

Interview Log

Interviewee: Buddy Harrison

Tape #: OH167

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault
Ceres Bainbridge

of Tapes: 1

Date: March 29, 2001

of Sides: 2

Location: Tilghman Island, Maryland

Topic: Recreation on the Bay/Charter Fishing Project

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: Clear tape. Entertaining stories and history of Harrison family business.

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: All right, let me have you go ahead and say your name.

B.H.: Captain Buddy Harrison.

K.F.: Okay. And today's the 29th, I believe, and we're here to talk to Captain Buddy about charter fishing. And let me start off with asking you what's your full name?

B.H.: My full name is Levin Faulkner Harrison, III.

K.F.: Okay. How did you get Buddy?

B.H.: They were all too hard to say. (Laughter.) Actually, I got Buddy, my grandfather's nickname was Buddy, and when I was a young boy, my father was buying oysters and fish and up and down the bay a lot, so I started hanging around with my grandfather a lot, because he was like semi-retired. He was home all the time, and my father was plying the bay trying to make a living, and I was hanging around, and then they started calling me, you know, Buddy, Little Buddy. So that's how come I got my name.

K.F.: Okay, all right. And if I'm not mistaken, isn't your son Little Buddy Harrison?

B.H.: Yeah, yeah.

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

B.H.: Right here at, right here on Tilghman. Right here in this house, really.

K.F.: Really?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. What year?

B.H.: 1934.

K.F.: Okay. So you said your dad was in the waterman business. Was your grandfather too?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). That's how this place got started.

K.F.: Can you tell us how it got started?

B.H.: It's a long story.

K.F.: Go ahead. I've got plenty of tape. (Laughter.)

B.H.: My grandmother was a schoolteacher here on Tilghman. This was in the 1890's, and my grandfather was a dredge boat captain, not a skipjack, a bugeye captain in those days in the winter months. In the spring, he had pound nets. Pound nets are nets that were set in those days in the spring to catch herring and shad. That was a big item; it was a big food item in those days, herring and shad. And it was all the way up until the 60's. That season of the - the dredging season, the oyster season went November to March. And the fishing season went March, April, May to the middle of June. And then that was it for the net season. So that left them, that left my grandfather and whoever else was working with him the rest of June, July, August, September, October, with virtually nothing to do. He told me, he said if you were not a farmer in those days, all you did was sit under the tree and play a little baseball in the afternoon. My grandmother was a very ambitious person. She was a schoolteacher, and she wasn't happy about him doing that. So she said I'm going to send your resume into steamboat companies, see if I can get you a job on one of the many steamboats that plied the bay, because in those days, that was the only mode of transportation. He told me if you left here to go to St. Michaels, you went by boat. If you left to go to Easton, you went by boat, you know, 'cause there was

hardly any passable roads. And certainly to Baltimore, you had to go by boat. So he got accepted only as a steamboat captain, co-captain at first, from Baltimore, the route was from Baltimore to here, right down here at - it's Tilghman on the Chesapeake now, but it was the Tilghman Landing then, the wharf.

K.F.: And Tilghman Packing Company.

B.H.: Right. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And Tilghman Packing Company. And anyway, he got accepted as a co-captain on one of the boats, and later on as a captain. And he made, I think the route was from Baltimore to Claiborne in those days, believe it or not, and here at Tilghman, and then to Solomon's Island, Crisfield and down in Virginia somewhere. I'm not sure where, but then they did a return trip. And he said from Baltimore, they would bring passengers, salesmen selling different wares, and they would bring hardware, and canned goods, you know, what have you like that. From the Eastern Shore, they would take the other way, they would take livestock and produce and passengers, and they had pens built on the boat, you know, for the cows, for pigs, and for everything. And also seafood, you know, seafood orders. So it worked well both ways. And so he got, he got to be like a veteran captain for a year or two, kind of knew what he was doing, and he made real good friends with the guys that loaded and unloaded the steamboats. And one of them said, Captain Harrison, we'd like - isn't there someplace down on the Eastern Shore we could send our wife and family down, get out of this heat and out of this stench down here? Because my grandfather said those guys all lived right on the waterfront there, and he said everything done was done by animals then, and he said it was terrible there. So he said no, not that I know of.

So he mentioned it to my grandmother. My grandmother said well, look, we got this big house. I mean it wasn't this big. We had this big house. She said why don't you bring them down, drop them off, and when you come *back*, *pick* them up, you know, and I'll feed them and entertain them. And he said yeah, that's a good idea. He said in those days, if you were a successful waterman, you had a big house and a nice horse and buggy. There was nothing else on Tilghman Island to spend your money for, you know. So, you know, you built a pretty nice house, and you had a nice horse and buggy, and he said that was about it. So they had a large house. And they - he said okay. So he told his friend, he said you asked me about your wife and children. He said my wife said she'd be glad to entertain them for a week, we have a large house. And he said okay. I'll get them together before you leave here. So they got on the boat and they came on down. Well they picked them up in the horse and buggy down here to the steamboat wharf and brought them on up, and they spent the week here while he went on further south. And they had a great time. They did some swimming, and ate very well while they were here, and there wasn't much else to do, swing in a swing, but they got fresh air, you know. But they enjoyed it. So he took them back and dropped them off. Then he made his return trip, went on to Tilghman, Solomon's to Crisfield, Virginia and back, and back to Baltimore.

