. So it was a very exciting time, the war. Very different from any of the wars since then. And tons of guys. There was ASTP on the campus, which my husband was in, and then he went right to officer's training school.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.B.: My friend has a friend, so it was different from my freshman year, but it was not dull, and it wasn't like being in a college down in the hills of Virginia. My granddaughter is 16, and she's going to be going to college soon, and she lives in Madison, New Jersey, and very city oriented, you know, in and out of New York City and he dad and everything. And the schools have taken her to some of the different colleges to visit. And, oh yeah, oh, I wouldn't go there, it's out in the boonies. She wants to go in a city where she can get on the train, and she's music oriented, you know, she loves to go concerts and things. Far different life. She came to spend time with me by herself when she was 10, and she had read all the books I had, the children's books and what have you, and I said oh, I have something you can read. This is a diary that I kept when I was 13. I guess somebody had given me a diary for Christmas or birthday or something, and I wrote in it, and I gave it to her. And after she finished it, she just buried herself right in this diary of mine, written with pencil. And when she finished, she said, Grandma, you only went to the movies once in a whole year. She couldn't believe, because we had to come to Chestertown or go to Middletown, and we had to have a friend's brother, somebody special, to bring us. And she couldn't believe that I went to one movie in a whole year. And it was probably Shirley Temple, or Jeannette McDonald, Nelson Eddie or -- (Laughter.) And the cartoons. My grandmother and grandfather both went to Washington College. Have you been – you went, you didn't go past the college.

C.B.: No, I've seen it.

K.B.: Have you been there?

C.B.: It's beautiful.

K.B.: All my cousins went there. I was so afraid I'd have to go to Washington College. And my husband was the same way 'cause his sisters had gone to Washington College day hopping, 'cause there weren't many dormitories. I mean just one dormitory.

C.B.: You wanted to go away and stay overnight?

K.B.: Oh, yeah. I couldn't imagine having to stay home and go to college. So University of Maryland was really hot stuff. Clear on the other side of the bay. No Bay Bridge.

C.B.: Huh-uh (negative). What did you study at school?

K.B.: Home economics, College of Home Economics. I think they now call it human ecology. And what everybody thinks I went to college to learn to cook and sew, and that was not what we did. We got a B.S., and we too physics, chemistry, organic chemistry, human physiology. We took, we got a B.S., we got science. It wasn't like those guys in arts and science that did English and never took a science. We took physics.

C.B.: How was it tied to the curriculum?

K.B.: In what way?

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

K.B.: Well because you end up either in foods, which is a dietician.

K.F.: Nutrition.

K.B.: Nutrition. I took child nutrition. Or you were in textiles. And when I was, even when I was in college, we had – the boys started coming because of textiles. And we had lots and lots of Jewish girls. And when I was in college, there was two Jewish fraternities – sororities, and then eight gentiles, I guess you'd call them. I didn't know because we didn't have Jewish people on the Eastern Shore except in Chestertown in a couple stores, and I didn't even know what it was from being, you know, where I lived and what have you. And we were very good friends in classes and what have you, but nobody ever walked up and down the hill, which is we lived at the foot of the hill in the sorority and fraternity houses, and it was really strange that in those days it was like that. And we were really good friends, but there was no socializing. It was almost like the black situation, except that they were your good friends in class, but they didn't socialize with you. I don't know exactly how to explain that, but that's the way it was.

C.B.: You did pretty well.

K.B.: But it was a tough – and then a lot of people went into art. (Phone ringing).

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: Yeah, Tolchester was?

K.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). It was a big amusement park. And I went there as a child.

K.F.: Do you remember it?

K.B.: Oh, yes.

K.F.: What were your --

K.B.: They had a gazebo.

K.F.: What was your favorite part of Tolchester while you were there?

