

Interview Log

Interviewee: Lorraine Henry

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Henry's Beach
African American Community

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Comments:

BEGIN SIDE A

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

L.H.: Okay, Lorraine Henry.

K.F.: Now, Ms. Henry, where were you born?

L.H.: I was born here in Dames Quarter (phonetic),

Maryland. K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And what year?

L.H.: 1921, January 31st.

K.F.: Okay. What was Dames Quarter like when you were a child?

L.H.: Very prosperous, when I was a child, I thought. And densely-populated.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Colored and white. And everybody got along just like they were neighbors and friends and whatever, you know. The only difference was they didn't go to church together or school.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: We had separate, you know, schools.

K.F.: Was there a school here in Dames Quarter?

L.H.: There was one here. It was a school here for white and colored, but we didn't attend, you know, different – each other's schools.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: Yeah. But other than that, people got along beautifully together. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

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

L.H.: Well my dad was a waterman. He was a blacksmith by trade. I'm going back when I was a kid. (Laughter.) And I can remember when he was in business, because his father left the business, really, to his 14 children, I think it was. But only he was the only one that stayed with the business, out of 14 boys and girls. I don't know how many sons it was offhand, but probably I knew of three daughters my grandfather had, my father's sisters. But out of 14 children, you know, must've been more. I heard of one, maybe to make – would make it four, but I never saw her. She lived in Baltimore at the time. And I think that's where she passed, in Baltimore, Maryland. I knew of two brothers my dad had. So that was five, six, seven, so had to be seven more, you know. But anyway, they were born and raised here too. So I didn't know my grandfather or my five or six other siblings of my father's, you know, but they were wonderful people. They were in the ministry, you know, they were a very religious type that I can remember, and church-going, of course. So I thought it was a beautiful environment to be born and raised in.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Now what did your father do on the water?

L.H.: Mainly oystering. I think that was a popular means of livelihood then in this area. And that would be the bay.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Now did he have his own skipjack, or was he working on –

L.H.: Well, they had – they had owned their own skipjack. Was a family skipjack years – I didn't know anything about it, but I've heard them talk about it, but I've heard them

talk about it. But at the time I was born, he was in Blacksmith part of the time, and part of the time on the water, working with other people that had skipjacks.

K.F.: Okay.

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

K.F.: Do you remember the name of the family – the boat, the family's skipjack?

L.H.: It was Wigfall.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: My father, the skipjack that my dad's father owned, I don't know the name of it, but their name was Wigfall from the Wigfall family.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

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

K.F.: All right. And what did African Americans do for recreation here in Dames Quarter when you were a child?

L.H.: Well when I was a kid, let's see, they had mainly it was church-going, church activities. And they were into ballgame.

K.F.: Okay, ballgame.

L.H.: I guess you would call it sand lock type ballgame. They would come from different neighborhoods, and they had a ballpark, I can remember that. And people would gather, and they would watch the game, and that went on for years. I guess that has been established long before I came along because it was really on the way when I came along, you know, everybody wanted to go. And mostly it would be on a Saturday, you know, I suppose, or a holiday, but no Sunday. People were very religious then more so than they are now, you know, when it comes to doing certain things on Sunday. My mother didn't even cook on Sunday. She would cook Saturday or Sunday. And most people did that.

K.F.: Now would Sunday be a big meal, family meal though?

L.H.: Family meal. Had the minister to the houses. They would come Sundays. In fact, I imagine he made a round to everybody's home for a meal. And family gatherings. This would be every Sunday. And we could just look for that, you know, people coming to your house and having a meal, and kids coming, playing with the different kids, you know.

K.F.: Sounds like a nice time.

L.H.: It was. To us then, it was nice. And everybody was like an aunt and uncle in the neighborhood, you know. And we called them that, and they weren't related to us, but we would just say uncle so and so, and aunt so and so. And they would accept us as that, you know. So I just thought it was a beautiful atmosphere to be born in, really, when you look at things today, you know, how times have changed. And you say well, gee whiz, I guess I'm the only one thinking that way. Maybe it's because I lived to be old enough to have experienced those things. (Laughter.) You know what I mean?

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

L.H.: But you have to go along with the time, you know. Time changes things to the better or the worse.

K.F.: Yeah.

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

K.F.: Well now I know you started the beach with your husband, so how did you meet your husband?

L.H.: Well after finishing high school, I decided I wanted to venture and advance myself. I had no means of employment around this area for women at that time. I didn't like the idea of working in the oyster factories, or I guess you call them factories or plants or whatever. And, well, it would be laborious work, you know. And I said I, gee whiz, I think I want to better myself. So I took off to Philadelphia to further my education, you know, and I ended up during War II, World War II, and they had more opportunity there in cities and places for people to work and take advantage of different opportunities, you know. So I went into Philadelphia, and I worked a while. Then I attend different schools. I took a course in drafting. Then I felt I was the only woman at that time in that field, and I had different ones that told me, says well why would, as a woman, want to go into this drafting field. I said well I like the idea of drafting. I like designing, you know. So I got a job working for the government, Navy Yard, and I worked there for about two years. I guess that was in, let me see, '45. The war ended in '45, didn't it?

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

L.H.: I can't remember, I think it was '45. I was working, I worked two years for the government at the time. So that made me work '43, '44, '45. So then we were laid off, and then I went into cosmetology, took a trade in cosmetology. So I worked, did that for about a year in another business with someone else after graduating, you know. And then I went in business for myself. And at that time, I was about 21. So I opened my own business, 21. And about '50 – I'd say about 12 years later, I opened another business. So, actually, I went into cosmetology operating and owned and operated a beauty shop.