When he got back to Baltimore that time, he's up in the pilot house, and he said the - what do you call that guy, Purser, I believe he said, Purser said, Captain Harrison, there's a lot of people down here to see you. And he said he looked down there and there's like

two ladies and a whole bunch of children, a whole bunch of them. And he said, you know, get them out of the way. Let the bulls up, you know, they were unloading the - they'd unload the livestock first because he said they would get so disgruntled going up the bay, especially if it was a little rough, and they would like, try to get them off the boat, and there would always be the people there waiting for the boat that they were selling them to, you know. And they all had tags on them and whatever. And he said tell them to get out of the way, let the livestock off. And he's up top, you know, and they lifted all the livestock off. And he said these people, they know you, he said I don't know who they are. He said well you got to come down and talk to them. He said they want to get on the boat. Well he said, you know, before they get on, they had to unload the produce and whatever the farmers grew and the seafood. So he went on down, he said I don't know you people. They said oh, yeah. Well he said it was three guys, I can't remember their names, in charge of loading and unloading there. And they were all kind of equal in their duties, you know. There was no really boss. There was three guys, he said. They said well who are you? And she said I'm Wills' family, and I'm so-and-so's family. And he said you are? They said yes. They said you took Jim's family down, and now it's our turn to go. He said wait a minute, you know, he asked me like three weeks ago, and the Mrs. knew that they were coming. And they said well, you know, we're here, all packed, all ready to get on the boat. He said oh, I can't take you. He said I have to notify the Mrs., he said, and there's no phones on the island then, no telephones, he said.

So they - next he went on and unloaded, and next thing you know, here come the two other guys that were in charge of loading and unloading. They said okay. They said you got the best unloading time on the bay. If you want the worst, the worst unloading time, you leave our families here. You're going to be sitting here for hours before you get unloaded and reloaded. He said oh, my. He said all right, okay, put them on, put them on. So they came on the boat. And he said he agonized all the way down the bay. What am I going to tell, what am I going to tell the Mrs. He said he got down here, and two of my uncles, or one of my uncles, and he said I got 13 people here; 11 children and 2 ladies to go on. And he said the buggy won't even carry that many. He said well you have to make two trips. And he said, he was a young man then. He was like 28 or 29, I forgot now - then. And he, he would always come home. This would be his night to come home and spend with my grandmother. And he said he was afraid to come home. He said oh, I better not do it. So he sent those families up with one of my uncles, and he stayed on the boat. Well the boat left early next morning, went on. And when he came back again, he still didn't come home, he went on to Baltimore. Picked those people up, though, and took them on back to Baltimore. They had a great time. So when he came back, he said he walked in and he said I guess I better throw my hat in first. He said I know you're mad. She said no, I'm over my madness, but I'll tell you what. If I'm going to work like that, I'm going to make money, and I've had some signs painted, and I want you to nail them up at the pier where you tie. And if we're going to go in business, you know, might as well do it right. And he said she had a sign, two signs printed up, and it said Harrison's Boarding House, \$5 per person per week, you know, and he nailed them up and that's how the business got started. He start - he said after that it would, you

know, be a family or two, you know, get on the boat and he'd bring them down. So kind of by accident is how business got started.

Then my father actually told me this too. The first 8 or 10 years, it was nothing but ladies and children would come. After that, a few men started coming. The men weren't content to sit in the swings and do a little crabbing, swimming, what have you. They wanted to go fishing. So by that time, my father's brothers were old enough to date. And my father, they had a couple small boats built, and they started taking people fishing, and so that's how the fishing part got started. And it just developed into more people coming, more people wanted to fish. And then when - and, of course, we always had good food. And in those days, when they would come fishing, even after the steamboat era, they would come on the ferry, the two ferries. One would come from Annapolis to Matapeake, and then the other one from Matapeake to Claiborne. I'm sure you all remember - or you don't remember that, you're too young, but you know about it.

K.F.: Yeah.

B.H.: And in order to make that trip worthwhile, they would come for like three days, the people would, you know. In other words, they get on the ferry at like 8 or 9:00 in Annapolis, and they get here like at noon or whatever. So then they'd fish the next two or three days then go back because you couldn't make a day trip, you know, back and forth then to Baltimore like you can now. It was an all-day event. So he said, you know, they got to doing that. And then the men was going home telling the ladies what great food you get down at Harrison's, what great food. So when the Bay Bridge was built, that's when a lot of our fishing customers started bringing their wives down on Sunday afternoon or Saturdays, you know, to the restaurant. Because before that, it was more or less a boarding house, you know. And the first Bay Bridge was in the 50's, '52, I think, 'cause that's the year I went to University of Maryland. So then they started in the summer bringing car - a couple carloads coming down. So that's really how the restaurant part got started. And then when the second Bay Bridge, that made it even that much more better. But most of our customers, when we first started in the restaurant business, were from the western shore. My mother said that for 8 or 10 years, the local people, you know, didn't come. And it was just - some of the watermen would, like if they were up here from Crisfeld and all, you know, need a place to stay and eat in here. But mostly all the people from Baltimore, Washington, our fishing customers. And then the quality of the food was known and a lot of local people started coming. So that's kind of how this business got started.

K.F.: Let me ask you a couple questions. This is a great story. I didn't know the history of this place at all. This is fabulous. The guys who are unloading the steamboats with your grandfather, what nationality were they or - because I know Baltimore had a lot of different immigrants at that time. Were they Italian -

B.H.: You know, I can't answer that. Only he said they were very forceful, and you know, to make that point -

(INTERRUPTION.)

K.F.: So they were just very forceful. That's what your grandfather said?

B.H.: Yeah. I don't know the nationality. But he said they really let him know that he was going to be, his time as a captain was going to be cut short if he didn't bring those people down here.

K.F.: What was the name of the steamboat that he captained?

B.H.: You know what, I never did - as many times as he used to tell that story, I think it was not just one. It was different ones, because he would only work in the summer months. See he'd go back in the fall to dredging oysters, and in the spring to fishing for herring and shad. And then he would take whatever was available, you know, I don't think he was one of the main captains. But from what I understand, in those days, you know, it was - they were in great demand. Captains of steamboats were in great demand because that was the only way to get anywhere, and there was a lot of them plying the bay. And, you know, you could get on as a captain or a co-captain. Because if one guy worked all winter, you know, he was pretty well stressed out, you know, going up and down in the bad weather and all. And they would welcome somebody to take their place for a while in the summer, like that.

K.F.: And what year did the fishing start here? Do you know?

B.H.: I think it was in the early teens, probably 1913, 14, 15, long in there.

K.F.: And did they take people - they took them out on boats in the bay.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.