K.B.: Well the interesting part was – or was it Betterton? They had nettles. And we didn't have nettles in Georgetown. We could swim anytime all the time. And they had a net out there, I guess it was Tolchester, they had a net – or Betterton. They had a net out in the water, and you could only swim inside the net. Oh, that was when I went to Girl Scout camp out on the Chester River. I thought that was pretty boogie to have to swim in a net instead of – 'cause I spent my time swimming across the river in Georgetown. We did it three or four times a day. And we played, my grandmother would say you have to stay out of the water for an hour after lunch. You can't go – well we're just going to go over there, and you can't swim in the afternoon, you should be up resting, because they

took naps every day, my grandmothers, oh yeah. And nobody, you know, my mother or nobody ever took naps then. But my grandmother always took naps. She'd say you have to wait one hour, and then they would allow us to go over there if we promised to swim under the piers so that the sun wasn't on our head. (Laughter.) Crazy, huh? But we played in the water. We really did, completely different from anything nowadays. Lots of picnics. We'd row a mile down the Sassafra River to this guy's house that the book is about. They had, they called it the shack. It was off of the farm on the river, and they went down every summer, and we'd have our picnics down there. And we rode all the way down and rode all the way back.

K.F.: How many of you –

K.B.: Didn't think anything about it. I was in college, we were doing that because it was the fun thing that we liked to do.

K.F.: What would you –

K.B.: It's like people now that are into kayaking and canoeing. You know, it's the same idea. You're out there in the boat and you're away from everybody, and there's no motors running. And I think that's why kayaking is so – and canoeing is so good now. We used to take our kids down in Georgetown and skate on the canal, 'cause we thought they'd like it because it was like being in Georgetown. That was our big, that was a really big thing was ice skating. The creek off the river froze, and the – some of the fathers would come down and they would, if it snowed, and they would take their car and drag a, like a wooden road scraper or something and clear off all the snow so we could ice skate. And they always built a great big fire for us on the ice with tires. And it blazed up, and you could get warm. And we went sledding at the bell pond outside of – between Galena and Georgetown, spent hours sledding. And you could go down the big hill, and then go out on the pond, the mill pond, with a sled. Really, Flexible Flyers. We had big races. We really did have a good time. And halfway down there when we lived in town in Galena, halfway down to the mill pond was Annie Ruly (phonetic), who did our laundry. We'd put it, mother would put it all in a great big laundry basket. We didn't have washing machines and things, and this is when you didn't have help, 'cause a little later, you didn't have help. They'd put it in a big laundry basket and put a dollar on it. And Annie Ruly's husband would come in town in the Dearborn. Do you know what a Dearborn is? It's like a wagon with a horse, open wagon, and pick up people's laundry and take it back to their house. And we'd go down there. We loved all the black people. We really did. And Annie Ruly, we'd get cold and wet because we had galoshes and everything got snow and ice, and we got wet, and everything got stiff, and our mittens got stiff because there weren't all these good things that they have nowadays, and we'd go up to Annie Ruly's house practically in tears, and she'd take off our mittens and things, and she'd hang them up. She had a big stove in there, and she'd hang them up and dry them all for us so we could go back sledding. What fun. You know, I'm remembering things I never even think about anymore.

C.B.: Good.

K.B.: And then we got, went home, and we had a big register in the floor where the heat came up.

K.F.: Oh, right.

K.B.: And we went in, and we put all of our mittens and scarves that we tied around us. And after a while, you'd start smelling – the water would drip down, the snow would melt off. We were so happy. We never had all the problems kids have nowadays and the pressure. I think they have a lot of sports pressure. We all just went out and had a good time. And one fellow's father was Norwegian, and they had a boatyard in Georgetown, and he had skis. We didn't even know what skis were. And he let us all try them. And you put your feet in, and then hooked them on. You went in your own shoes or boots or what have you, and you went down the hill, and I went down and one leg goes this way and one goes that way. I never wanted to ski. I did learn many years later to ski. I went to Switzerland, and two or three of the people in the group – I was going for a holiday. It was after my husband died, and they went out the first day, and two or three of the college boys, it was the Washington College group going, couldn't keep up with the crowd. So they came back, and there was one other good friend of mine who was Dean of students there, and he didn't go out the first day. He said oh, I'll go with you to lunch, and I'll go get my skis, and he had to rent them and what have you, and he came back, and we went to ski school for three days. I was, what, I was 60, in my 60's. And guess what? I learned to ski. We had this fabulous Norwegian man about in his 50's or something that taught us. And I learned to ski in three days. I immediately retired because I didn't want to break anything, but I did learn to ski, and I knew what a great sport it was. And I wanted my children to do it. It's a great family sport. But Tom worked in New York City, and wasn't practical for them. Too far away to get to the things, what have you, and of course, they're different, you know, different music and all other things that they go for.

