

Interview Log

Interviewee: Lucretia Harris

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Virginia Jenkins

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Comments: Cooking noises in background. Making cheese biscuits.

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Let me have you go ahead and say your name.

L.H.: My name is Lucretia Harris. You want my marriage name or the whole name?

K.F.: How about the whole name?

L.H.: My name is Lucretia Holbrook Harris, and I was born and raised in Mount Vernon. And I was raised on the Anderson Farm in Mount Vernon.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And when I was 15, I went to baby sit, and I did that for four years. And the little girl grew up to go to school, and I went and I got a job as - they called you then a maid, upstairs maid. You did the upstairs work. And I stayed there 30 - not 30, 18 years.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I worked there 18 years. And they- and then I, the lady's husband passed, and she didn't need a maid alone, so then I went cooking. So when I learned to, my first experience with cooking was cooking Thanksgiving dinner.

K.F.: For who?

L.H.: For Mrs. George Brown in Princess Anne. I knew nothing about that. (Laughter.)

K.F.: How did the dinner turn out?

L.H.: Huh? Oh, beautiful. I got flying colors. I knew you had to kill your turkey, you had to kill and dress your turkey then yourself. You didn't go buy it from the store.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: And tell me about killing a turkey. You tie it on the clothesline, and took a knife and cut the shoo. Then you had to dress him before he stopped kicking.

K.F.: Why?

L.H.: Because you couldn't get the feathers off. That's what I was told.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: You had to dress him before you get - before he stopped kicking and get the turkeys off. So I thought, well, I - she said do you know, do you know how to do? And I said oh, yes. (Laughter.) And I knew nothing. So I - she had a drawer in her kitchen that had cookbooks in it. And I sit down one evening and went through the cookbooks. And in there was Fannie Farmer's Cookbook. And I went, picked that up and went through it. And it had the whole Thanksgiving dinner that she was going to have. So I followed it, the recipes in there.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: The turkey, the chicken - I mean the turkey, the mashed potatoes, the hominy, the coleslaw - not coleslaw - yeah, coleslaw, and cranberry sauce, hot rolls, the mini ha-ha cake (Laughter.) And that's a white cake with fruit between the layers. And everything right on down to the letter. And, of course, then I had to bake the turkey on a Florence oil burner, oil stove.

K.F.: Oh.

L.H.: Do you know what that is?

K.F.: No, I don't think I do.

L.H.: It's a Kohler stove. It's a stove shaped like that, and it has burners like a gas stove. And on the top, on the side was the oven. And then you had the four, the six burners. And you, and the tank was on the back of the stove, but it looked, it looked, the

top of it looked something like a gas stove. You know how a gas stove is with the flame coming up, that's the way it looked. So that's the way I cooked the dinner.

K.F.: Let me ask you what year were you born?

L.H.: 1908, the 21^d day of June.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: (Laughter.)

K.F.: And have you been cooking all your life then?

L.H.: All my life. I started, I would say I was 17 when I really cooked my first really dinner. From then - of course, I've always loved, I always loved to cook as a child at home. So I worked with Miss Brown for 18 years, and after her husband died and she was alone, she didn't need somebody everyday like I went. So then I went to work different places. And my first job, first cooking job was at the Washington Hotel. And I cooked there a while, and then I went to Johnny's and Sammy's, I cooked there a while, and then I come back to the hotel, and I cooked there till 1967, and I had poor circulation so bad, I couldn't stand long, so I had to stop. But I never stopped cooking. (Laughter.) I did parties and things like that.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: Until when I really stopped, it was 1989, 1987. Then nobody didn't want hominy 'cause it's too old. (Laughter.) That's what I'm saying.

K.F.: So when you were cooking at the Washington Hotel, can you describe the hotel to me? I'm not familiar with it.

L.H.: The Washington Hotel up here?

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

L.H.: Well when I first started cooking there, it was in the early 30's, or middle 30's. And it had a huge wood stove from that wall to here. The top, and then it had a big oven. You could cook at least three turkeys in there, if you wanted to. And then they changed it into oil, they put oil, had oil put in. And the dining room was, it was a huge room, like they had what they call a butler's pantry, and it was as big as these two rooms together. Had a banquet room, and then the bedrooms upstairs. And it has a double stairway. When the women wore hook skirts, the men come down one, and the women the other, and went up and down that. And I was, I wasn't - I remember people wearing the skirts, but I never seen them go up and down those stairs. (Laughter.)

K.F.: And what kind of food did you cook at the hotel?

L.H.: We had roast beef, standing rib roast, and chicken, fried chicken, oysters, and crab cakes, beef stews, and the vegetables would be stewed tomatoes and greens, and string beans, and peas. I don't remember broccoli.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Cabbage, cooked, well steamed. That was the food they had there. And bread puddings, lemon pies, coconut pies, chocolate pie, apple pie, pumpkin pie, sweet potato pie, blueberry pies, and rice - old-fashioned rice pudding. We put the rice in raw, and beat your egg, beat your milk - I mean put your milk and sugar and a little salt in and let your rice cook a while in the oven. Then you take it out and beat it up and put your eggs and milk in, keep it from curdling.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And had light, light bread, sliced bread, and take the bread and toast it a little bit and cut it up and put, pour milk over it and then beat eggs, and sugar and vanilla, and sometimes a little coconut, and pour over that and bake it. And so that was the bread pudding. That was one of the bread puddings. Then another, they'd soak the bread and beat it all up like a cake and pour it in a pan, and then you make a lemon sauce. Milk, eggs and sugar, and make a sauce. And when you served it, you put it on, cut it and put it on a little plate and put a spoon or couple spoonfuls of that on.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: (Laughter.)