K.F.: What were those boats like that they used?

B.H.: They were almost; they were almost like a log canoe. In fact, some of them did go out on log canoe. Sail out in the morning and drop your anchor and then sail back in the afternoon. Some of the first boats were - and then my father said they had, just like the real - what did they call it, the one-lunger, the Palmer engine, you know, that would take them out. And they were small boats, small, no cabin, just a workboat really, you know. Something that somebody used in the winter for oystering or in the summer for crabbing, you know. They'd sub-use it for fishing in those days.

K.F.: Okay. What - how did the loss of this steamboat affect this business since it was so tied to that steamboat wharf there?

B.H.: Well, immediately when the steamboat stopped running, then I think the ferry started. So I don't think it affected it, you know, a lot. All these communities depended upon steamboats for a long time. But then in the event - the automobile came, then steamboat was too slow, and trucks could do the same job as steamboats could do, you know, and more efficiently and easier. So the trucks started traveling the ferryboats. So I guess it was just moving from one mode of transportation into another.

K.F.: And now how did you get into this?

B.H.: How did I get into it. Okay. My grandmother and grandfather ran the business until, I guess, about 1930, and my father married my mother about then, and they kind of, it seemed like - I think my grandmother got ill like maybe in the early 30's. And then some of the responsibility shifted to my father. And he had two uncles, I mean he had two brothers too, Randolph Harrison and Dobson Harrison. I think, and they both had wives, so I think my grandfather just kind of shifted the responsibility over to them. And I think they kind of ran it in partners for a while. And they got along really well, but Randolph seen an opportunity that he wanted to have his own business, and then Dobson did too. So Randolph bought a place up the harbor here called Blue Haven, and he went

in business for himself, and then Dobson bought another place called Blue Rock Inn, and he went in business for himself. And then that left my father and my mother here running this business. So when I was like, you know, 15 years old, I started - maybe 13 or 14, started fishing with my father as a mate in the summertime, you know cutting up bait and doing different chores like that. And then in 1950, I went and got my charter license. I was just 16 years old. And then I went to University of Maryland from '52 until '56. And, of course, in the summer months, I was back right here working in the business. And even though I was in the University of Maryland in the winter, I came back and ran one of the charter boats in the summer. So I've actually been in the business just about all my life, grew up in it.

K.F.: Well now what changes have you seen in the charter industry?

B.H.: Well when I first started charter boating, there was no such thing as a depth sounder, radio, radar, global plotting system, none of that. You got on the boat - did have a compass, though. Got on the boat and went out to where your forefather showed you was a good fishing ground. It was mostly bottom fishing in those days for trout and croakers and Norfolk spot. And we'd go and anchor or drift and catch a lot of bottom feeding fish. And there was some trolling, but it was usually, the trolling for rockfish then was usually in the fall. And actually, our seasons didn't start then until late in June, middle of June or later because everybody was so involved in the commercial end of it. Now my father took my grandfather - my father and his two brothers took my grandfather's rig of nets, the pound nets, and they continued to fish those nets until - actually, until I was out of the University of Maryland. That was '56, until about 1956. And then that season wouldn't be over until June, like middle of June. So then they'd start charter fishing. And it was mostly, like I say, for bottom fish. But the boats were not of a nature of anything we have now. The boats were pretty plain. They did have what we call a canopy on them. They had a top on them. And they were big old comfortable Chesapeake Bay boats, but they were not elaborate like our boats are now. And like I say, they had no equipment on them, you know, well you had life preservers, of course, and you had a compass. And all gasoline motors. There was not a diesel motor on the island in those days. All gasoline. And all kind of small motors, you know, and the boats would only go eight or nine knots, you know, at the most. Nobody was in a hurry in those days, nobody.

C.B.: Where did you get your boats? Who built them for you?

B.H.: They were built either in Dorchester County or locally here. Guy, Maynard Lowery, has built God knows how many. He was a great boat builder. He built some for me, I got some of his boats. And he built a lot of boats. But he didn't start building them until after World War II. Before that, John B. Harrison, who built the log canoes, he built two boats for my father, and we used those. And then we had some that were built by a guy named Harvey Hurley and Bronzy Parks in Dorchester County. And they were kind of the more elaborate charter boats that were built down there. They would have a nicer cabin on them and some varnish work in the cabin. There was another guy down there named Elsworth Windgate that built a nice boat. And more of a, more of a yacht finish boat, you know, not quite that elaborate. But the ones you got built here would just, just something that you could use for charter fishing. And like I say, they were big and comfortable, but they weren't elaborate.

But changes I've seen when I first started fishing, we used linen line, mostly hand lines, really on our boats. We had corks wrapped up with about a dozen hand lines. If someone came fishing and didn't have any equipment, then we would give them a hand line 'cause it was mostly bottom fishing. And a few of them had rods and reels. One big change in the industry, when I first started fishing, and all my father's customers, my Uncle Randolph, my Uncle Dobbs, everybody, those guys would come here and they all had a rod and reel, most of them would have a rod and reel. Like I say, the few that didn't, we had the hand lines for them. Well we didn't have any rods and reels for them. They would come and they'd say okay, we're going fishing the next morning, 8:30, 8:00. Nobody was in a hurry to go fishing then because like I say, we caught the bottom fish that bit all day. There was a lot of them here, trout, croakers, what have you. You'd take them to the tackle store in the morning and say okay, you need this, and they'd buy it. You need that. They'd buy it. You need this, they bought it - and I mean that went on for years and years. Of course, when they - after they got off the boat, they'd take it with them. And then the next trip, they'd bring it back or the next year, but one thing I realized, once I got in the business, I said, you know, this just doesn't make sense to me, this is just - you know.

