

Interview Log

Interviewee: Wade H. Murphy, Jr.

Tape #: OH173

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault

of Tapes: 1

Date: June 5, 2001

of Sides: 2

Location: Tilghman Island, MD

Topic: Skipjack Project

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: Good speaker, clear tape. Recorded outdoors. Birds in background.

BEGIN SIDE A

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

W.M.: I'm Captain Wade H. Murphy, Jr., Tilghman Island.

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

W.M.: I was born on Tilghman Island, 1941. An old doctor on Tilghman Island came here after the Second World War, and after the - I'm sorry, the First World War, after the First World War, and he brought every kid into the world on Tilghman Island until the 1950's.

K.F.: Now I guess he was the only doctor -

W.M.: The only doctor we had on Tilghman, yes. And he was good man. He'd make house calls, not like today. He was a good doctor.

K.F.: Now were you born at home?

W.M.: At home, yes. They didn't go to hospitals here until after the 50's. When Dr. Reeser left, that's when they started taking them to the hospital.

K.F.: Okay, wow. And what did your parents do for jobs?

W.M.: What's that now?

K.F.: What did your parents do for jobs?

W.M.: My dad was a waterman starting in 1913. When he was 13 years old, he started dredging. And my mother was just, well she's not just, she was a mother and a housewife. And that was a lot of work when she had seven children to take care of.

K.F.: Seven kids. Where were you -

W.M.: I was in the middle. I have three older and three younger than me. And I got three brothers older, three - no, no, no, no. I got one brother and two sisters older; two brothers and one sister younger. And my mother passed away 1971. My dad lived to be 87 and died in 1987.

K.F.: Wow. Okay. And so your family's really seen a good part of the water business then in the 20th century.

W.M.: Right. I'm the third generation. My grandfather come here in the 1860's and married my grandmother. So I'm the third generation Murphy. On my grandmother's side, it goes back more than that, six, seven generations on Tilghman.

K.F.: And how did you, or when did you first start coming on board, I guess, with your dad?

W.M.: I used to go on board on Saturdays when I was 12, 13, 14 years old. But then I started working full time when I was 16 years old in 1957. I was 16 years old, and started dredging full time, working on the water full time, crabbing, dredging, and anything else, fishing, that you could do to make a living.

K.F.: Where did you start on board? What job did you have?

W.M.: Oh, I was a deckhand for seven years, the first seven years with my dad, I was deckhand, and then I bought my first skipjack in 1964, kept it for 20 years, and I sold it and bought this boat, the Rebecca Ruark.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And the Sigsbee was the first one.

W.M.: The Sigsbee was my first boat from '64 until '84.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Let's talk about when you were a deckhand those early years. What did you learn from your dad?

W.M.: Well when you're a deckhand, you learn how to cull oysters, and reef the sails, and you don't really learn much about sailing the boats yourself. You're too busy working oysters. You don't really learn how to sail. You pick that up yourself as you go along, experience. Now when I first got my boat, before I bought the boat, I thought I knew everything. And when I got the boat, I found I didn't know anything about sailing, and you had to learn as you go along. It wasn't something that you had a chance to do while you were dredging oysters 'cause you were solid busy either culling oysters, and if you weren't culling oysters, it's 'cause it was no wind. And if it was no wind, you couldn't learn how to sail anyway. So you didn't get a chance to learn much as a, you know, to learn how to sail the boat as long as you were doing the deckhand work.

K.F.: So how did you learn then? I mean did your father come with you a couple of times on the Sigsbee, or -

W.M.: No. I went by myself. And at this point in time, in 1964, we didn't have radios like we have today, so we couldn't talk back and forth. He would tell me, he would see me out, we would be working. Of course, I would see the other ones, and if they were getting ready to reef the sail, the wind breezed up, I knew I had to do the same thing, and I did what they did, not knowing for sure why they did it until the next, that night. Ten hours later he would say remember this morning? I'd say - well, if we'd have had radios, it would've been much simpler for him to talk to me while we were doing this, but we didn't have. So it's just a matter of really common sense when you're dredging oysters under sail. You got to just figure the wind, and the tide, and work it to your advantage. So it's really a lot of common sense involved.