K.F.: Wow. Then you had two beauty shops at one time?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Pennsylvania. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Let me ask you –

L.H.: But I started one in, I started one in the 50's. I was just trying to think, I think it was '52 was my first shop, and I had nine operators at that time. And then in '70 – well it was in '65, '70, '72, I bought an apartment building, and I converted the first floor into living quarters. And that's two blocks away from where I started in 55th and Gerard in West Philadelphia. And I started another business there on the first floor, and I moved my living quarters to that part, to 57th and Gerard, and then I rented out 55th and Gerard, living quarters, first floor, business and was a house.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And was an apartment on the second floor. And business on the first floor. And I rented that out. So that's where I ended up, 57th and Gerard in an apartment building with a business. And in the meantime, we'd started the beach, we bought that in '51. We got married in '51, and I started the beach in '51. And '51, '52. We bought it in '51, must've been '52 when we opened the beach, actually. '52 I believe it was. And this is my husband and I got married in the meantime. (Laughter.) I'm going ahead of myself here. And so he decided that after we came and saw the spot and I told him all about it because I came home to visit my parents, and I said oh, let's go down the beach. And he said what old beach? No beach here. You know. I said oh, yeah, it used to be. So we went down and saw this sign for sale. The property was for sale. And so I got, I got really enthused about it. And I said I'm going to take the phone number and address down and the name of people that sell it, the realtors' name, rather, and see what's going on with this property, because I remember it when I was a kid. My father used to tell us about it.

Well the last year of the operation of that place that they had for a recreational spot then was called, it was in '24, 1924, was called Tangier Beach, I believe.

K.F.: Tangier Beach?

L.H.: Tangier Beach.

K.F.: Tangier.

L.H.: That's the name of us prior to us buying it. But it was a wilderness like. You couldn't tell it was anything there but a few rundown little cottages, was a couple of them. And the beach itself was beautiful, nice sandy beach, was gorgeous. And it was another long building, and I think it must've been a bath house, because it had stalls, like for changing clothes and things like that. And it looked to be about five, maybe 75 feet long, and 40 feet wide. And on each one side was for men, one side was for women 'cause you could see a sign that was still up there. And I said this must've been a place where they changed their bathing suits and things, you know, 'cause it weren't any bathrooms there at the time because we were the only ones that brought electric. We had to bring electric there, we had to get running water, and all that had to be approved by the Board of Health, you know.

K.F.: Well let me back up.

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

K.F.: And ask you first, back in Philly when you were working for the government, were you doing drafting for them?

L.H.: I was working as a tracer, by the way.

K.F.: A tracer?

L.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

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

K.F.: Well how did – I talked to some other women who, you know, for, you now, a better term, were Rosie the Riveter, because women got jobs during World War II, you know.

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

K.F.: (Laughter.) Good jobs.

L.H.: Well I thought I had a good job. I was making big bucks, I thought, you know.

K.F.: Well now how did you feel when, you know, you got laid off so the men could have their jobs back?

L.H.: I felt, I felt a little bad, because I said now what am I to do? But in the meantime, I was in, I had taken up beauty couture, doing the evening classes. And something, my mind told me said just in case this folds up, folds up, you know, said you better get yourself started on something else, just thinking for the future, you know. So I went into beauty couture at that time, cosmetology. And by the time that I was laid off, I was well on my way, you know, to get established into a beauty couture which I always liked anyway.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.H.: And so that's where I went.

K.F.: I just find that so interesting, you know.

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

K.F.: Men come back from war, women lose their jobs.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That's what happened. But anyway, I think mine ended because the war was just about ending, if I'm thinking correctly. It was in, was it '45, I think it was when the war was just about – but there was another little war going on. I think it was with Japan, wasn't it?

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

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And it carried on into Korea.

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

L.H.: Right?

K.F.: Yeah.

L.H.: But at that time, I was – I had no job, really, but I was in business then on my own. And I had to make it, you know. (Laughter.) But I had saved up some money, and that carried me over nicely. Yup.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Into my, it made me able to go into business, you know, prepare myself for business, for myself.

K.F.: Well let me ask you, you said your father used to tell you about Tangier Beach.

L.H.: Right.

K.F.: So did people from this community used to use that beach? Was that something –

L.H.: Well it was for white people only.

K.F.: Oh, it was?

L.H.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And my dad was hired there, I think why he knew so much about it, he was hired there for help out in keeping order, by the way. He remembered telling us about it, and he could really tell us, and I listened to him. And I said at the time, and at that time was no recreational areas for colored people at that time anyway, you know, that is the way everything was, you know. We lived through it, you know what I mean. But then later years, Ocean City opened up. One day a year, one week, what was that, they had Maryland Day, Virginia Day and Delaware Day, three days I guess it was, or a week I'll say, a week. At the end of the season down Ocean City, Maryland, for colored people to come. And they made more money off, I think off of those – that week of busses coming in from everywhere, people so excited to go. But you know, my mother would never let us go.

K.F.: Why not?