So I told my father, I said we got to have, got to equip our boats with rods and reels and fishing tackle. He said it would be too expensive. Said no - so anyway, he couldn't see, you know, because it had been done that way all along, let your customer come buy his equipment. But, you know, we started taking groups out, corporations about the time I got into it. And they would be entertaining people that were not fishermen, that were golfers or what have you, and they didn't know anything about it. So I saw the need. So I went ahead and bought a tremendous amount of rods and reels and fishing tackle for our boats. And I remember my father raised cane about it 'cause the expenditure, you know, spending all this money. But our boats were equipped then, you know. And that made a difference. That got us a lot of business because people knew that if they sent, you know, people here fishing, there was a guy in Easton, Howard German; German, Hersloff and Swanson, that started, had an insurance business. And he started fishing with us. And he said, you know, the reason I'm sending people to you guys, they don't need anything. When they come down there to get on the boat, you got your breakfast for them, you got your box lunch, you got your tackle, type of fishing, and you clean the fish for them. And he said you're getting all my business from now on. And we had a lot of guys that did that, you know, so it was really beneficial for us to do that. And that was a change. But we had all linen lines. We never had - when I started fishing, there was not a monofilament line anywhere. The only monofilament you had was you use it from your lure, and you'd sparingly - you'd use like 10 feet of it on your lure from your linen line. And the linen line would never go deep. You know, linen line was pretty big, it would kind of float. It would take a ton of weight to get it down, so it was tough for trolling with linen line. But even bottom fishing, all linen line, you know. And then after a while, the diameter of the line started changing from the old linen line it went to like a flax, flax line that was more sinkable. And then, low and behold, all the sudden, monofilament showed up, and that was wonderful. Another thing, there was no spinning

rods and reels when I started fishing. Never heard of them until Bill Burton came around in the 60's, and a guy from Massachusetts named Bob Pond who invented the Adam Pug. And the Adam Plug was invented to spin cast to breaking fish, bluefish, what have you. And we never, we never seen a spinning rod here on Chesapeake until later. I hadn't in the Choptank River anywhere. When you see breaking fish, I'd take my line and throw it out like that and then circle the boat, you know, so to get around to them. But with the advent of monofilament line, then came the spinning rod and reel. And that made a lot of difference in the fishing. But, you know, it was - so many changes, it's hard for me to remember, you know, a lot of them. But those few stand out in my mind. And the equipment, we didn't have, you know, I started fishing in the early 50's, and we didn't have radios for the first couple years. And after that, the war surplus, they got them off the LST's, and LC - landing craft tanks and all like that. And somebody said they're selling -- plus radios. And my uncle, Randolph Harrison, he was the first one, he bought several of them, you know, so he could re-sell them, you know. And there was a lot of watermen that was reluctant to buy them, you know, but since it was my father's brother, and then we bought some for our boats, and it was a great advantage to be able to talk to each other, you know. Because before, if you couldn't see the other boat, you had no idea what he was doing, you know, until he got in that day. I mean boats may leave here together and go out and then come back in. One boat may have a lot of fish, the other one have none. But with these radios, we could contact each other and that worked really well. Then after that came the depth sounder or fish finder, or whatever you call it, all like that.

C.B.: So do you catch more fish today than you did then, or are they all just toys?

B.H.: No, we catch a lot more. No, no. They mean a lot. Without, without a GPS and our depth sounder, we'd be - I don't know how in the world we could ever make out now. I don't. I really don't.

K.F.: Well let me ask you, you were talking about the early fishermen that used to come here had their own equipment. And then suddenly there were these corporations coming. It seems like a change in the type of fishermen coming here. Early on, was it really people who kind of knew how to fish already?

B.H.: Yeah, they kind of knew how to fish, and they were mostly, the economy was, at that time, probably not that good. And there was lawyers, and doctors, and people that owned their own business. There was hardly any average person, laborer or, you know, certainly no painters or plumbers or what have you, carpenters went in those days. All the guys that came came in their big Packards, you know, or Buicks. And they were owners of companies, you know. One of our large customers in those days was the Eskay meat people. I don't know if you ever heard of that, Eskay.

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

B.H.: Yeah, Snootleburg and Curdle (Phonetic). And they used to come, all of them had their own great big Packard, and they had their own fishing tackle and everything. And we had some attorneys and some doctors, and that was about it, you know. Later on, you know, when the economy got better, that's when the corporations started coming. And then, you know, I took advantage of the media, how I built the business to what it is today. When I first started, we had two charter boats, and now, you know, we got a whole fleet. But there was a guy, Bill Burton that was writing for the Baltimore Sun.

And this was in the early 60's, maybe late 50's, late 50's. And he was writing only about freshwater. And I called him, and I said Bill, you know, here's the whole Chesapeake Bay. And every damn - your article, you're in twice a week, you write about freshwater. He said well I don't know anybody, I don't know any charter boat - I don't know -- I said how come you don't write about charter boats? He said I don't know any. I said well you know one now. I said I'll take you fishing. He said - I said when you want to go? He said how about tomorrow? I said all right, tomorrow, great. So he came down and he had no idea what he was coming to or anything. And he brought another guy with him, and they stopped on the way down and got to a hamburger stand or something. When they came in, my mother had a great big dinner on the table for them, you know, mashed potatoes, stewed tomatoes and all like that. He said man, oh man. He said if he could get his foot far enough up, he'd kick his self in the ass for stopping up there and eating, filling up on those burgers. But anyway, I got in touch with him, and then he came here and he wrote a - he had a great day, first day was a wonderful day. He went back and wrote about it. And then he came back again about three or four weeks later and wrote about us again. And that's, a lot of people read his column, and we started getting some business from that. And then several different ways. And we have, we have a thing we call every year first of May a Pro-Am tournament. We invite all of our best customers and outdoor writers, and we put like five good customers on a boat and an outdoor writer, and they write about their trip, what a great time they had. And we even have some TV stations that come on us. And that goes out to several newspapers, magazines everywhere. And that really helps. I mean we get a lot of business out of it, lot of business out of it. One girl was interviewing me one time, and she said, you know, how do you attribute, you know, your success? She said, you know, you started out with a lot of these guys, and they all have their charter boat, and that's it. They got the one charter boat, and they're existing, but you've evidently built a big business, and pretty successful, and they said what's the difference? And I said well, it's advertising. It's like winking at a girl in the dark. Nobody knows you're doing it but you if you don't advertise. You know. And she wrote that, she liked that. A lot of people laughed at that. But

K.F.: Well let me ask you about this tackle store. We had talked about that earlier as a possible thing for the exhibit. What did tackle shops look like back then?