K.F.: Right, right.

K.B.: Swimming, beach. They just came home from – that's probably the other reason I was thinking, came home from Puerto Rico last night on a family vacation. Okay, I'm off the track again.

C.B.: That's okay. We'll – are you getting fatigued, or do you have more questions?

K.B.: You're probably getting fatigued.

K.F.: Well I'm wondering if you could describe some of the other activities in Betterton or Tolchester that you remember besides the dances.

K.B.: Well for us, it was just the dances. I'm sure the – they had lots of boarding houses, and people came for a week and two weeks, and they – I don't know what else they would do, though, swim. But we had our own swimming. Now after the war, that was a big thing. Well my husband, you know, that I met at Betterton dancing, then we dated. He was here for maybe a week or something like that, and a couple friends of his and the gal, and you know it was so funny around here with people, this gal wasn't allowed to date this boy because he didn't come from the right family or – you know what I mean. And so my husband would go out and pick her up. She lived on a farm down here in Broadneck where Bob lives, pick her up. They thought she was going out with Rolison (phonetic), and then they'd go pick him up, then they'd come get me. And one of the things that we did after that was what do you do around here? We went to Betterton. And the dance floor was up on the second floor. And there was a bowling alley underneath, and we bowled.

C.B.: That's fun.

K.B.: So there really wasn't anything else there. People went on picnics and had hot dog roasts on the beach. But I don't think there was anything else down there. Oh, you know, I suppose a few, like they have at carnivals, what would you call them, throwing balls at things. The spin the wheel.

K.F.: Yeah.

C.B.: Yeah.

K.B.: Spin the wheel, and take chances to win a cuie doll or something. We never did much of that.

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: But that was what would entertain the city people who were used to things like that, you know. They would go for that type of activity. We just didn't do it ourselves. Picnics and dancing or boating was more country things, I guess you'd say. What else did you say besides – Tolchester, it disappeared when I was really young. The boats stopped coming. I mean it wasn't there in my college or, you know, when I was older. Those boats would come over on Sunday and dump everybody out and they'd go swimming, and ride the merry-go-round and cars that bump, I guess.

C.B.: Yeah.

K.B.: Picnics were big.

C.B.: What kind of stuff would you take on a picnic?

K.B.: To eat?

C.B.: Yeah.

K.B.: You don't know what a marshmallow can is, but they're big tin cans, like this big, and they're about that deep.

K.F.: Okay.

K.B.: They'd be filled with fried chicken, and potato salad, and homemade rolls, and strawberry shortcake. That's what we ate on picnics. Or if you were just going for swimming or something like that, we had hot dog roasts on the beach. We added the driftwood, made a big fire, and we cooked hot dogs on a stick, we gathered our own sticks, and by the time I was in Girl Scouts we had – and we had popcorn poppers. It was my mother's, a long stick with a basket that you hooked the lid, and you would pop popcorn, and you'd roast marshmallows on a stick. You had to get a certain kind of stick so it wouldn't burn up in a fire. Hot dog roasts, you know. But the picnics were – and big cans of homemade cinnamon buns. Everything was homemade, and so good. And you just ate a ton of it. And you'd swim, and you'd come back, and you'd always have leftovers. There was always plenty so that you could go swim and wait your hour, and go swim and come back and have more. Those places where I used to go they say are now unreal and bad. They're up on the Elk River at the top of the bay.

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

K.B.: And they've turned into old mobile homes, and you know, a lot of drugs and trashy. They say it's just pathetic to go up there. I've never been, been back.

K.F.: So you guys would go all the way to the Elk River to have a picnic then or –

K.B.: That's not far from –

K.F.: Right.

K.B.: -- up where I was from.

K.F.: Yeah.

K.B.: Northeast.