L.H.: And all the kids would go. And I wonder why my mother wouldn't let us go. So and the kids would have, their parents would get them nice outfits to wear, you know, for that particular day. And they had their own change to spend, money, and this was for Virginia, Delaware and Maryland, states. And we could never go. So that always stayed in my mind. I said now I wonder why my mother wouldn't let us go. She would never tell us. And I'm from a family of 11 children. My mother – I guess I'm about the, I'm going to have to count it, but three brothers older than I, and a sister. I'm about the fifth child, oldest of the 11. All come under me after that. But she would not allow us to go, and that used to really hurt my feelings. All our little friends would say we're going to Ocean City. We're going on the boardwalk, we're going on the playgrounds, you know. And we couldn't go. So when that idea came to me actually, as I said, about when I saw this place down here, Dames Quarter, well I had been away from home and came back just to visit, you know. And I saw it, and I said boy, this would be nice because we can

have a place for everybody come that want to come. And that's what started Henry's Beach. And my husband agreed to it. And we just worked right on, and just – and as luck went on, we just made wonders happen, you know?

K.F.: Okay. Well let's –

L.H.: We really wondered, you know, did wonderful with it. It was a beautiful place. It's well spoke of now even. Different ones know about it, you know, they'll say oh, you're Miss Henry, you had Henry's Beach. Oh, what a wonderful – you know, it makes you feel good. Because I can, I said all this stemmed from that feeling that I got from my mother not letting us go out and have a little recreation, you know, down Ocean City, Maryland. And that had to have been, what, let's see, 60-some years ago. See how things have changed now? Times have changed.

K.F.: Well let's talk about what you guys had to do to get that beach up and running.

L.H.: To get it started and all?

K.F.: Yeah. How did you get the funding for it?

L.H.: Well I'll tell you what happened. I'm in business now.

K.F.: Right. I'm just going to put this closer.

L.H.: Okay. And my husband, he's working for Scott Smith Cadillac Company in Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, that is. And I had the business going. It's going well. So when I first saw the beach, I called my husband after I talked with the realtor, by the way, about how much it was and all that. And I called him on the job, and I told him, I said hey. He says, he's going on vacation and he has to have a deposit. And he had to have a deposit of \$200. He said you like the idea? I said sure, I like it. I would love it. He said okay, well we'll send them \$200. And he says when he come back off of vacation, he'll get back to me. Well that was just for to close the deal, you know. And so we waited till he came back from his vacation, that's the realtor, and we made an appointment. I called him. And he let us know when he came back, so I called him. And he said well, what do you want to do? I wanted to know the people that own it. They live in New Jersey that owned the land, you know, at that time. And he made connections with them. So he asked us how are we going to pay for it, you know what I mean? I said well, I can pay so much down, and so much a month.

K.F.: Mortgage, right? How much was the property all together?

L.H.: I believe it was something like 224 or 2,500.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: I mean, yeah, 2,500 or something like that. I got to really check that out to be exact, you know. It's been so long, in '50 – but it was – to me, it wasn't that much then, to me I felt like it wasn't, you know, for all that land. And at that time, I think it was something like 16 acres. But since then, we have added onto it because we brought properties from, adjoining properties where people sold to us to add onto it. So I think it came out to be something like 38 acres, all together. But those years went by, you know. So we had ideas of making – doing great things for the property really. 'Cause, well, it's such a beautiful place. The beach was just out of sight. Sandy all the way out almost to the buoy we used to say. But we eventually lost some of the beachfront from storms. But that's just recent years, you know. But anyway, how we got started, after we got the land, we got in touch with the Board of Health. And we got permission first to use the land, because we were paying so much a month for it after we made the agreement, you know,

purchased it, so to speak. And then, and then we could, we had – the Board of Health gave us a year to decide whether – how the thing was going to go, how the business was going to develop. So we built a building – well first, we had to get water, because there wasn't any water on the property, drinking water, you know.

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

L.H.: And the Board of Health had to pass that, of course. Then we had to have electric brought in from the main highway because there weren't any electric, only on Deal Island Road, everyone had lamp lights around here and, what do you call it, dynamite, dynamo electric?

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

L.H.: That's that motor, private –

K.F.: Like a little generator?

L.H.: Generator. That's it. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And it's the only type of – means of electricity they have. And so we had the electric brought in from the main highway, and then we got water. That was our main, worst expense we had at that time was getting that water because it had to be so many feet underground, an artesian well. And they had to dig for it. I think they went down something like two, 300 feet below sea level sort of thing like that. And to see if we could really get water, we had to have that done. So we paid for it ourselves, so much down and so much a month. Sometimes we could pay it all, sometimes we couldn't, you know. But they went along with us until we – after we got the water, then we decided we were going to have to have some kind of building to serve food. So we had this – oh, my goodness. I would say a bathhouse. It was about 75, 80 feet long. So we had a friend of my dad's, he was a builder, and he came down and added on to that and that became our first dining room for serving meals. And that was just for a local thing, we thought. But then it caught on from place to place, so finally, we had to build a building to accommodate more people because people just flocking in, you know, because it was a needed place. You could see that from the very day we opened up. It was in demand. People just loved the idea and they were just thrilled to have someplace to go, you know.

K.F.: And what was that –

L.H.: And fish and crab – it was terrific. We tried to feed 50 cents a person, adult only. And I'll tell you, I saw so much money, I didn't know what to do. That's the way I felt about it because I was young, you know. I'm just about 20 something. (Laughter.) You know what I mean, 25, 6 years old. I said goodnight. I didn't know something like this would go over so big. My husband and I, we were excited. I'll never forget it. And it encouraged us, you know, to continue trying to develop it, so we did, to the point where it was real nice for a day thing. But we didn't have any overnight accommodations. So that would have been the next thing that we would have been working on, like motels or something of that nature.

K.F.: Right.

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

K.F.: So how did you manage this living in Philly and then having this property down here?

L.H.: We drove back and forth for 50-some years.

K.F.: Oh, my.

L.H.: Every week from – all during the summer months because it was only open during the summer months and early spring and late fall.