K.F.: Some of these dishes aren't really cooked anymore these days, you know.

L.H.: No, no. 'Cause I was, I did creamed chicken one day, the other Sunday, and the girl said I don't know what you mean by creamed chicken. And I said, yeah, creamed chicken. And she said well I go to the store and buy mine - buy cream. All you do is put water in it, I guess. I don't know how you do that. But I said well I make a cream sauce, and I cook my chicken and cut it up like you was going to make chicken salad. And then I take a quart of milk and a quart of the soup from the chicken, and I put a half a pound of butter in a pan and melt it, and a half a pound - cup of flour and stir it around, and then pour the milk and water. But I said be sure you heat your milk and all before you pour it in, because if you don't, it'll be lumpy.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And then you pour that over your chicken, and that's your creamed chicken. You use it in patty shells, toasts, rice or noodles. You can put it over noodles. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Do you have a question?

V.J.: Did you learn to cook from your mother?

L.H.: Huh?

V.J.: Did you learn to cook from your mother?

L.H.: Oh, yes. You want me to say - my mother was a good cook. But home, I guess maybe I should start - it was 12 children in my family. And my mother cooked a lot of bean, bean soup and beef stews. You know, you buy beef - not selling for - not standing rib roast, but you get side beef and cut it up, pork, and use a lot of pork, and she'd have cabbage, and pig hucks, you know what they are?

K.F.: No, I don't think so.

L.H.: They're part of the pig foot.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). They're part of the pig foot. And she'd put that on and cook it. And then when they were done, she'd cook her cabbage and potatoes all in one pot with corn, old-fashioned corn dumplings. (Laughter.) You all don't know what corn dumplings is. But you take cornmeal, and you take about two cups of cornmeal and a couple tablespoonfuls of flour and some salt and pepper, and a little bit of baking powder, not too much, and put in there. And then you make it in little round balls, about as big around as this cup, and you lay that around the pot after the cabbage is in it. And lay that around there and put the lid on and let it cook. That's a dumpling. And she used a lot of chicken, she used chicken and dumplings, but we didn't have chicken like we do now.

K.F.: What do you mean?

L.H.: You raised your own chicken. You didn't go to the store and buy them. And she would go out in the yard once in a while and get a chicken, and make chicken and dumplings. And that, she made the dumplings for the chicken like you would a biscuit dough, like - you know how you make biscuit dough. And roll it thin as you could get it, thin as this paper. And when the chicken was done, you put the dumplings in the liquid until it was cooked, and you put your chicken back in there. You had chicken and dumplings. And we used a lot of fish and oysters was very cheap then. (Laughter.) I won't say crabmeat so much because I don't remember crabmeat, but oysters and fish, and rabbits - didn't cook possum, but they cooked a lot of - not a possum, what do you call it now?

K.F.: Muskrat?

L.H.: Raccoon. Cooked a lot of raccoon. But she always had something in the morning. We had scrapple and eggs, and when we had - they don't have eggs like they do now. They had eggs, but the scrapple and sausage and fried potatoes. Fried apples, they used a lot of fried apples this time of year because everybody then had fruit trees around mostly. And biscuits. Had a lot of cornbread, which was very good, I think.

K.F.: What do you think is the secret to being a good cook?

L.H.: I think that's something you have to want to do. I feel it is. I don't think it's something you just do because it's a job. I think you have to put your whole self in it to be - 'cause I worked, I worked as I grew older, I worked a lot of - I'm going to say high restaurants. And some in there was just doing it for a job. But they didn't, it didn't always turn out right. But I feel you have to want to do it.

K.F.: Okay. Well do you want to show us how to make your famous cheese biscuits?

L.H.: Well your cheese biscuits is a half a pound of cheese, cut up fine; a half a pound of butter; and a scant teaspoon of salt; and a scant teaspoon - a half a teaspoon full of red pepper, which is this, and two cups of flour. That's this. And you mix your cheese and butter together until quite smooth. Then add salt and red pepper, and add flour a little at a time, a little bit at a time. And then you pat down with your back of the spoon, and that's when you cut it, add flour a little at a time until well blended. Make into a small ball, which you'll see me do after a while, and with 4-X sugar, press one-half a pecan into the center. When you get it made, you just like it would be this side, and you just press it down.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

L.H.: (Laughter.)

K.F.: These are fancy cheese biscuits.

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: These are fancy cheese biscuits.

L.H.: Yes, it is. (Laughter.) And then, and then you put a little, you put this in a little 4-X sugar and press one half a pecan in the center, bake on a cookie sheet or a shallow pan about 10 minutes. You can't do much more than 10 minutes. Really, 10 minutes is enough. Do not let biscuit touch. Maybe about - it makes about 90 biscuits, and keep them in a tight -- and especially good with cocktail. (Laughter.)

K.F.: That sounds great. All right, we'll let you begin. I'm just going to move this, Miss Harris, so we can see what you're doing.

L.H.: Okay.

K.F.: Okay?

L.H.: All right.

K.F.: There you go.

V.J.: What kind of cheese do you use?