K.F.: So what was the first day like when you took the Sigsbee out and you didn't have all that much experience?

W.M.: It was, it was - excuse me, got allergies. It was kind of nerve-wracking like, really, I don't know. It was like I didn't know if I was going to be able to do it or not, and it was like a challenge. And after the first day, then it was no problem, you just went on. But it was a little, I was a little reluctant to take over at first, but I had to do it because I bought the boat. So I took a while, but the first day was the worst for my nerves.

K.F.: Do you remember what the weather was like that first day?

W.M.: No. It seemed to me - no, I didn't have any problem with wind, so it must not've been much wind. I know we didn't have a lot of, I know we didn't have too much wind because that's what I was worried about at first, what I was going to do. Was I going to be able to reef it. You also got to depend on your crew. And when you first start, you don't have a good crew. You got to build up a name that you can catch oysters to be able to get men to go with you. So you start off with not a very good crew.

K.F.: Well let me ask you then about this first crew that you had. How did you find them?

W.M.: They just - I don't really remember except that at the first part of the season, it used to be that we could do good dredging oysters. And you had crew, I've had crew after the first year, I've had crew come to me in September, October to ask for a job in November. And you could, you know the general character of these people, who's dependable, who's good, who's not good, and you could pick out the best of what comes. But after the disease killed the oysters in 1985, '86, they got so scarce that you can't get a

good crew anymore. They don't make the money, so you don't get a good crew. They do something else, and now you get a crew that, you get a crew now that can't do anything else, and they try to dredge or try to be a crew, but you don't get a decent crew like you used to.

K.F.: Well what would make a decent crew? Having been, you know, working on the middle deck and culled and done that job, for you as a captain then with that background, what makes a good crew?

W.M.: Well you've got to learn how to cull oysters, sort the good ones from the, big ones from the small ones. You've got to be able to reef the - know how to reef the sail. It just takes time to get the experience. I used to pride myself on having a good crew. When you're out there dredging, you have to go a certain speed to harvest oysters. If you go too fast, you go over top of them. If you go too slow, you dig in the bottom, so you got to go right speed. And under sail, it's hard to get the right speed unless you have the right amount of sail. So we have four sets of reef points in the sail. So when the wind picks up a little bit, if you start going too fast, you got to put a single reef in. And then if you -- breeze is up a little more, you might put the second reef in to shorten the sail. Then you may have to let a little bit more line out because you regulate the harvest, the dredging, the digging of the dredge by how much line you let out on your dredge cables. And if you go a little bit too fast, you may be able to let a little bit more line out to compensate. If you go a little bit too slow, you may take a little bit more line up, but it's hard to get it perfect, and especially with the wind breezing up and falling out, breezing up. Sometimes I've reefed the sail 100 times in a day, and if you get things right, if you get a crew, you teach them how to reef, it's simple, easy to reef. I can reef this sail with four good men in 30 seconds. I can reef it. We have like 20, 25 reef points to tie. If every man gets in the right spot, when you get ready to reef and they start reefing, when the boat starts coming up into the wind, you can reef it in 30 seconds. If you don't take advantage of the wind, you can be five minutes and it won't be reefed right. So something, I've been out there before with crews that didn't know how to reef, and it would just drive you crazy trying to teach them. And then other times, after you teach them how to reef, you look at the other boats, and sometimes they would be 5 or 10 minutes reefing the sail. It's important to get the thing done, get the sail down and reef because the wind is too heavy. That's why you're reefing to start with. Plus, you're back to work immediately; you're right back on the oyster bed working. And it's, it's just common sense when it comes to reefing. You can do it, like I say, 30, 40 seconds. Or you can take 5 or 10 minutes.

K.F.: Now where do the guys have to stand here on the boat to reef right?

W.M.: For instance, you take - I'll tell the guys before we start, after they know the fundamentals, I'll say okay, one of you get up here -

K.F.: Near the mast.

W.M.: -- to the, to the halyards.

K.F.: Okay.