K.F.: And only on the weekends?

L.H.: Only on weekends. Uh-huh (Affirmative). So we operated like that ‘cause we had managers at the time we weren’t there. And but we were there every weekend just about. I can’t remember a weekend hardly that I wasn’t there. If it was one, I think it might’ve been the time I took a trip to Bermuda. I remember that. (Laughter.) And I think that was the first time I ever took a trip for not being there, you know. But you would probably have to ask me questions because it’s such a – I haven’t thought back over it too much to get it organized, you know, to talk to you about it.

K.F.: Right. Well let me ask you, the first building you put in was for food. So what kind of food did you guys serve?

L.H.: Oh, we served, we served seafood mainly because people liked the fish and crabs and oysters and stuff down this way. And we had, we had – we could give you any type of meal, like fish, chicken, ham. We carried that, and roast beef too, or beef. And we made sandwiches, we sold sandwiches, and we sold meals, platters.

K.F.: Who did all the cooking?

L.H.: Mainly me. And believe it or not, I took up cooking too, just mainly be able to cook that food and make it right so that people would want to come back again. You know what I mean?

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

L.H.: So I had help, of course, but I saw to it that food was right. Yeah.

K.F.: And what sort of traditional Maryland kind of dishes did you serve up?

L.H.: Well like I said, we had crabs. People went for, you know, crabs of all types. Soft shell crabs, crab cakes, crab croquettes, crab this, crab that. Fish. Mainly fried fish. And sometimes we had baked fish. But you tried to cook the things people really liked, you know, or called for, and cook them the way that they like it. All kind of vegetables. And everything was home cooked like style.

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

L.H.: Yeah. And salads and desserts, and that’s about it. Beverages.

K.F.: How many people would you serve?

L.H.: The building was built to serve, the last building – well tell you the truth, I don’t now how many people we served the first building. So many people. We would run low in food, but we had contact where we could get more, you know, seafood.

K.F.: Oh, yeah. Where did you buy all your –

L.H.: Right here in Deal Island. Fish, oysters and crabs.

K.F.: So from the local watermen?

L.H.: Local watermen. People that I knew were friendly, they’d save them for us, you know, make sure we had plenty. They were glad to have someplace to unload it, of course, you know. And they let us have it at reasonable prices too. And Perdue, we dealt with them with chickens, you know. Buy them by the crate. We sold a lot of chicken. Fried chicken, platters, sandwiches and stuff. And vegetables. We had fresh vegetables. We had greens that were out ready for fresh, and of all kinds, you know, green vegetables and salads.

K.F.: Now let's see. What other buildings did you have as you continued to grow? You had the place to serve food.

L.H.: Yeah. And we had, ended up adding on, and we had, I guess you would call it beer – where we sold beer. We didn't have a whiskey license, but we sold beer of all description, and soda.

K.F.: What does that mean, of all description?

L.H.: Like Budweiser. I forget the name of half of them now, you know. (Laughter.) Oh, Lord. All makes, all brands.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Country Club, that's a malt liquor, but it comes under the heading of beer.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And Miller's High Life. That's why I say all description.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Budweiser. I did say Budweiser. And, oh golly, I can't think of the name of those beers. (Laughter.) And I was responsible for ordering them too, you know.

K.F.: So you did all the cooking and the ordering then. (Laughter.)

L.H.: I don't know how I did it. I used to say I was 10 people. The good Lord just made me able to bear and go through it and with a smile. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed every bit of it. It was always a way to do things, you know. It all got done. So I just loved the place. I loved it to this day. But it's good, I had to let go 'cause my husband passed eventually in '79, and I kept it open myself for about two, three years, and then I decided that I needed a good man, and I didn't have it, so I couldn't handle it all by myself, it just gets too much. So I started leasing it out, and it didn't work too good because they weren't taking care of the property like it should have been or always something, and I was afraid I would lose my reputation of the place, Henry Beach reputation.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: And I decided to sell it. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Well now did you have a dance hall or anything?

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

K.F.: And what was that like? What sort of entertainment?

L.H.: We called that, we called that the Arcade room where we had all entertainment indoor, and then we had, we had a stage outside that would accommodate any type of entertainment you want outside pavilion.

K.F.: And so who would come and –

L.H.: Well we would have different groups coming in. We had, I'd say top entertainment. Just whatever the public would appreciate seeing or want.

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

L.H.: We had it.

K.F.: Do you remember any of the names of the bands or groups?

L.H.: We had, let me see, the Temptations. I don't know if you've heard of them or not.

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

L.H.: Blue Notes. They probably – I guess they're in circulation now, I don't know. I'm out of that field now, you know. (Laughter.) But and I was trying to think of – Earth, Wind and Fire; New Birth. Do you know – you've heard of those groups?

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

L.H.: And, oh, it was so many groups we had.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We had good talent.

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

L.H.: And we also had stage shows too, like plays.

K.F.: Oh, really?

L.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: And would they be traveling plays, or community plays or –

L.H.: Well they would be, well I got in touch with some of them in Pennsylvania, and they would come down and perform, you know. But I don't know if they're in existence now or not, you know, but they were good. People enjoyed them. Some was comedy, you know. Uh-huh (Affirmative). It was always something going to draw the people, you know. And we just never had to worry about clientele.

K.F.: Really? So what kind of people came to Henry's Beach?