B.H.: In those days, they would have a few rods and reels hanging up, rent - actually, you might be able to get a - Fairbanks Tackle, right up here.

K.F.: Yup.

B.H.: Fairbanks. He might have a picture of the inside of his tackle store when it was - there was a few rods and reels hanging up, and then there was a lot of, as I was telling you earlier, a lot of corks wrapped up with about 100 feet of line and a couple hooks and a sinker on it. And they were for rent also. And then there was the little showcase with buck tails on it.

K.F.: Buck tails.

B.H.: It's a fishing lure. Gary's father made those, Harry Fairbanks made fishing lures, and they were called buck tails. The reason they were, it's lead, it's a hunk of lead, and you take the white hair off of a buck deer and glue it and wrap it, and it's called buck tails. Put a hook in there, of course, you know, hook to hook it. And then there was an,

there was an area for the sinkers. They'd have the 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12-ounce sinkers lined up. And it was, you know, when you get ready to do it, I could help you. It'd be easier to kind of show it then it would be to tell you about it. But it was pretty simple. It was all kind of a wood background. And then they'd have like where the worms, you know, have a little sign, you know, worms, so much a dozen, and crabs, so much apiece and all like that.

K.F.: Now can you tell us some of the funniest things you've seen while you've been out charter fishing?

B.H.: Some of the funniest things. Well I had - a guy used to play football for Baltimore Orioles - I mean Baltimore Colts, Billy Ray Smith, and he had Bill Burton, who was then writing for the Sun Papers, and a photographer named George Cook. And this football player, Billy Ray Smith, were down fishing, and we were in the Choptank, and it was very windy, and we were not catching that many fish. And we were anchored. So he said well I'm going to go to town and take a nap. So he goes in and takes a nap, and they try to wake him, and he doesn't wake too easily. So they said let's play ship sinking with him. I said what do you mean? They said we're going to - we're going to hit him with a bucket of water, with a big C02 - so when it comes out of there, because Billy Ray was about 6'6 and weighed about 280, you know, and all the rest of us were just small guys. And he had, you know, he had a pretty bad temper. And they wanted to do something to irritate him. There was only three of us on the boat. And they said, so I forget which one did it. One of them threw the bucket of water on him. And just as he started out of the cabin coming up, the other one hit him with that C02 cartridge thing, I mean blast. Froze his eyes right wide open. It was like he was crazy, you know. Excuse me, he's going around and around. And I mean he just goes wild. And he runs out, and I had a long engine box in the middle, and they're on each side, and he's on this side, on this side. Round, and around, and around. They keep away from him. So finally he grabs, one of them grabs Bill, overboard. I mean overboard, and it was windy as hell. Windy and raining by then and everything. It was terrible. And I said we got to get out. It's getting bad. And he tries to get the other guy, and the other guy keeps getting away from him. So then he, as he was getting free, the other guy, Bill tries to climb up on the boat. When he does, he takes his big fist and goes bam, and Bill falls back in the water. And he's trying to get the other guy, and he tries, but he hits again. Finally, I had to beg him. I begged him. I said, man, don't - I said the man's going to drown, he can't keep - I said it's terrible, it's rough, it's windy, it's raining. Please, please let him on the boat, please let him on the boat, please. And finally, I begged him to the point where he did let him on. He said for your sake, I will. And that was an extraordinary happening. Very extraordinary. Some other things, funny things, I don't know.

C.B.: How about weather? Have you ever been caught in bad weather?

B.H.: Very bad weather. Uh-huh (affirmative). Got caught in a screaming gale in the Choptank River one time. Several times really, but this one time, one of our other boats, we had just bought a boat, and it wasn't that big. It was kind of a smaller boat. But we had a lot of people here, it was on a Sunday. And a storm hit. And usually thunderstorms go quickly, but it didn't pass that quickly. We were all anchored like in the middle of the river. And it kept blowing harder, and harder. And the anchors broke loose. When the boat goes way up like that, you know, a lot of anchors broke loose.

Well had a young captain on, Tommy Murphy. He called me, he said I'm in trouble. I said what's a matter. He said my anchor broke loose, I started in, and he said the wave hit and washed part of my cabin off, he said washed the glass. You know, your glass, when it hits like that, you know, went right on through. And he said it's a barrel of water coming in every moment. I said oh, my God, where are you? He said I think I am - 'cause it was raining so hard you couldn't see. So I was in the bigger boat. I was in the Bronson. So I finally, you know, went towards where I thought he was, and then I couldn't get him on the radio anymore. Man, I was frantic because, you know, I thought what in the hell is that? Well I finally found him. And he was still trying to go into the wind. And you could see that the boat had taken in a lot of water. And I said turn around and go with it, go with it, go with the wind, you know. I was screaming top of my voice. So he turned around and start with the wind. But as the boat was taking on more water, more water all the time. So then I maneuvered as close as I could get to him. And I said I'm still not going to be able to get these people. Throw me a line. So he threw me a line and I pulled him around what we called Ben Oney Point (phonetic), going up into Tred Avon River. Right around that point, and it's just kind of smooth water. And backed up, and boy, those people just leaped, leaped toward me. They leaped on it. But the boat didn't sink. Because when we got him in that calm water, he was able to go to shore and kind of pump it out and all. But that was one harrowing experience I remember. It's been a lot of times, bad times. I was out the day Wade Murphy sunk his dredge boat, which was a couple years ago, and that wasn't a pleasant day either.

K.F.: What was that day like for you?