W.M.: And when I get ready to come around, when I get ready to come around, as she's coming around, I'll have another man back aft. I've got one man to the halyards, one man back aft pulling the sheet. When the boat gets almost up into the wind, you lower it down. It's an outhaul on the back end. Somebody grabs, you got a man back there that pulls the sheet. He ties the sheet, he grabs the outhaul. The fellow up on the mast, up on

the halyards, lowers it down. The biggest factor in reefing is, and most people neglect to do this, let the sail down low enough. In other words, if you want to put a first reef in, lower it down to the second reef. Lower it down lower than you need it. Then you're not fighting the wind. You lower it down; you pull the back end out with the outhaul. You make it fast. You lower the front, when it's down, lower than it's supposed to be, you can tie the front in very easy. Then after you got the back and the front end tied, then you can heist it back up a little bit so you can see the reef points, and then you can go ahead. One man, the man that ties the head down, the head of the sail that's on the halyards, he can start from there and start working aft with the reef points. The other fellow can be seven reef, six, seven reef points back. He can start working forward. It's another man alongside of him that can start aft. The man back aft can start forward. And everybody will be done the same reef points. They will all tie about the same amount; they will all be done the same time, done. But if you don't know where to get - you're in his way, and he's in your way, and you got to have teamwork when it comes to reefing if you want to do it quick. And it can work out. But if you get in the wrong place, then you're messing the other guy up. So it doesn't take long to teach them if they want to learn. You can take a man that wants to learn how to dredge oysters and be a good crewman; he can learn everything on the boat in two weeks if he wants to learn. If he's just out here for a job and waits for Friday or Saturday to get his pay and he's not interested, he can be here for 10 years and he won't be worth a damn when it comes - but if you want to learn, you can pick I up in two, three weeks at the most. But I've had them before, they just - you could tell after a while they're not interested. They're going to be able to cull oysters, maybe, which is the main job, but all the other jobs is part of being a good crew.

K.F.: Really being a sailor.

W.M.: Right.

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

W.M.: And then you got guys that do the maintenance, which is just oiling up the winding gear and keeping things straight, oiling the rollers, making everything greased up that's supposed to be oiled. And some of them don't do anything. As soon as they get on a boat, they go in the cabin, they set there until they get where you're going. If you need something done, you got to call for them to come out. The way it is nowadays, you just don't get - I had a decent crew last winter the first time in 10 years, and I had a decent crew. And I just lucked out on a couple guys that hadn't been dredging for a while, but the oysters in the lower bay where they work had died again, and they come up and dredged last year. I don't know, they're dying right now; the oysters are dying right now so I don't even know if I'm going to dredge next winter. If I don't dredge next winter, it will be the first time in my life that I didn't dredge when I could dredge. The only other time I didn't dredge is when I lost this boat in a storm, and I had to repair it all winter. I didn't dredge the Winter of '99 and 2000, but that's the only winter, and that's because I couldn't. But this year, I will be able to dredge if I want to, but I may not because the oysters are dying again.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me back up and ask you about when you first bought the Sigsbee, how much did you pay for her?

W.M.: In 1964, there were some bad seasons. And the way you get the price of skipjacks, well the way you used to get the price of skipjacks was what the season looked