L.H.: Hack borough. It has to be very sharp. I, sometimes I get the New York sharp cheese. But Hack borough. I lost a fork. And the softer your butter is, the better.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And why are you famous for your cheese biscuits, Miss Harris?

L.H.: (Laughter.) Well, I don't really know. (Laughter.) Let me see. I don't, I guess it's because - I really can't say, but I just, just make them up.

K.F.: So you were saying that after you worked at the Washington Hotel, you worked where?

L.H.: I worked to Johnny's and Sammy's - I worked Johnny's and Sammy's for about four years. You know, you don't know about that though.

K.F.: Well, I don't know. What -

L.H.: It's in Salisbury.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: It's-let me see now, can I tell you where it is? It's just before, leave going here, it's just before you get to the hospital.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: And it's in that - on the left-hand side.

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

L.H.: But it's not there anymore.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: It's a filling station. They tore it down. This has been a long time ago, it was.

K.F.: Now was that just a local restaurant?

L.H.: No. I think it was, it was a little - it was a restaurant, but I think it was a little more than that because it was sort of a fancy place.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: They, they had a lot of-

K.F.: So you started working at a pretty young age.

L.H.: I was 15 years old when I went to baby-sit.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And what were you doing with this money that you were earning?

L.H.: My mother -- (Laughter.) When I was paid, I always was so happy to get home. I was living out Mount Vernon. You all don't know anything about down here, do you?

K.F.: Not too much, no.

L.H.: Well I was, I guess you'd say about five or six miles from town going west from here. And I would go home on like Saturday night or Sunday. Saturday night most the time because she liked to take her home, little girl, at weekends.

K.F.: So that money was helping your family?

L.H.: Yes. Uh-huh (Affirmative). It was. It helped. It did.

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

L.H.: My father was a, he worked on the farm. He was - I guess you'd say a farmer. That's what he did. And my mother, she, she helped at the house during hog killing time.

And they raised turkeys and geese. In the fall of the year, it would be couples of women would go and they'd dress them and put them on, on the freight train, I guess, to go to New York or New Jersey.

V.J.: Were you the oldest child?

L.H.: No. I had three sisters and a brother older than I was. But we all worked.

K.F.: And what kind of jobs were really available to women at that time besides cooking?

L.H.: It was a lot of jobs available like people with homes like this, you would go work in the home. But on the farm where I grew up, we worked on the farm. And, you know, the grass and stuff was in the corn and potatoes, it was a real farm with potatoes, beans, tomatoes and everything that grows, he had it on that farm. And we pulled the grass and hoed around until we all got big enough to go, old enough to go work on our own.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). You're just blending those together then.

L.H.: Yes. You have to, you have to blend this together and be sure it's blended before you, before you bake it. Do you all cook?

K.F.: Yes. (Laughter.) I'm not a biscuit maker, though.

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: I'm not a biscuit maker, though.

L.H.: No, you're not. I never turn my back. I don't care what it is. I always say - I have had some, some experiences that when I started, I didn't know whether I'd do it or not.

K.F.: Can you share some of those with us?

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Can you share some of those experiences with us?

L.H.: Well the one with the turkey was one. (Laughter.) Then I went to, when I went to Johnny's and Sammy's, he said, Lucretia, you know, you do this flour, and he had 40 pounds of flour, and I said I don't think I can do this kind of work. And he said I know you can. So anyway, I had to make 40 pounds of flour - I mean 20 pounds of flour in the morning for lunch. And then 20 pounds for night. You didn't make it all one time. And I was lucky. He had a mixer, and I could do part of it by the mixer. But it turned out all right.

K.F.: So what did you have to do to the flour?

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: What did you have to do to the -

L.H.: I made - oh, I'm sorry, I made rolls.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: (Laughter.) I made rolls. Now you had to, you make them up and dump them in a large pan like this and they rise. Then you have to take muffin tins, 10, 15 muffin tins, and pull them up and pinch them off and put them in those muffin tins. And then one time, I was visiting down Atlantic City, and the girl said she was sick, and she said oh, she was crying, going on, and she was salad girl. And I said I'll go in your place. And when I went in that morning, you had to be there at 8:00, 'cause you went to work at 9, but you eat your breakfast first. So anyhow, I went in, and it was a little set up there in the kitchen, and the second, the chef, the second cook, he left. He was leaving. And Mr. Darmer (phonetic) said oh, Lucretia, you know, you have to take his place. And I said I

don't know anything about cooking. I don't know one meat from another. He said anyway, you have to take his place. And the chef said I'll help you. And I go - I had to go on, and I went on 'cause I was supposed to save the job for the girl that was sick. And I went on and worked that day. And when the day was up, he said don't go home, my wife needs you. And he said oh, you know, you make a good liar. But I knew how to cook, but I didn't want the job. I wanted to be pastry - I mean a salad girl like she was going to be. But I stayed there that week and worked until she got better to go back because I was coming on back Princess Anne anyway. Can you see it? You have to be careful with red pepper because it'll be too hot and you can't eat it. (Laughter.) Go around there so you can see.

K.F.: Who else worked in restaurants with you?

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Who else worked in the restaurants with you?

L.H.: It was the chef, the kitchen help, which was two men, two boys, and the salad girl, and the two, the two boys that - 'cause you, when you went to your table to work or stove, you didn't have time to go get your vegetables and things. So they had kitchen help. And the salad girl and the chef, the chef, the second cook and the salad girl and the pastry girl, woman, which was me, that was four, and the two boys were six, and the man that cleaned the kitchen. 'Cause you was always filling something. (Laughter.) But it was like six, it was like eight or nine most all the time.