L.H.: They were people that came there that appreciated it because we didn't have people there that didn't. My husband was a good policeman. Oh, boy. He was so strict, first he wouldn't allow them into the Arcade room, which was our best room we had. It was nicely arranged, you know, good entertainment, unless they had a tie on in the summertime. I said oh, my goodness, wait a minute. Let's cool it a little bit here, you know. It's getting warm weather, you know. But he did that purposely because he feels that guys, when they come dressed up, they're not apt to start nothing. Which he had a point there. They come to have fun, and enjoy, and meet people and socialize. We just not going to have these riff-raffs coming. We didn't have any trouble, so there must not been too many riff-raffs (Laughter), so to speak, you know. But it was, I have good memories of it. I mean it's amazing because I remember, I forget the gentleman's name. He was a chef in Princess Anne. Fevas (phonetic), Mr. Fevas. I forget his first name. He said I don't know how you people can operate a place like that with all the people that goes down there and not have no trouble. Said we can't even, downtown here, every Saturday, we have problems, you know. And I mean that made me feel good, you know, because it was a lot of people came in that came from places we didn't know anything about even. Just motoring cars, you know. Then we did have, we did know about the busses because we made arrangements for them.

K.F.: You had busses?

L.H.: We had busses coming in.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Philly, Baltimore, New Jersey.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey.

K.F.: How did you advertise Henry's Beach?

L.H.: We advertised it -- Hoppy Adams out of Baltimore. Have you heard of Hoppy Adams? He was a disk jockey on W – what? Hoppy Adams. Oh, Lordy. I forget what station he was with, but anyway, he did a lot of our advertising. And we had placards mainly, and we got in touch with groups that were looking for outings and places to go. And that was some good advertisement too, you know.

K.F.: Like church groups?

L.H.: Church groups, clubs, organizations. And one tell the other, you know, about the place, and they would run three or four busses. Each group would come in with three or four busses. You got a couple hundred people right there or more.

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

L.H.: Deal with it, you know. Just that one group coming in. So then you have your locals come in. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And did they come from all around the Eastern Shore?

L.H.: Oh, yeah. People know about it. Snow Hill, Berlin, Cambridge. All the local places. Some parts of Delaware, Virginia, upper part Virginia and Delaware. And just about all of Maryland, local Eastern Shore. And they would come in with their groups, the busses, or just drive out down here. It's, I was surprised – the people that I met that knew about this place, when they find out who I was, from different places. You know. So like I say, it was a much needed thing because it just went, it just went, took.

K.F.: And at that time, there really wasn't any other –

L.H.: There was no other place, as far as form of recreation, area, you know, for people to go to.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Now how did the white community feel about it?

L.H.: The ones locally, they felt good because they knew me and my family, and they were with me because I had – they helped me a lot.

K.F.: How?

L.H.: Like signing for us, having permission, number one, to have the place. And they really made, they signed for it.

K.F.: Oh, they did?

L.H.: You had to get permissions. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Because we had to have license. Whatever, just like any other business. But they had to be approved of in the neighborhood. So they approved of it. And they came too. They just came down, fell right on in because these people were just down to earth, normal people – acting people. All the local people were really for it. And it was business for the people anyway because they had businesses here then, and people would stop in and patronize them all down all the – actually, all the way from Pennsylvania were places we stopped, and we had those busses just stop. They appreciated it too because that business for them, like stop-off places for them. Restrooms and areas where they could get maybe a little lunch or breakfast or whatever meal they want. And they appreciated, maybe gas, oil, you know. Whatever they saw they might have in the store that they might want. They had money. They were out to spend money and have fun. So they just stopped off places, you know. Because I've had them ask, when you opening the beach, you know? Henry Beach going to open this year, or whatever. We would stop on our way back and forth, you know. They'd be glad when those people stop because they come in and buy things from them.

K.F.: So you –

L.H.: So it helped the whole shore. It helped the whole area, really. It didn't just help us. It helped every business along the way, actually.

K.F.: And would these busses have to stop at places that would, you know, allow African Americans to come in and have lunch, and use the bathroom?

L.H.: They would allow, you know, they had separate places at that time. They had colored signs for colored – they never stopped people from coming, but colored had to go in this door, or use this bathroom, or whatever.

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

L.H.: You know.

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

L.H.: They had separate. But they could buy whatever they wanted.

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

L.H.: But when it came to being served, that was a different story. Like meals, you know, and bath facilities. They had facilities, but they had separate ones.

K.F.: They really had designated places for the busses to stop along the way?

L.H.: No. They could pull into –

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

L.H.: Oh, you mean the bus drivers stop only certain places?

K.F.: Or did you recommend to them that they stop certain places?

L.H.: Well I did in some instances. Some I didn't. They just took for granted and stopped.

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

L.H.: You know. And not only busses. People come in cars too.

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

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So people, well they were used to that anyway. So they probably stopped said can we get served here or something, maybe. They didn't always stop where we told them or made arrangements for them to stop. There's a couple places we made arrangements because we –

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

L.H.: -- they could, they had to stop and get gas you know, restrooms or whatever, get a drink or soda, sandwich or whatever. They just took a chance, I imagine, and they stopped. But didn't nobody have any trouble. But that's been always the case. I never felt that we couldn't stop and buy things anywhere. But now when it came to your restroom and your having a meal, you couldn't use the same area.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: That was the only difference. But they treat you nice. But that was just the way of things, you know, way of lie, you know, and everybody was used to it, the black and the white, I guess. (Laughter.) That's about all I can say because I don't know when it started, but I do know when it end, you know.

K.F.: Well how did that affect Henry's Beach, the desegregation?

L.H.: Well it didn't say affect it, but I heard a couple comments that I didn't appreciate too well. Oh, we can go to Sammy's and Johnny's, for instance, now. You know? You understand what I mean? That they were thrilled to death that they could go there and get a meal.