like next year. That's the way you got the price of skipjacks. Also, in 1965 or '66 when they started power dredging two days a week, that changed everything also. That changed the price of boats because a boat that was a real good sailor against a boat that wasn't a good sailor, it would be a lot of money difference in the price. But when they started power dredging two days a week, that put the poor sailing boat up in - up in competition or whatever you may want to call it with a good sailing boat because you didn't have to sail. You could use a motor. So that brought a poor sailing boat's value up, and but when I boat this boat in '64, the oysters were down. And also, the way these boats were sold, most people don't know this, they don't even think about it, but we had county lines. We had Talbot County oyster beds, Dorchester County. Not every county, but most counties had like Dorchester and Talbot County had the Choptank River to work in common, them two. Up the head of the river, Dorchester, Cambridge, had a piece of bottom that was Dorchester County waters only. In Talbot County, we had a piece of ground in Eastern Bay that was strictly Talbot County waters. So only Talbot County dredgers could dredge there. Dorchester County dredgers could dredge in the upper Choptank in a small, it was a small area. And the whole Choptank River in general worked in common with the two counties. Somerset County had - Somerset County had Tangier Sound, and every - then it was a law about the boats. If - and I don't remember exactly the year, but I think it was after the war. Maybe 19 - before the war. If a boat was over 10 ton, it could not work in the Choptank River. It was considered a bay boat. A big boat could only work in the bay waters. Even if you were from Tilghman Island and you had a large boat, you couldn't work in Talbot County waters. You had to work in the bay proper. And this, and now unless the boat was licensed in that county before 1940 or whatever the year was, if you were already licensed, then you didn't have to - you could work there. But any new boats built after a certain year had to be - like the Rosie Parks that is owned by the Maritime Museum was built in 1955, '54, whatever, the fellow that had her built had a lot of - he had a lot of political power for a waterman, and the boat was really too large for the river. But he had it, what you call done - where when he got it measured, they didn't give the right measurements, and that boat worked in the river. And it was over 10 ton, but they marked it under 10 ton so he could work in the river, he got to work in the river. But any, a lot of other boats that were bigger could not work in the river, they had to work in the bay. And then when - and that's the way the boats were sold. If we had a lot of oysters in the Choptank River and it looked good for the next year, and they didn't have any boats down in Tangier Sound, we would go down and buy them boats and bring them up here and work them till we caught the oysters up. And then if they had a strike of oysters in Tangier Sound, they would come up here and we didn't have anything, the boats went back and forth between the - because you had to be a resident of that county to - most people have forgotten about this, but I remember, and most people don't even think about it, but you had to be a resident of that county, the boat didn't have to be a resident, you had to be a resident, you could buy that boat. 'Cause when I bought the Sigsbee in '64 that was before they struck the county lines down. It was a couple dredgers on Tilghman tried to stop me from getting a license for the river. They said the boat wasn't a resident, and I had to go to the Attorney General to rule on it. And I had a lot of people behind me. I mean I've been here all my life. I had been born and raised on Tilghman, and the two other dredgers that tried to stop me from getting a

license were both implants. Both of them moved here, so it kind of upset some of these other dredgers that these two dredgers tried to stop me when they wasn't even, they wasn't even - one of them was born in Maryland, but the other one was born in Pennsylvania, and they tried to stop me. And I was just a kid starting out. And it was - but I got the license, but that was, they were saying the boat had to be here six months before you got a license, but it wasn't that. It was me had to be here six months before. So that's the way it was. And that's how the price of the boats was. The more oysters it looked like it was going to be, then the more money you could - they used to go down and get a boat out of a marsh that was - that had been abandoned and get it back in working service to work a few months when they had a big crop of oysters coming. And then sometimes they let them go too long, they couldn't get them back in service. But that was the way, and I ended up that time, the boat was in fairly good condition, but it was no oysters in Tangier Sound. And wasn't many in Talbot County. But I was just starting out. But I bought the boat for \$3,000.

K.F.: Wow.

W.M.: And that was 1964. I bought the boat for \$3,000. Now today, I've sold the boat, the boat's been gone since '84. I kept it for 20 years. But I've got the quarter, I've got the trail boards from the boat.

K.F.: Oh, you do?

W.M.: And I've been offered as much money for the trail boards in 1999 as I've paid for the whole boat in 1964. I've been offered \$3,000 for the trail boards. And, of course, I'm going to sell them. I wouldn't sell them off of this boat because I would never do that. But I don't own the other boat anymore. I don't have the sentimental value. So I wouldn't, I wouldn't sell the ones off of this boat, but I'm definitely going to sell the other ones. And they got a lot of historical value, and I'm going to sell them whenever I need the money or whenever the boat needs the money.

K.F.: Wow. I didn't know. You want to talk to them?

W.M.: Let me talk a second.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

W.M.: They're the life rings. I'd like to pick it up. I don't know how I'd get it. It is -

K.F.: It must be -

W.M.: -- coming this way a little bit. Maybe it'll come over.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you what have been some of your more scary experiences onboard?