B.H.: It was bad, really bad. I was in the bay when it hit. And actually, I changed course two or three times. I started to try to go in Chesapeake Beach or Deale because it got so bad, because I was trying to get home. And then it just screamed, you know, and then it kind of let up. When it would let up, then I finally, you know, I was scared of breaking the boat up. My boat, my personal boat that I operate is a big wooden boat. We have several fiberglass boats, but she's a big wooden boat, and she go in there like that and then come down. She come down, it would be awful crashing and shaking. And it blew one of the antennas off, broke a couple glasses, and I told the mate, I said I got to turn around. We had passengers on there, and they were all scared to death. Scared right to death. They were running and getting their life preservers on. I said man, I guess, I hate to give up, but I guess I'm going to have to go to the Western Shore. And I turned and I went north, and the further up I got, I thought to myself maybe I can make towards Poplar Island, and then come around that way, because the wind was coming from the southeast. So say Poplar Island's here. When I turned, I was headed towards Chesapeake Beach, and then I went this way, and I kept on up, kept on up, and I noticed a little bit smoother, way up there almost to Kent Island, I turned in and came on in up in Eastern Bay, and then came on down between Poplar Island. But that was a pretty bad time. I've never seen the wind pick up that quick and get so - with such force so quickly. It was unreal.

C.B.: You mentioned the passengers. How does it feel to be responsible for all these people?

B.H.: I tell you, it worries you. Like when I saw that Perfect Storm and those guys, you know, the movie. I mean I read the book, and the book's great. But, you know, you

don't laugh, and you don't say oh, yeah - you don't go through; you don't do all that, because you're tense, you're very, very worried. `Cause in that Perfect Storm when they turned around a couple times, you know, they were kind of cheering and going on. That don't happen on a boat, huh-uh (negative). That' don't happen. Not when you're worried about your life and the lives of your passengers.

C.B.: So I just have one question just to take you to a lighter note from that.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

C.B.: What was it like growing --

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.F.: All right, go ahead.

B.H.: It was great for me, meeting different people, you know, almost daily in the summer months, you know. Just meeting hundreds of new people all the time. And then making relationships with some of them, you know, I still have friends out in Masontown, Pennsylvania that came here when they were 16 and I was 16, you know. And we kept the relationship over the years. And it was a good education, you know, `cause most of our people were affluent, and most of them were educated, it was just a great opportunity, you know. And my boys have enjoyed it too. Both of my sons enjoyed growing up in the business here.

C.B.: And did you go to the Tilghman Island School?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Tilghman School, and then St. Michaels, and then University of Maryland.

C.B.: What did you study at Maryland?

B.H.: Business and Public Administration.

K.F.: Well, I'm sure I have a million more questions. I've just been dazed by the story of the storm.

B.H.: That's just one that comes to mind. I've been in a few other ones too. I was out in one and lightening hit. In those days, we had CB radios. Had the VHF radio too, but we had CB radio, had a base, everybody had a base in their house. So we had a base here, and all of the boats had `em. And it came, really, really bad storm all of the sudden, and I said well I'm going to wait it out instead of trying to bust in, you know, I'm going to just hang, drop the anchor, wait it out. So I dropped the anchor. And I heard my mother calling, you know, call -just as I went to answer, lightening hit the antenna on the boat and just tore everything, you know, all the electronics and everything. And I said oh, many, am I in - I'm in more trouble than General Custer was now `cause I didn't think the engine - I thought maybe it would affect everything, you know. But low and behold, it didn't bother the ignition part. So I finally got her started. But they were all frantic. They were getting ready to get marine police come looking for me, you know, when I got in `cause not being able to get in touch with anybody, such a tremendous gale of wind. But you know, here the last few years, we haven't had the really violent thunderstorms that we used to have.

K.F.: Really?

B.H.: Yeah. I don't know. You know, of course, I'm damned glad of it, but we have, it seems to be - we had a really bad northeaster last year. We were all down to the gas dock, what we call the gas dock off of - down near Solomon's, and we had a really bad

northeaster that caught a lot of us down there, but we knew it was coming. It was our fault. We knew it was coming. And that was a bad trip. But the boats we have now, you know, all the power and everything, it's a world of difference.

K.F.: Well let me ask you, what are some of your favorite fishing spots in the bay, if you don't mind giving them up?

B.H.: No. The Diamonds in the mouth of the Choptank River. Stone Rock west of the lighthouse. The Gooses, which is in the middle of the bay. That's west of Little Choptank, I guess, yeah. And the - and the Gas Dock off of Cove Point, that's been a wonderful productive place for us.

C.B.: Do you notice a difference in the fish from when you were a young man fishing to today?

B.H.: Yeah.

C.B.: Are there different kinds or sizes, or -

B.H.: When I was young, we caught only trout and croakers and Norfolk spot. And that was about it. In the fall sometime, we'd catch a few rockfish, but not a lot. Later, later on, we were inundated with rockfish in the 60's, like the late, middle 60's, and maybe early 70's. And then a tremendous decline in the rockfish. In the later years after the moratorium - we had a moratorium on the rockfish from 1985 until 1990. After that, we have seen a big increase in production of rockfish. It's been wonderful. It's been beyond anybody's expectations. We were able to catch our limit every day, every day. And they have to be 18 inches, *which* is a nice fish. A fish that we didn't used to catch, didn't have the equipment or didn't have sense enough to do it, was the drum fish, the channel bass. Years ago, we'd catch one now and then bottom fishing when we're fishing for croakers, what have you. Then with the advent of the depth sounder or fish finder, whichever you want to call it, be trolling along out on the stone rock or whatever, and you'd see this great big blob under the boat, you know. Man, what is that? You know. And then after a while, we figured it out, that it was a larger fish. So then we decide to try to put crab on the line with a fairly large hook, and not trolling, pull our lines up, but be looking, and when we saw it, to stop and drop this down. And low and behold, it turned out to be drum fish, a lot of big drum fish. And that spawned a whole new industry. Now every year, the last week of May and the first two weeks of June are predominantly drum fishing time. I mean we catch a lot of those big monsters then.

K.F.: What are they like to catch?

B.H.: Pardon?

K.F.: What are they like to catch?