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

L.H.: Those type of things used to turn me off a little bit, you know, but it didn't bother me. But it's just how, the way some people took it, you know. Some were glad, and some wasn't. Some it fazed, some it didn't.

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

L.H.: But not enough to hurt, because I guess they were used to it, you know, certain way of life, you know, and it just didn't bother them. I don't, I don't know if it bothers some people today even, you know, the difference in the way they used to have to live, you know. But there's others it does, I guess, still. So to me, it just didn't faze me one way or the other. Because I was, I'd been used to associating and living and working around all types of people. And I know people are people, regardless. You know what I mean? And it's the way you carry yourself, the way you demand respect, you can give respect to everybody. I was brought up that way. My father, my mother, they all live like that. People around here seem to live that way. So it was no big thing for us. We had an interracial ball team in 1950. We had a ballpark too, by the way.

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

L.H.: And that was in '51, we started in '51, started in '51. And back in '51, interracial ball team or anything interracial, you know, was saying something to some people, you know.

K.F.: Yeah.

L.H.: But that's the way it was around here. You know, it was no trouble at all. Mr. Ken Miller. People used to work for this man, the Millers. They had a canning factory, and a lot of people used to do work for them. I don't know if you've heard of them or not. And one of his sons was on the team. And that drew a lot of white people down, you know, see the game. And everybody got a long wonderfully well. I'll never forget. I said – one day I went into the club area where they sell beer. The guys was all in there gathering after the game was over. And they were pouring beer and – not champagne, the ale, champale over the guy, you know, just having a ball. And I said, Lord – all these guys, white and colored, they were pouring beer on each other, you know, just having a big time. I said it was just beautiful how people got along. So time changes things.

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

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

K.F.: What other days do you remember of Henry's Beach, just some of the fun that was had?

L.H.: It was just fun time all the time. People greeting each other, haven't seen each other for years, for the first time. And laughter, good music, good food, and recreation. We had Mrs. Trimper, Ocean City, she brought her rides and outfit down for us to –

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We had swings, rides, and the whip thing, all on the beachfront area for the kids, you know, and young adults, I'll say, that wanted to take part in it. And it was just a fun place, actually. I can't remember other than just having an enjoyable, fun time. And I was busy working, but I would have time to speak to people, you know. Say hi, and observe what's going on, of course, you know. And everybody just seemed to have fun. Glad to get down there, Henry Beach, so they could go bathing, fishing, or crabbing. We had an area called Crab Creek that was attached to the property where crabs would come in, and I think that's where they found most crabs. And people loved to go crabbing. And, boy, they would have the best time out there crabbing. Sometimes they'd catch a fish or two too, but they would most crab in Crab Creek. And

then some would be bathing, some would be crabbing. We had bath houses. We had two bath houses: one for men, one for women, where they could change their clothes. We had, we had quite a few bathing suits. It got to the point they wasn't returning them like they should, you know how that goes. But then we just weaned it down to know bathing suit rentals, and we just had a place for them to come and shower and change clothes and bathroom. Got two buildings on the property. That's been taken away.

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

L.H.: And we had three cottages, with only one left. And we had a house there that was for living, you know, of course. And that's where our family and our friends, we all gathered at times when we wasn't working.

K.F.: Now where did you guys live when you were down here for the weekend?

L.H.: We had a house, called a guest house. It's still there, but it's been covered completely with some sort of weatherboarding. It's called, it's some kind of cured wood. I did know the name of it. Salt-treated or something.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Is there such a thing as salt treated?

K.F.: Yeah. So it won't rot.

L.H.: And they have extended it and made, added onto it, the people that bought the property.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And we have one other building left there. That was the club.

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

L.H.: And the restaurant. And I think he has it for some sort of machine shop, and he keeps all of his farm equipment in there and so forth, you know He has it for residential only. And like I say, one little cottage on the waterfront. But all the rest of the buildings are down, stage is down. Big – the gate entrance house is down, and the ballpark is done away with. Had little bleachers out there. And it just doesn't look like the same place really, you know.

K.F.: Well what about some of the big storms that happened in the last 15 years?

L.H.: Well that, that had –

K.F.: How did that affect –

L.H.: That did affect the beachfront. It did a lot of erosion. And I guess we must've lost about 100 feet of waterfront there. Nice beachfront, yeah. And that's why, I think, he took down the bathhouses because they were being eroded because they were near the waterfront, you know. And a cottage, one cottage, I think it was affected from the storms. But other than that, it was like I said, it's just one building left and the house. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And the grounds. And I sold the other lots in sections, I call it, because I had it sectioned off. Like the first section was 16 acres. The other was like – the next one I sold, I think, was two acres. And well five, and four. And 16, 5, 4, and it was another one. About six acres. That was the last acre, I think it was. And they just took the whole property, and I was finally glad to get rid of it because it was costing me money to keep it.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: Upkeep of it, you know.

K.F.: Well and had the taxes gone up because of the waterfront?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). It went up when we put it, when we established it as Henry's Beach, and we put the buildings up and started a business. Became a business, it went up. We were paying for taxes over \$2,000 a year, you know, just for property tax.

K.F.: And how much were you making on Henry's Beach?

L.H.: At that time?

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

L.H.: Towards the end or the beginning?

K.F.: Towards the beginning first.