K.F.: And was everybody African American who worked in the kitchen?

L.H.: No. Not all the time.

K.F.: No?

L.H.: Huh-uh (negative). No, we were mixed. Now that's it now. Now then I'll get my flour. And oh, by the way, when you're making this, you don't sift your flour.

K.F.: No?

L.H.: You just take it from the bag.

K.F.: Why not?

L.H.: I don't know, but that's what (Laughter) - I think it's because you'll make it too fine.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: See when you sift it, that's too fine.

K.F.: So as the pastry chef, what other kinds of things would you have to make besides biscuits and -

L.H.: Biscuits - I made muffins - rolls, muffins, pies, cakes, puddings, custards and - that's it. Rolls, muffins, pies, all kind of pies. Lemon, coconut, chocolate, blueberry, apple and sweet potato. And let me see, I said coconut, didn't I?

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

L.H.: Coconut. And then we made an applesauce pie that was made of applesauce. You just make a crust and bake it, and then put the applesauce in it. And I - oh, I forgot one thing. Buns, sticky buns. You take light - dough, ice cake, you make with ice cake, and you roll it out very thin and fill it with brown sugar and pecans and cinnamon, and then roll it back up like a jelly roll, and cut it off in blocks about that, and put them in a pan. And that's, you know what sticky buns is. Well that's the way you make that.

V.J.: What was your most popular dessert?

L.H.: I don't know. I guess if I had to say, it would be make lemon pie. I loved to make a lemon pie. And the high meringue like that. But I just love to cook anyway. I don't care what it is.

K.F.: What were the restaurants like back in the 30's and the 40's?

L.H.: It was very nice. The 30's and 40's. Johnny's and Sammy's, that was a marvelous restaurant. They had a cocktail bar and all. It was very nice. And a lot of people, especially lunchtime. And Johnny's and Sammy's when I was there, they had - I think it was 19 men that come out every day for lunch, and they were always early. Always before - sometimes before 12. It don't look like it would be as many people, but it was quite - in Princess Anne at the hotel.

K.F.: You must've seen a lot of changes in equipment in the kitchen.

L.H.: Yes, because as I say, when I first started cooking, everything you did, you had to do by hand. Now potatoes, they bring potatoes and things in by bushel or half a bushel, and they were brought in in a basket, and string beans, and you peeled them. You didn't, wasn't no putting them in the thing. You peeled them. (Laughter.) And the string beans, you had to, you had to cut the ends off, you know. And greens, you had - somebody had to get in the corner and pick the greens and cut the stems off and all of that. But you had to be ready by 12, 11:30, 12:00.

V.J.: What time did you start working in the morning?

L.H.: Six, 5:30, 6:00. I say now, I - when I was started working at the hotel, I had a right good distance to walk. Took me 20 minutes to a half an hour.

K.F.: And what time would you get off at night?

L.H.: When I first started, I think it was like 7 or 8:00. But as the time went on, I worked from 6 to 4. But when I first started to work, it was like 8:00 when you got off I say to myself sometimes now how did you do it?

K.F.: Well how did you do it?

L.H.: (Laughter.) That's what I ask myself. I say sometimes, I say, I say, and then sometimes I sit down and I say when I, when I was growing up as a child, I say how did my mother find food enough for 14 people? And you know, they had breakfast, lunch and dinner. Now dinner was in the middle of the day. And what we call lunch now was like - that's what they had at night. It was sort of maybe applesauce and bread and jelly and stuff like that. But in the middle of the day, they had a full course dinner. But I sit down right now and ask myself how did I get, I was - I lived on Deal's Island Road, this road that comes here.

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

L.H.: The first settlement after you turn to come this way, that's where I lived, a little bit off the main road. And I walked to - you know where the hotel is in town?

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

L.H.: Well I walked from there to the hotel. And not only me, most everybody that worked in town, we had to walk that distance.

K.F.: And how did you manage doing this when you had a family?

L.H.: I didn't have a family. I was only married. I raised a child, one child. But I didn't, I didn't have children, I never had children. Never was lucky enough to be a mother, and I love children. But I raised this - his mother died when he was - at child's birth. And I took him, and he was 58 years old when he died.

K.F.: So this is really turning into a dough.

L.H.: Yeah. It'll be a dough. I'll show it to you. When I get it all together, I'll put it out on this paper and show you what it looks like. Then I'll show you how I pinch it off.

K.F.: Okay. And can I peek at the cookbook that you're using?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, you can look at the book. I'm through with that. That's from the - it fell apart, and I'm waiting for my niece to come to put it together for me. You can look at it. Take a look.

K.F.: Okay. We're using *What is Cooking on Party Line*, and this is Lucretia Harris's recipe for cheese biscuits.

L.H.: Yeah. I think I got some more stuff in there.

K.F.: This has been well used.

L.H.: This - these that are not together, that's the index of it, and I dropped it and it come apart. (Laughter.) Got a lot of people in there that -

V.J.: Is this a church cookbook?

L.H.: Huh-uh (negative). It's the - what's the name, it's from Salisbury.

K.F.: Looks like a county.

L.H.: Is it Party Line?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Oh, it's a radio station, the sponsor.