B.H.: People have a wrong opinion about them. People say it's like pulling a boot. It's not. They are fighters. I mean you get those on and they just rare, and pitch. They don't want to be caught. They're tough. But that depth sounder spawned a new fishery there, being able to see them, you know, drop on them.

K.F.: What kind of special gear do you need for them, 'cause they're much bigger than -

B.H.: You need a heavy rod and like 50 pound test monofilament, you know, pretty heavy rod. Can't do it with a light rod.

K.F.: Right, okay.

C.B.: So then we come to the biggest fish. What are the biggest things you've hauled in?

B.H.: I caught a 96-pound drum one time. Then I have pictures out on the porch of, I can't remember if it was 52 or 54-pound striped bass.

C.B.: Wow.

B.H.: That was caught a long time ago, but I'll show you, I think I've still got it hanging up out there on the porch. That's probably the largest fish I ever caught.

C.B.: What do you do with your fish? Does it end up in the restaurant?

B.H.: Our customers take all of our fish. When we take customers out, they - at the end of the day, we have a fish cleaning service right up to our fish and oyster company. When we come in, we don't come here, we go right to the oyster company, and we have a fish cleaning service, or have a bunch of guys there that clean fish. And they clean them and pack them into individual packages, and put them in Styrofoam containers. And then when the people come down here, we bring them back in the boat and they go take a shower and what have you, and then our truck will bring them down. They'll be right here at - when they pay their bill, they get their fish.

(Laughter.)

C.B.: That's right, otherwise it's yours.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

C.B.: Well so who runs the inn today?

B.H.: My wife and I. And my son Bud that's County Commissioner, he's very instrumental in -

C.B.: How many rooms do you have?

B.H.: We got, we got 60 rooms here in the inn, but then we own a bunch of houses around the perimeter of the property, and we use those for our overflow. So we got about 90 rooms all together.

C.B.: And how often are you filled?

B.H.: In the summer, we fill them on the weekend, you know, almost every weekend. But in the winter, not at all.

C.B.: Who added on all the rooms? Just bringing you back to the inn a little bit, 'cause it's an interesting building as well, and obviously, this isn't the scale that your grandfather lived in.

B.H.: No, no.

C.B.: Can you tell us a little bit about the architecture?

B.H.: Well I'll show you part of the house, you know, that they lived in. Actually, part of it's been burned down. Part of it was right here and it burned. But, you know, I've added on. I have, since I took over, I added, you know, the rooms upstairs here and the swimming pool and over by the swimming pool and that wing there. You know, as you see a need, you know, you say okay, build a few more rooms. And also, I have a group of captains that work for me in the winter - I mean in the summer, that run the charter boats. And we keep a lot of them on the payroll. So in the winter, gives them something to do, you know. We'll either re-do a boat or two, or build a few rooms, or remodel one of the houses.

C.B.: How many employees do you have total?

B.H.: At the heat of the battle, we have about 100, right in- but we have about 50 or 60, except in August, September and October, we have about 100. That's our busiest months.

C.B.: You must be one of the biggest employers down here, or the biggest.

B.H.: Oh, without a doubt. There's nobody down here, I mean you know, we're the only -

C.B.: In the county, you're way up there in the county.

B.H.: Well, I guess, you know, I don't know about the county, but down here, there's nobody but us, you know, to employ anyone. You know.

K.F.: Well, you want to take a little tour?

C.B.: Yeah.

K.F.: You want to give us just a little tour, and show us some of these photographs?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. Yes, indeed.

K.F.: I'm going to bring this just in case we have some other -
(OFF RECORD BR TFFLY.)

B.H.: But in the summer, we have this deck open. We call it our crab deck. See the big crab we have carved out of wood?

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

B.H.: That's a monster crab.

K.F.: Who carved that?

B.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Who carved that?

B.H.: A guy named Barry - I forget his last name, but he's a wonderful craftsman.

K.F.: Is he here on the island?

B.H.: No, he lives - he lives on - what do you call it, down Miles River Neck on one of those estates, and he's like a caretaker there.

K.F.: Okay.

B.H.: I'll remember his name in a minute. Barry.

K.F.: Okay.

B.H.: But anyway, he carved that crab. And here we have crabs, and shrimp, and oysters and clams, everything in the summer. And we have music out here on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Saturday night and Sunday afternoons.

K.F.: I know where I'm coming in the summertime.

C.B.: Yeah. I know the feeling.

B.H.: And here we use this, you know, in the evenings for special events and then on the weekends in the summer, at night we have entertainment inside. They won't let us have it outside at night.

C.B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). The neighbors.

B.H.: Here is some pictures, that's Senator Mikulski.

C.B.: Is this your striped bass?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. These are some - that was Dr. Tory Brown, he was head of the DNR for a long time, and that's a guy from Easton, Bud Wood. And that's when I had a tournament here one time.

C.B.: This boat, Retriever, is that your boat?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yes, that's our boat. That was built by Bronzy Parks, guy I was telling you about. This is a couple of our oyster, couple of our boats we used to use for buying oysters when there was a lot of oysters. These were charter boats. Then we just take the top off of them and put masts in them and then use those to unload the skipjacks. That's my - that's my mother there.

K.F.: That's a nice picture.

B.H.: That's down to the lower end of the island, we have a church, our family church. My grandmother was like the first - they couldn't get a preacher when they first built it, and she was the first preacher there. And our whole family's buried there. So -

K.F.: Your grandmother sounds like a very dynamic woman.

B.H.: Yeah. I got - here's a picture of her here. Right there in the middle. They took her likeness and put on a mural in between the two black ladies. And they got my oyster company, oyster house here, and that's my father at the helm of the boat.

C.B.: Beautiful mural, painted mural.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). A lot of these pictures of good catches, you know.

K.F.: Oh, right.

C.B.: Who takes your pictures, captain? Looks like you have somebody that takes them all the time.

(Laughter.)

B.H.: Oh, a lot of people take them. A lot of different people. That's my mother again. That's the house a few years back. I can't remember. That's how it looked before we kept adding on and adding on.