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

K.B.: My neighbor that just did this house next door spent his childhood at Western Shores, which was up across from Turkey Point, and that's why he's down here because he has such great memories, and they come from way up in Ho Ho Kus, New Jersey down here for weekend and what have you.

K.F.: Well what would you say would be the best thing about growing up on the Sassafras?

K.B.: It was always fun and good time, and there was so much to do, in our book, you know what I mean? You were on the water, and it was just – you could swim or crab or go on a picnic. And I did it when I moved back here on the river. First thing we did was go up, canoes and go up Morgneck Creek. We'd go up with the tide so you didn't have to paddle so hard, and we'd eat lunch. We knew a lot of the people that had farms on the water up there, and then we'd see the tide turn, and we'd say, hoop, we'd get back in and we'd come back out. And just spend the day doing that. You have to like nature, I guess. You probably, you probably grew up – what part of Montgomery County?

K.F.: Oh, I didn't grow up there. I grew up in Virginia.

K.B.: In Virginia.

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

K.B.: Well I raised my kids in Montgomery County. They were born in the District, and then we moved out Montgomery County. I wish I could think of something exciting to tell you.

C.B.: That's all right, you know, it's kind of a lot of pressure to speak on a microphone when somebody says talk for a few hours too.

K.F.: This was great, yeah.

K.B.: Huh?

K.F.: I think this was great.

K.B.: Well I'm not a speaker. This is the guy, I don't know if it would have anything to do with you, which one of you would look at this?

K.F.: Oh, Ed.

K.B.: You both would.

K.F.: Yeah, okay.

K.B.: Bob, Bob showed you the book?

K.F.: No, actually, I know Ed.

K.B.: You know the guy that did it?

K.F.: Yes.

K.B.: Okay. This is the guy.

K.F.: Oh, no. I know this guy. The guy who wrote the book.

K.B.: Yeah. This is -- and he has, there's an article in here, and he has a one-man boatyard, family.

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

K.B.: And this – Ed interviewed him, I guess. And it's all the lost arts.

K.F.: Yeah.

K.B.: Of the Eastern Shore. Isn't that what it is? It's – my biscuit lady, I think, was in there making – it's all the things that aren't here anymore. And, of course, the Maritime

Museum is fabulous. I – Bob worked there when I met him, or Bob – and what have you. And I went down there, I took my two grandchildren. They were just enraptured with it.

C.B.: There he is. To Kitty.

K.B.: And that was a one-man boatyard. It's on the Sassafras River, only it's above the bridge. So people go there to save money, it's not as fancy and big time, and they can work on their own boats if they want to. But he lets them, you know, dock there and do all that kind of stuff.

C.B.: What did I just go by?

K.B.: Wicks Weskit.

C.B.: Wicks.

K.B.: Wicks. Family name. Wicks Weskit. The Wicks have been here since 1690 or some such time, which all the families have. My family's the same way. My family came in the 1700's. All parts of my family, the only one that didn't come back in the 1700's was one grandmother. And she was Irish, totally Irish. Lot of them were Irish, Scotch Irish and what have you. But and Bob and I are going to Ireland in June.

C.B.: Wow.

K.B.: And we're going to go out where they're from. He came here in the early 1800's to Philadelphia, and he married an Irish girl in Philadelphia. And I've done all my background stuff of all the families.

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

K.B.: Except the Irish. So I'm going to –

C.B.: Catch up on that little branch.

K.B.: Yes. Because – and they came from the far – Bob, he saw, I had a cousin who had been there come the other day and bring me some information. And –

C.B.: Bob – I see you –

K.B.: Me?

C.B.: No, I was afraid you were going to trip over my bag when you went by because I had left it sticking out, but I moved it.

K.B.: Oh, no. I didn't see it. I wouldn't trip over it.

C.B.: Well, Kitty, I feel – I feel like we're giving you a brain drain.

K.B.: Do you want –

C.B.: No, no, not at all.

K.B.: Do you want a hot cup of coffee?

C.B.: Actually, I'm fine. I'm not even really cold. I'm just –

K.B.: Nervous.

C.B.: -- rubbing my hands. I guess. I'm sorry. (Laughter.)

K.B.: I put that –

(END OF INTERVIEW.)