L.H.: It's not Party Line. I forget the name of it now. But I have - I have, it's - I have a cookbook, the church's, with recipes in there.

V.J.: How did you get your recipes in this book?

L.H.: They send out - you send them in like that.

K.F.: What else are you -

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

L.H.: I love to make pies, and I love to make cakes.

V.J.: What kind of cake do you make?

L.H.: I love to make a pound cake, an old-fashioned pound cake. And sometimes, it's what they call a mini ha-ha cake. You make, it's like a pound cake, but then you put the fruit in it. It's baked in layers, and you put the fruit between it.

K.F.: I've heard of that cake before.

V.J.: What kind of fruit, raisins or do you use fresh fruit?

L.H.: You take raisins, and citrines, and candied orange rinds and all that and put it together, and you put that in a, like a little filling of it, and then put it between the layers. You take brown sugar and stuff and put, make a sauce, and then put the fruit in it and put it between the layers.

K.F.: Can I see it?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Wash my hands now.

K.F.: Okay, well let's go over there, and she's just putting them into the oven. We're going to move to the other side of the room so that you can get to the oven.

L.H.: Okay. (Laughter.) Get my table straight. Clean this stuff up. Then I'll get down here while this is over.

K.F.: So these are really small little biscuits.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). They're very small. Can't put them very close together either.

V.J.: How many biscuits does this recipe make?

L.H.: Ninety.

K.F.: Wow. (Laughter.) I was thinking rolled out flat, you know, biscuits.

L.H.: I better not put them too close, 'cause I don't want that - they're not supposed to touch.

K.F.: What happens if they touch?

L.H.: (Laughter.)

K.F.: Now you said you did some catering later on?

L.H.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative). I've done a lot of, most everything you do in food line, cooking.

K.F.: Was that your own catering business, or did you work for someone?

L.H.: Huh-uh (negative). No. Somebody just wanted a dinner, and I did it like that. I didn't do it for like real catering, but people would - it was catering, but -

K.F.: So if somebody was having a party, they might ask you to come and cook the meal?

L.H.: It was a lot of people too.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Eighty, 90 and 100.

K.F.: Oh, my goodness.

L.H.: So that would have to be a little bit of catering. I did it all. And they had bartenders to come in, but I did all the cooking.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And how would people know to call you up and ask you to come and cook?

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: How would people know to call you up and ask you to come cook for them?

L.H.: Well if I was - this, they had a party here. If you were here and I was having a party, that's when - when you went home and you want somebody to cook your dinner, you would know who to call. (Laughter.) I didn't advertise.

V.J.: How did you set you charges?

L.H.: Huh?

V.J.: How did you know what to charge people?

L.H.: How did I know what to charge? Oh, you know what to charge when it comes, when it comes to cooking, it's easy to do. I worked with caterers. I have worked with real caterers in Cambridge and Salisbury, so I knew.

K.F.: I think the oven's all ready for you.

L.H.: I better take this.

K.F.: Yeah, just put it on the floor there. That's fine.

L.H.: Now then, we'll see what biscuits in 10 minutes.

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: All right, so this photo -

L.H.: That is Governor Tawes and his wife.

K.F.: And his wife.

L.H.: And that's from the - what is it, let me see now. I can't - yeah, this.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: You can see what you -

K.F.: It's from an article, "Somerset's Best, Lucretia Harris, 74, loves to cook, and people love to eat her meals."

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

K.F.: And this is Governor Tawes and his wife. And let me see what they're eating here. Well, biscuits and sticky buns, it looks like.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, that's sticky buns.

K.F.: Oh, and a lovely photo of Lucretia with her famous sticky buns. Here we go.

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

K.F.: Those are lovely photos.

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: These are great photographs.

L.H.: (Laughter.)

K.F.: So you worked at the Ambassador Hotel in Atlantic City for two years, and it says that you never went to the beach, you just went to the boardwalk.

L.H.: That's right, because I love water, but not to get in it. (Laughter.) I just want enough to wet myself. (Laughter.) No, no.

K.F.: Just get your feet wet. That's it.

L.H.: That's right.

K.F.: And so what are these other articles here?

L.H.: They're just -this is food, I think that's, this is -one of them is from the Soybean Association I used to cook for - oysters, that's for them, I think. I think that's one of them, I think that's what it is.

K.F.: Now what is this photograph here of you as a young woman?

L.H.: That is where I worked as a maid.

K.F.: Okay. And that was Judge Warren Dewars' (phonetic) farm.

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That's right here in Princess Anne. Judge Dewars' grandson.

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

L.H.: And this is, on this side, I think - I think it's the same thing. I was looking for one that I had -

VI: They smell wonderful.

K.F.: They do smell good.

L.H.: I hope they're as good as they smell. (Laughter.)

K.F.: We might have to borrow some of these to copy them.

L.H.: Huh?

K.F.: We might want to make copies of -

L.H.: Help yourself.

K.F.: -- some of these.

L.H.: Whatever.

K.F.: So you got a plaque as the world's greatest oyster flyer.

L.H.: That's what they say. (Laughter.) We had, what, 80, 90, 100, 150 men, something like that. I think they called it the Soybean Association.

K.F.: Yeah, it says it was the Soybean Growers.

L.H.: And every year, I would go down there and do the oysters. And really, I went to do the oysters, but really, I did more. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Like what else?