L.H.: Beginning first. It's hard to say. We did all right, actually. It allowed us to develop it. We put the money right back in it 'cause we didn't need it to live off. See, my husband had a job, I had a business going. And we took and just fold the money back into the property. So I'll say it this way. We paid, let's say 25? I'll say 25. I want to really make sure. I think it was 2,500. And we, I sold it for half a million dollars.

K.F.: Wow. That's quite an investment. (Laughter.)

L.H.: So it was a good investment. You know what I'm saying? The same, you know. But now, like I said, those other lots we bought, acres we bought, it was, it cost – see people knew it was a business going so now they going up. That first, that first 2,500, \$2,500 was, to me, it was a lot of money because my first property buying, you know? Purchased some property. And in 1951, too, or '50, '51, that was a lot of money to me then. But I said well, I lived to see it work pretty good, you know.

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

L.H.: It was a good investment.

K.F.: Now how come you and your husband never moved down here full time?

L.H.: He had a job. And he was waiting to retire. That was the whole thing. He was going to wait for his retirement before we came. And he didn't live to retire.

K.F.: Oh.

L.H.: Only on disability. It all happened from an automobile accident. And all those years we were up and down the road, we never had an accident in our life. And it was a Christmas Eve we were going to his mother's. She's from Berlin, Maryland. And we were going to visit with her for the holiday, and someone ran into us. And my husband hadn't been able to go to work since. He was injured badly. And he lived four, five years. After that, he passed. But we were hoping to come and retire, and that's why I came on down because this was in the making, you know. Of course, I had thought we would be living at Henry's Beach, really. But it got to be too much for me. So I said – to live off a place like that by myself. So I came down, but I found this place and I moved here after his death. And I sold out in Philadelphia, moved here, and then that made it easier for me to take care of the property there, you know. Here, rather. And see to things. I've been here since 1990. I moved here.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And I haven't done anything else since, just move here and get established, you know. But it's like home to me because I was born here.

K.F.: Yeah.

L.H.: And I don't know too many people now that lives here because it's not that many people living here now. They moved away. Whole lot of people left this place. This

place used to be densely populated with colored and white. But now I think it's about 8 or 10 colored families, and more white, but they're on the waterfront. It's hardly anybody in this area. That's why it's growing up, you know. And the people that has bought this property, it's hardly any property for sale around here, are – could be if you want to pay a good price, maybe, for it. But the people that's bought this property, they don't even live here, and they don't come and take care of it. They just let it grow right up. And this is why we're getting bushes and woods. You could see for miles all over this place. Nothing but houses when we were younger.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: When I was younger, I'll say it that way.

K.F.: Was it all farmland, and it hadn't been built?

L.H.: Mostly tilled farmland. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And gardening, you know. People did a lot of gardening then. But when I came back here, I was surprised. It's been quite a few people that's left because of these younger people, they moved to town. Salisbury, this place, looking for better working conditions, I guess. And the working area, the Chesapeake Bay, a lot of people tonged and did what they called oystering. And there's a few doing it now, and crabbing, but there's just a few. But at one time, that's all people did around this area is work on the water. But I hope it'll come back. Because if it does, a lot of people have in their blood, you know, working on the water, like that type thing. And they'll maybe bring the area back again. Who knows? I don't know. But I understand the fish is getting plentiful.

K.F.: Yeah, the fin fish are very plentiful these days.

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

K.F.: The crabs are not, but the fish are.

L.H.: I heard the – what are those crabs that you fish with? It's a certain crab they fish with. I didn't learn too much about seafood and stuff. I left. (Laughter.) But anyhow, what do they call them? I know the name of them when I hear them, but that was plentiful this year. I was just talking this morning to a girl that told me that these crabs that they use for fishing, they get very plentiful. I don't know. I guess you can use them as you do the other crabs. I don't know.

K.F.: Yeah. I don't know. I know some watermen do use crabs for bait, but they – a lot of them have stopped doing that because they're so scarce these days, you know.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But they're the ones that I'm talking about, but she said they're getting plentiful.

K.F.: Good.

L.H.: Said different one has told her because she likes fishing, and she goes fishing a lot.

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

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So I said well, I said the hardheads came back, so they're plentiful. They have been gone for years, you know what I mean? So maybe they're cleaning the bay up or getting it together again. I don't know.

K.F.: Yes. Yeah, I think that's really hopeful.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So anyway –

K.F.: So is there anything like Henry's Beach? After you closed it, was there any place similar to that for people to go?

L.H.: Available? No. But see, at the time I closed it, they could go, it was integration, interracial around in the area. They could go anywhere. Ocean City, other beaches. What are they called? I don't know how many beaches is around here. But there was a place, I was trying to think of this place. It's Public Landing, I believe it was. Public Landing. Isn't that a beach area? I remember having gone there. Is it still in operation, I wonder?

K.F.: Public Landing? I've never heard of it.

L.H.: It's out from Snow Hill. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And they have a boardwalk, small boardwalk there. I remember that. And now they got beaches in Delaware. A lot of beaches in Delaware.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But I don't know all the beaches in Delaware, but I know there's quite a few there.

K.F.: But there was nothing really on this side of the bay then.

L.H.: Other than Ocean City and – what did I just call the name of it? Out from Snow Hill.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I don't know of any other. They have one in Virginia? Near Virginia, close by.

K.F.: I haven't heard of any.

L.H.: I think there was a Virginia Beach, but I think that's on the other side of the bay.

K.F.: Well the big Virginia Beach, I mean that's still there. But thinking of these community kind of beaches.

L.H.: Oh, no. I don't think so.

K.F.: Ocean City probably puts it all out of business as well. That was what folks said in Betterton and Tolchester, once 50 was paved.