W.M.: Okay. The worst day in my life on the bay was the day I lost this boat in a storm. Before that, 30 years ago, a little girl fell overboard off another skipjack. I was on the other skipjack, and I went over and got her. It was so much confusion on the boat that we were racing, and they couldn't get the boat turned around to pick us up, and it ended up she was safe, and I was safe, but she almost drowned me. That was my first scary time. I was only 27 years old, 28 years old, so I was in good - if it had been now, I couldn't stand to be in the water that long with somebody hanging on me, but I saved her and I was safe, and everything ended up - and then the next time, I was coming home after a day of work. It was blowing pretty hard. We were coming headwind. We had the push boat. At that point in time, we had gas motors. And we were running up pretty hard headwind, pushing pretty hard, and the wind started to moderate, and I had a young crew, 18, 20

year old kids. And I was afraid, and we also didn't have controls on deck like we had today. We had controls inside the boat. So I was afraid to send one of them back in the push boat. It was rough, and I was afraid they'd get overboard. So I said I better do it myself. So I had one of the boys steer the boat for me while I went back in the yawl boat. And the second I picked the yawl boat engine top up to reach in to slow the engine down, she must've broke a gas line because she caught on fire, she pumped gas on me in my face, on my foul weather gear. I had to jump overboard, I was on fire. I had to jump overboard to put the fire out, and I was always glad I'm the one that did this, because if it had been one of the crew, they would maybe not have held onto the boat. I held onto the boat with one hand after I went under. And you can't see it. It's hard to see. But - well you can see the little dark here.

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

W.M.: And I had a watch on here, and it burnt on both sides. This hand got the worst burn. My face was just superficial. Just a little bit of burn. But this hand was really bad for a couple weeks. I was always glad that I was the one that jumped in there because they would've maybe got lost, it was rough, and I had to jump overboard. So that was the second scary time. And then another time I was in a storm that blowed 80 mile an hour winds, and we had the sails down, rolled up, but it sunk the yawl boat on the Davids, and it was - we had to get towed in that time. Then I've seen another storm I was in that I broke my mast, my bow split in the boom, I tore everything up, and that was another storm.

K.F.: What's it like now when this mast breaks, because this is a pretty huge -

W.M.: Well it's dangerous. If you're sailing and the mast breaks, it's pretty apt to go overboard if it's blowing. But if it's just rough and it breaks - if you roll it out, if you roll it out instead of blowing it out, you're liable to get killed because that mast comes out, it's going to hurt you, it's going to kill somebody. Every time I ever lost a mast, it was blowing so it went overboard. I broke two masts off in one week. I broke two masts working rough weather, weather that weren't fit to be out. I love to do this, my crew made good money. All my money was going back into the boat to repair what I tore up while I was dredging oysters under all this bad weather. I broke the mast off. We got it repaired, put it back in the boat. It cost \$2,500 to fix it. And we're going back in the 70's now when \$25 was - I mean \$2,500 was a lot of money. And I got it repaired and broke it again the same week. I broke it twice in one week. And my crew, like I say, was doing good because they were making good money. I was putting all mine back in the boat again. I'd have been better off not even to work the rough weather. My dad worked for 70 years on the water. He never broke a mast out once. And I broke two off in one week. So but I've seen three or four scary times. But the worst time was when I sunk my boat in 1999. And that was the first time I'd ever sunk a boat. I was worried to death that my crew was going to get drowned. And after they were safe, then I worried about my boat. It was just like one of my children being out there when I left her that evening. I didn't think I'd ever see the boat again. And three days later, we got the boat up, and with the help of the Maritime Museum, we used the dry dock up there, and they helped me. We got the boat rebuilt, and now she's upgraded. It turns out because of the accident and the boat sank, it's the best thing ever happened to the boat because now I'm upgraded. Instead of taking uninspected six people, the boat was uninspected before I

sank, now she's inspected. And the Coast Guard certified her for 49 people. So I can do large groups, and it's a big help maintaining the boat, being able to get that extra people onboard to get the extra money.