L.H.: I cooked ham and the macaroni cheese - macaroni salad, not macaroni and cheese, macaroni salad. But I - you know, timing is everything of the cooking.

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

L.H.: You cook it, you have to - now is anybody going to try these?

K.F.: Well we'd love to. (Laughter.)

L.H.: Well help yourself.

K.F.: They look like little cookies.

L.H.: You want to try one?

K.F.: All right.

L.H.: Been maybe 10 years since I've made any.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: It's been a good, good long time.

V.J.: Delicious.

K.F.: Fabulous. Very heartwarming, you know? They're just a nice fill you up and make you feel good.

L.H.: That's what they're for, cocktail party. You put more red pepper in them.

K.F.: Yeah. Okay. Those are good. Those are excellent. So you've cooked for some very famous people. The governor.

L.H.: Yeah. You know, I have to tell a story. When I was 19, 20, my father told me I had to vote, and I said oh, no. Huh-uh (negative). 'Cause I don't believe in women voting, they're giving they're rights away. And he said oh, yeah, you're going to vote. By the time I was 21, you have to - he says you have to go register, which would've been - by the time I was 21, he had passed. So the closer it got to Election Day, I had already registered. I said now if I don't vote, what is he going to do, 'cause he's not here, he can't do nothing about it. Then I was afraid to not vote. (Laughter.) And I went on and voted. And Governor Tawes was, he was running for Governor of Maryland. So I said, when I went to vote, I said oh, Lord, I hope I live long enough to tell him that I really didn't believe, I really don't believe in women voting. That give me the chance to tell him. I met him at a party, and I said I have - I told Miss Dora, I said I just got to tell him that I didn't, that I didn't, really didn't believe in voting, but I had to vote, and I had to vote for him because that's what my father had said. But my father was dead. So I always laugh at that. And I said oh, I'm telling you, every day, the closer it got to election, the more I said no, I just can't do it 'cause I definitely don't believe in it. Then I was afraid not to 'cause I was afraid I'd wake up and my father would be standing there, and the election would be over. (Laughter.)

K.F.: And have you voted every time ever since?

L.H.: Yeah, ever since. Yeah, I go ahead and vote. But, honey, I was really against women voting at that time.

K.F.: Why?

L.H.: I think that you - I still feel that it's a man's place to vote, not a woman. But I'm sort of, I wouldn't go without voting now, you understand, now. But I still think it was, at that time, and I still don't, I still deeply think - I just still feel a little different about it. But I wouldn't, I wouldn't go along, because you know, my father was very, he - what he always said was come out all right. So I voted. But I don't know what I'd done if he'd

have been living. I have to say that. I don't know whether I would've voted or not, because I figured I was 21 and I could do as I pleased. I'd have my own say, you know.

K.F.: How did you meet your husband?

L.H.: Well I worked in homes, and he worked in yards and places around, and we had things we done entertainment, like play cards. I used to, was a group of us that worked in homes, and we were off, we'd go play pinochle and wis, and games like that. And I met him playing cards. And I would always go, you know, sometime, I say - you walk then where you went, and in going, he was there, and I said well I'm going home 'cause it's 10:00, and I said I'm going to walk on home. And he said wait, I'll walk with you. And we walked good distance, it was like the distance - I guess far near the end of the lane from where I was to where I lived. And that's how I met him. He asked me to go to the movies. (Laughter.) We both liked westerns - all those westerns like that. And he said it's a good movie on, and it was a series. It run about a month and a half or a month, four weeks before it ended. And we followed so we could see who won the fight. (Laughter.)

Are you married?

K.F.: Yes, I am. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.H.: Well I was married about 40 years, I guess, but my husband died.

K.F.: Yeah?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). He went blind He was blind for about 12 years, and I guess he had aneurisms of the brain.

K.F.: Oh, wow, okay. Do you want to sit here, Miss Harris?

L.H.: No. No, I can't sit down till these are -- (Laughter.) This is not like a pot, you know.

K.F.: Right.

L.H.: You have to - Miss Sherry, these are all done.

SPEAKER They are?

L.H.: And I can't get anybody to taste them.

SPEAKER: What? What, what, what? Are you spoofing me?

L.H.: No, I'm not.

SPEAKER: Don't you put these in? What are those?

L.H.: Yes, I'm waiting for those.

SPEAKER: Oh, there are more in there. Wonderful. Seriously, did you try one?

K.F.: Yes, we did.

SPEAKER: What did you think?

V.J.: They're wonderful.

K.F.: We're trying not to make pigs of ourselves.

SPEAKER: We need this. This is part of it, don't you think?

L.H.: You know, I tell you, it's two things in life that I love. I love to do fancy table linens, I love to iron fancy table linens, and cook. When you say cooking, and do linens, and I know I - now I'm going to say myself, I know I can do a tablecloth. I don't care how it is. But I won't say that about cooking. I'll let somebody else say that.

V.J.: You're a great cook.

K.F.: What do you love about ironing fancy table linens?

L.H.: Huh? When you finish, you've got such a beautiful sight to see, all those things pressed. You know, when I started, you did with a washboard like this. And then you

had irons on top the stove. You didn't have electric. And you put starch in them. Made your starch, took starch. I don't even think they have that, they had that in your day. Did they?

K.F.: No. Ours comes in a spray can.