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

B.H.: That's ex-Governor Schaefer, and that's Judge Home, Bob Pascal, Ed Hale and Nelson Sabotini, who's head health officer.

K.F.: Oh, I remember. Yeah. Uh-huh (affirmative).

B.H.: And this is Brooks Robinson. That's Frank Perdue. That's when I was on USA Today, front page. And then this is when I was on front page of Chesapeake ay Magazine.

K.F.: That's a great picture. That's a rock up there.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. That's my, couple of my grandsons. Looking in there, isn't he?

(Laughter.)

B.H.: And this is our 100th anniversary last year, we had our 100th anniversary.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

B.H.: And we had the Phillips family, you know, they own the Phillips Restaurants.

K.F.: Oh, right.

B.H.: This is our family here. Over here, we had an old-timer's game years ago, and Brooks Robinson brought those guys down here fishing for the old-timer's game. They're all Joe DiMaggio, Willie Mays, Stan Musial, Brooks, and that was quite an event for me, you know, to be with all those Hall of Famers, you know. Famous. All at one time. Nobody would believe Senator Mikulski's an avid fisherman, but she comes every year here.

(Laughter.)

C.B.: She comes every year?

B.H.: Every year. Early, in spring.
K.F.: Gets her rock for the year.
B.H.: Yeah. And then over here, we got Vanna White.
C.B.: Oh, she's beautiful.
B.H.: Yeah.
C.B.: Did she catch a fish?
B.H.: No. We have, we had a hotel restaurant in Baltimore, in the Inner Harbor, of '89 through '95, and that's where that was taken. Now this boat right here is out front right now, out in the parking lot. We brought that boat when we sold the place, we brought the boat out of there.
C.B.: Yeah, Barbara Mikulski's all over the walls.
B.H.: Yeah. Well, you know, she comes out, she looks at her staff, they'll come, they'll say oh, we got her picture up, got her picture up. Okay.
(Laughter.)
K.F.: Now we're heading out of the bar.
C.B.: There's a trophy.
B.H.: There's one here of James Michner fishing.
K.F.: Oh.
C.B.: James Michner, 1962.
B.H.: Yeah, yeah.
K.F.: His fish is a lot smaller than Barbara Mikulski's.
B.H.: Yeah, that's a trout.
(Laughter.)
B.H.: That's Willard Scott, the weather man.
K.F.: All right.
B.H.: That was with my son, Bud. And that's my sister. She was Queen of Miles River. That was a long time ago. That was, I guess, in the 50's.
C.B.: This picture -
B.H.: That was a long time ago too. You can tell this one was a long time ago. Captain Buddy before eyeglasses.
(Laughter.)
C.B.: Looks like a boy.
B.H.: Yeah.
K.F.: That's a lot of years of fishing up on the wall.
B.H.: Yeah, I'll show you this side where my - this is part of the original house.
K.F.: Wow. Now do you guys still live in this part?
B.H.: Pardon?
K.F.: Do you still live in this part?
B.H.: No. We use it for our guests when we're full.
C.B.: Very comfortable inn.
K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative).
C.B.: This is a double, beautiful wallpaper. And this is part of the original house?
B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.
K.F.: Wow, that's amazing.
C.B.: This is nice. It's very nice.

B.H.: Yeah.

C.B.: You used to hang out here?

B.H.: Yeah.

C.B.: Where was your room?

B.H.: Upstairs here. Upstairs here. We got -

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

B.H.: I had one sister, one brother. And my brother died, he was 32 or 3, I think.

C.B.: An accident?

B.H.: Yeah, yeah. But my sister's still alive.

C.B.: She's in the area?

B.H.: No. She lives in Marco Island, Florida, in the winter; and in Europe in the summer.

K.F.: Well that's the life.

B.H.: Yeah. And then they got a home in - is it Venezuela? Venezuela, they live there too part time.

C.B.: Wow, so she married off the island, I take it.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. Married a guy, and he was, you know, a nice enough guy, but he just - everything he touched turned to gold. He started out, started out janitorial service. And he said his - he must've made 50,000 calls, and he has yet to say he's lead off of his - are you satisfied with your cleaning? Getting your building clean? Is your building being cleaned properly? And he said every one of them says no. And he'll say okay, let my men come and try it, see what they do. So that's how. Then they got into security and then, you know, a lot of other stuff.

K.F.: Yeah. Diversified.

B.H.: Yeah, nice guy.

C.B.: The humble shall be exalted.
(Laughter.)

C.B.: It's a very cozy house.

B.H.: Oh, yeah. That it is. That's my youngest son. He's a broker with Legg Mason in Baltimore. He won the bid for bachelors, 8,000 bucks or something.

K.F.: That's quite a good bid.

B.H.: Oh, here it is. Here it is. Yeah.

K.F.: Is this a blessing of the fleet?

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Reverend Joel from Easton.

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

B.H.: He comes down. Not every year, but like every other year and does it. Then this is one of our girls that entertain that's very popular out on the deck here. She entertains on Sunday afternoons out there, and we got about 50 old men come just to watch her.
(Laughter.)

K.F.: Deborah, and she's in a bikini.

B.H.: Right, right.

K.F.: Does she sing or -

B.H.: Oh, yeah. She's got a great voice. Yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

B.H.: Of course, those old guys don't notice. They don't notice. There's a picture up there with my son and the governor and all that.

C.B.: So you have a tradition of taking Maryland officials out.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. Yeah, I've been doing that a long time.

K.F.: A chance to teach them about the bay, I guess.

B.H.: Uh-huh (affirmative). President now, he was governor then.

K.F.: Oh, look at that.

B.H.: Yeah, he was governor then. Governor then.

C.B.: Did he catch any fish?

B.H.: No, that's on one of our skipjacks. He just wanted a picture with a high profile person to get - for some ads.

(Laughter.)

B.H.: Speaking about my grandmother, here's a letter that she wrote in 1924 to some of our customers. You can read that.

C.B.: Rock Haven on the Choptank.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)