L.H.: Is that right? Well, you know, I didn't feel any – well most of the time during our operation, it was, like I said, I didn't have any competition there at all. Most of the time. When did it – let's see, integration was in '70, '76, '75? When did they pass the Equal Right Bill? Was it in '70?

K.F.: It was in the 60's, but I know the shore didn't really start integrating until the 70's.

L.H.: The 70's. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well, see, at that time, like I say, I wasn't having any problem. And the type of, way of operating was a little different than Ocean City anyway. You know, we more or less catered to groups and people that came, made plans to come down. Not just open to the general public. We were open to the general public, but we didn't have to depend on that for business, you know.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: Because we had, we had to know what we were going to do. That's the way we operate.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: But so we could plan for and then have extra for local people that come. So we operate a little different. And it was a day thing, you know.

K.F.: Well what was the worst part about running Henry's Beach?

L.H.: The worst part about running it was getting back and forth from Philadelphia down to Maryland. (Laughter.) But that wasn't no real problem because it was a thing we just had to do, and we just went on and did it. But, boy, sometimes my husband said who's going to drive, you or me? I feel sorry for him. And he's – at first I wasn't, I didn't start driving till '50, 1950. And he was an excellent driver, because he was an automobile mechanic, and he knew about cars, and he knew – so he did most of the driving when I – but he was getting older, and 50 years coming on him. I had to take the wheel most the time. That's why I say, that was my worst problem getting back and forth. Then I had a business. It got to the point I could only operate four days a week when I was, I was operating Monday through Friday.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Through Saturday, rather. So that meant five days a week I had to work. But then I got to the point where I had to take an extra day here, take an extra day there because it was getting to be too much toward the end. You know, I was younger, of course, and it wasn't hard on me, but toward the end, it was getting me down, the transportation. And as far as the public was concerned, it was a pleasure. I enjoy seeing people happy, enjoying themselves. And I worked. My husband did too, because like I say, he kept order and everything. But we had help, like waitresses and waiters, you know. And someone tend to the bar.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: And to help him keep order, see that things were going along okay on the other side, on the grounds. People to clean up, you know, that sort of thing. And it was no problem. I don't ever remember being bored, tired, disgusted or anything about the whole thing. It was just a pleasure. It really was. But like I say, eventually, the trip got to me. And that meant for 50 years almost, up and down the highway. We knew where we were going. (Laughter.) Yeah.

K.F.: That's like, what, a two hour, three-hour drive?

L.H.: Three-hour drive. Either way.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And we would come down on a Friday night, you know, and of course we had someone staying on the property, people staying there taking care of things. And we let people in during the week if they want to come in, local people anytime they want to come. They could get beverages if they wanted, but no food 'til Friday at night, or Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Had three good days.

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

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

K.F.: Then you would drive back on Sunday night?

L.H.: My husband would because he had to be at work Monday, but I would stay over until Tuesday.

K.F.: Oh, really?

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

K.F.: And then how would you get back?

L.H.: I'd drive back.

K.F.: So you would bring two cars down?

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

K.F.: Oh, my goodness.

L.H.: And because see, he had to be at work Monday. And I took off Mondays, Tuesdays. Yeah. Toward the end. But at first, I would go back with him on Sunday. And then that meant that coming back Friday or Saturday, you had a lot to do. And then you have to keep inventory, and see the place is kept up. So I took an extra two days to stay here to do that so when we did come back down, everything would be ready. Just open up business, you know, and do what you have to do.

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

L.H.: But we had like a little system, you know. Had to have a system. But it was no, I can't remember being tired, bored or anything no more than just was that trip was getting to me.

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

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

K.F.: Well should we go take a look at the property?

L.H.: All right. I'll take you. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: All right.

(OFF RECORD.)

(CONTINUING OUTDOORS ☺)

L.H.: -- and it grew up to be timberland because they just cleared it off.

K.F.: So it was all strawberry fields --

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

K.F.: -- when you guys --

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). We bought this property, and we sold it to someone. They built, they put a little house there, a trailer house. And this here we bought. And our property ended on this end over right here like -- excuse me -- ended right here at the mailbox. This driveway here ended our property this way.

K.F.: And what was down on this end? Was it still just more beach and --

L.H.: It was beachfront property similar to ours. And this was, this was -- one time, I don't remember it because it happened before I was born. This was called the Steamboat Wash Road. You know, the people traveled by, they traveled by steamboat at that time.

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

L.H.: And there was no busses or train, I guess. Right? And this was where everybody went to the steamboat wharf here. And they would travel from here to Baltimore, Washington or wherever they had to go by water. This driveway right here. So there's a few homes down here, you know.

K.F.: Now what was the rest of this point when you guys had Henry's Beach? What was out on the rest of this part?

L.H.: Just homes.

K.F.: Homes?

L.H.: Homes.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: People living here. Uh-huh (Affirmative). I could turn around unless you want to go a little further. But anyway, these were all private homes here, and they've been like this for quite a while. But different ones have sold out and moved out, you know. Some people I know, some I don't.

K.F.: Okay. Let's go ahead and turn around, and we'll go back and take a photo.

L.H.: Okay. I'll turn around here. I know these people well.

K.F.: Huh?

L.H.: I know these people. Some I know and some I don't, but I know these people here. They're all good neighbors, they were.

K.F.: Have they been here since Henry's Beach was here?

L.H.: Not ever since. They came since then, since it was here, established. Now you can tell me when you want me to stop.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me hop out here. This looks like a good place, actually, to get a full shot of the whole place.

L.H.: Okay.

K.F.: So let me jump out.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)