L.H.: You go to the store and buy a big box of, big square box about this tall, and it was blue and white, and it had hard lumps in it, looked like flour, but it was starch. And you took and dissolve it in water, boiling water, and you made a thick, like a paste, and put - and when it was done, when you cooked it a little while, you took out and thin it down with water and put your - and then you dip your table clothes or dresses or whatever needed starch, you dipped it in that liquid and then hung it on the line.

K.F.: And then ironed it once it was dry?

L.H.: When it got dry, you bring it in and sprinkle it with water, and put it in a towel or old sheet or something and let it stand a while, and then you'd iron it. That would dampen it a little bit. And then you'd go ahead and iron it. And it was just as smooth as that paper. See how easy you all have it? Go to the store and buy everything right out the, right out the box?

K.F.: I agree, I agree.

L.H.: And you go - if you wanted to cook dinner, and you wanted greens, greens or something, you had to go to the field and get it and shell them, and wash them and put them on and cook them. If you wanted a chicken, you had to go out to the hen house, or yard and catch it and kill it, and then take his intestines out, wash him good, put him on and cook him. You didn't go to a store and buy him already cooked and already dressed and washed. First, you had to go catch it.

K.F.: And what's the best way to catch a chicken?

L.H.: When he goes up at night to rest, he'll go somewhere in a tree or house or somewhere to rest. You go get him then and put him in. Otherwise, you'd have to - some people used to have a little string, and they'd throw it around his leg or neck, or let him walk on it like that and catch it. But the best way is when you went - they had hen houses. You know what they are. And he'd go in that hen house. You'd go get whatever you wanted out of there and put him - most the people would, if they were going to have chicken tomorrow, today is what, Thursday. If they were going to have chicken for Saturday or something, they'd dress and then they'd put in - catch him and put him up so he wouldn't eat the grass, too much of the grass, so he wouldn't taste like it.

K.F.: Oh.

L.H.: Now you all, I don't believe you all like my rolls. You don't eat them.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Trying not to get in the camera, but that's okay.

L.H.: You're not eating them.

K.F.: Turn the camera off. (Laughter.) These are so good. I think I might have to copy the recipe. (Laughter.)

L.H.: You'd like to have it?

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

L.H.: Get it. It's in the book.

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

L.H.: You can get it. You can have it.

K.F.: We might have to write that down. These are so good.

L.H.: Got to be sure of one thing, that you don't sift your flour. And if you don't want to work on it as much as I do, you take it - if you want to make them today, you could take your butter out tonight when you went to bed.

K.F.: And let it soften up.

L.H.: Let it get room temperature. And it won't be, it would be much easier to work with. But it doesn't bother me either way, but that is a way you can do it.

K.F.: And what page are these on?

L.H.: Huh? That would be the easiest way for you. You wouldn't have to work so hard. And don't use no more than two cups of flour.

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: Use my little stool when I'm cooking. You know when I was working to Johnny and Sammy, they had stools, and I used to sit on, when I was working to the table and going to be there a length of time, I'd pull a stool up and sit down on it.

K.F.: Yeah?

L.H.: Of course, we all did. All, 'cause it was nine of us in the kitchen, and all of us, the women would have a stool or pull a stool up to sit on if they were going to be to the table any length of time.

K.F.: I mean that's really a job where you're on your feet all day long. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.H.: And I go back and look, and I say all those women, I think I'm the only one living.

K.F.: Really?

L.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I know I am. I know I'm the only one, out of the five, I'm the only.

K.F.: You must've made some good friends working in some of these kitchens.

L.H.: Oh, you do.

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

L.H.: Well we were friends and sisters. We were really friends 'cause in that kitchen, we helped each other. It wasn't that I was the pastry cook and I didn't do anything else. I got my pies and things in line, and as I said, the vegetable person was working with vegetables. We went and helped him, or we went and helped the chef. We would, if he was making soup, and you would put so much at a time, and then we took care of that. And even the waitresses that were in the dining room, when they come out, and I had, I had an oven like from there to the end of that window to bake in. And if my rolls was in that oven and they come out to the table to get the applesauce and fruit cocktail and cranberry sauce and stuff like that, they would take the rolls out - they didn't take them out the pan, they took the pans out the stove if the rolls were done. That's the way we worked. And as long as any of them lived, then we seen each other, we always had time to have a cup of coffee together. 'Cause Johnny and Sammy, he - Johnny got sick and they moved to Florida. And, of course, we had to stop work there then. They didn't have the restaurant. And everybody went and got jobs, but we wasn't at the same place, we were different around. Some worked in Salisbury, and some worked - some went to Campbell's Soup to work. I didn't 'cause I couldn't stand the rumbling noise. (Laughter.) It's a roaring, boom, boom, boom, boom all day.

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

L.H.: And I really wanted to cook. And I don't think it's any of them, even the four, three or four men that work there, they're gone. I don't think it's anybody left but me.

K.F.: Wow. And in the last two days, you're the second person to mention Johnny and Sammy's to me. And I have heard of that, but down on Virginia's Eastern Shore there was a Johnny and Sammy's down there.

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

K.F.: So it must've been a very well-known restaurant out here.

L.H.: It was. It was a very good restaurant, very, very, very, it was very nice. Very. I'm saying, you know, to go there, it just wasn't an everyday restaurant, you know where everybody went in. People went in there, businessmen, women, clubs and things like that. And people would go to lunch. You know, sometimes you like you sometimes say let's go to lunch. You want to go somewhere where it's real nice. And that's the way it was. It was really very nice.

K.F.: Which were the better kitchens to work in, like the hotel kitchens or a real restaurant?

L.H.: I don't, I wouldn't want - I didn't go to Johnny and Sammy's as a restaurant, but I wouldn't want to work in a, just a restaurant.

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

L.H.: I want to work where they - I would work if I had, didn't have a job, I would like something like a hotel or first class restaurant where they do things in a big way.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: Was it more of a challenge to work at those kinds of restaurants?

L.H.: I guess it is.

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

L.H.: You have to go to bed thinking what you - how you're going to be ready the next day. 'Cause see, you have to be ready because businessmen and all that start lunch around 11:00, and some of the women would come at 10:30. (Laughter.) You know how we are. (Laughter.) Some of them would come at 10:30. I laughed 'cause it was two women used to come in around 10:30, and they wanted coconut pie. Now coconut pie is warm, you know, but that's the way they liked it. They didn't want it when it was cold. They liked it -

K.F.: They wanted it right out of the oven.

L.H.: I think they would eat it right out of the oven, but I was too fast for them because when I left at night, all I had to do the next day was come back and make the filling because the crust was all made and ready to put the filling in. So I was always ready for them. You know you have a lot of, in working and restaurants, and they have a chef, two chefs and a pastry cook, and the vegetable person, and the person cleaning the kitchen, you have a lot of leisure time. So when I did, I set myself up today for tomorrow. I did all my pie crusts, they had pie plates, and I would make my pie crusts and put paper between them. And they had, I had a freezer, refrigerator and a freezer that was mine that I used for what I worked with, and I would put my piecrusts and stuff in there, and then do it like that. So when I went in in the morning, I didn't have to make pie crusts. It was already made. (Laughter.) All I had to do was go ahead and make the filling.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Did you have a question?

V.J.: Did you belong to a church?

L.H.: Huh?

V.J.: Did you - were you an active church member?

L.H.: Yes. Oh, yes. All my life. (Laughter.) Oh, yeah. You can't, you have to go to church. I think you go to church Sunday, and then you feel so good all the week.

(Laughter.)

V.J.: Did you cook for the church?

L.H.: Yeah, I cooked for the church. I cooked for the Episcopal, a lot for the Episcopal Church in Princess Anne. And I'm a Methodist, Methopolitan, on Broad Street as you come in town.

V.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.H.: And I cook. I got to cook some chicken tonight for a funeral for our church. The funeral will be tomorrow at 10:00. I'm going to do some chicken later on tonight. A lot of times if I'm going to do something like rolls and chicken and stuff like that, I do it after 9:00 at night. And then it's - don't have too long. `Cause I don't, if I'm, if I'm not doing anything, I don't go to bed till 12:00.

K.F.: Really? How do you stay up that late?

L.H.: I don't know.

K.F.: I can't.

L.H.: I crochet an awful lot.

K.F.: Oh, you do?

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

K.F.: Okay.

L.H.: I do a lot of crocheting. And sometimes, I'm doing an afghan or doing some doilies or something, and I sit down, but I'm not a person that likes to go to bed. I - when I go to bed, I go to sleep. But I'm awake by half past four or five. I wake up around that time.

K.F.: Now how did you learn how to crochet?

L.H.: When I was 12, I guess, I'll say 13, I went to a stable of ladies, she had a store. And she - there were two or three little children. They weren't too little children, but they were too small to leave by themselves. And I went and stayed from Monday to Friday. And on Thursday night, they had a - was a lady, ladies' club. And then that - every Thursday night when they would be in there, they were crocheting. And where I sat in the den, and they were in the living room, but I was over in the den, and then I could see them. And I thought oh, Lord, I have to learn that. And the only thing I could see that I really wanted to do was with a crochet needle. And in hearing them talk, they said chain, and needle, and I said well I'm going to learn to do that. So I got a needle and a spool of cotton. And the spool of cotton had 400 yards on it. Great big ball of cotton. And I couldn't do nothing but chain, and I chained that whole spool of cotton, great big pile of it. (Laughter.) And then, and I was sitting there trying to figure out what I could do with it or how I could make what they were making. And Miss Mary came in and she said what are you doing? And I said I'm going to learn to crochet. She said why didn't you say it? Why didn't you tell me? I said well I didn't want to bother you, or something like that, and she said well, all right, next week when we meet, we will show you. Well it was about 20 of those women. And then next night after the business meeting was over, she

said come on and come in, we're going to teach you to crochet. And I went in and sit down, and I said all of those women around that room had to give me a little instruction how to use a needle, how to hold a needle, and I said okay. Well I finally made it where I could make a square, and I said okay. So one of the ladies said can you read? And I said oh, yes, of course I can read. She said well buy a beginner's book, and it'll tell you what to do. And that's what I did. The first piece of crocheting was a pineapple chair back, a little pineapple cover?

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

L.H.: That was the first piece, first crochet piece I made.

K.F.: Wow.

L.H.: From that, I went and got the book, and with their help, and I have never stopped. I crochet all the time. I used to make the ruffle doilies. Remember the ruffle doilies?

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

L.H.: I made hundreds of those, I know. I've got, I've got an afghan now that I think is the prettiest piece of crocheting I ever made. And about four years ago, I was in the hospital. I had a little touch of pneumonia. And the lady, she said - the nurse said, Lucretia, do you still crochet? And I said yes, I -
(END OF INTERVIEW.)