K.F.: Right. Well describe that day for me when she sank. What was the weather like, and how was -

W.M.: Okay. When I was - it was the second day of oyster season, 1999. I had -- the first day of the season I had went in the local waters here. And you never know where to go the first day to do the best. It's always a trial the first day. I went in the local waters and I worked all day. I had - end of the day, we had 41 bushel, which isn't, it's not enough to make a living. So the second day, I left about 5:00 in the morning to go to the upper Choptanknd about 10 miles up the river. When I left on that Tuesday morning, November the nd or 3rd, whatever the second - it was thick foggy when I left the dock. We went 10 miles up the river. During the day, the fog lifted, and it was rainy, squally, it was like 20 mile an hour winds, which is not too much wind up the river, but in the middle of the river, it would be rough. We worked all day. I was shorthanded. The second day of the season, I only had three men. Normally four men is what it takes. So we did good. We had found some oysters, and we had about 80 bushel of oysters at the end of the day. During the day, it rained and it blowed 20 mile an hour. It was squally. The crew was all wet and tired. I was cold and tired. The only thing that saved us was I quit an hour early, never knowing we were going to get a storm later. I worked about an hour - I quit about an hour early. What you do after you've been working in protected waters with the push boat, you have to haul the push boat up out of the water on the Davids. And sail, you have to sail home. If you have a rough water to go across, you have to sail. So we pulled the push boat up on the Davids, and we started sailing home. The wind about 20 mile an hour, which is nothing to it, and halfway home, the wind started picking up in the middle of the river and it started getting rougher. It went to 25, 30, to 35. At about 40 mile an hour, it blew the sails away. After it blew the sails away, I had to anchor the boat because she was, I was afraid she'd get broadsided and get swamped. So I anchored the boat. After I anchored the boat, I called my wife on the telephone, told her to send me some help out, I needed a tow. It was too rough to put the push boat down. No way would ever - so I - she sent a couple boats out. The boat, I thought that the boat had busted a plank because it was taking water on. But it was taking water on from the top. The deck, I had some bad deck on the starboard side, which had never been underwater before, so it was never any danger, and I was going to fix it. I was going to fix the deck when I had got a chance `cause it wasn't any danger. That day, it was underwater a lot, and it was taking water in from the deck. I didn't realize it was taking that much water in. I thought she was taking water in from the bottom also. And I told the crew to keep the water out, keep the pumps running. Well they were scared to death, and they weren't doing their job. They was not keeping - they were not keeping the water out, they wouldn't keep the water out, they wouldn't keep the pumps running. They thought the pumps was running, but they wasn't. The pumps were running, but they were clogged up with debris. So if they had kept the pumps running, the boat wouldn't have sank. But anyway, it did.

So the boat was taking water on. I looked from where I was standing back to the wheel. I could see the water coming up in the cabin floor. I knew she was sinking. And I

thought they were doing all they could do to keep the water, I just thought something was wrong underneath, I had busted a plank, which it hadn't. It just was all coming in and nothing going out, the pumps were clogged up, and it was the crews' fault for this, but I didn't know it at that time.

So the boat got a hold of us. I cut my anchor line loose, he started towing us in. And we were within 10 minutes of smooth water when she sank. And I - we had to wait to get away from the boat so the boats could pick us up. It was a bunch of stuff floating around, lines and sails and stuff floating around. So we had to wait for - we had to get away from the boat. And we were in the water about 10 minutes. Then after the boat picked us up, after the crew was all safe, then I worried about my boat. It was just like one of my children out here on the bottom when I left her and didn't think I'd ever see the boat again. And I called everybody I could ever call that would help salvage the boat. Everybody was busy. Nobody could come till the next week. They said we'll be there Sunday. I said Sunday'll be too late. I can't, I can't wait. The boat's going to break up. So finally, I got two small outfits that had agreed to come out. I sank on Tuesday, and Wednesday it was still too much wind to do any salvage. Thursday they came out, two small outfits, one from St. Michaels, one from Middle River, one little crane and a bunch of divers and pumps. They worked all day, we couldn't get the boat up. We had to put her back on the bottom at dark. The rig just wasn't heavy enough to lift the boat. We put the boat back on the bottom. A friend of mine who's in local politics knew that we had worked all day, and knew that we had come back in empty handed, happened to be going to a party in Annapolis with a bunch of governor people, bunch of dignitaries.

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

W.M.: This boat was on the front page, it was in the news for a week about her sinking. It was on TV, radio, newspapers. I'm talking about Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and everybody was covering. To me, to me, it was something like an old sports figure had died and everybody was in mourning really, that's what it was like to me. Well the next day, that night the governor people heard about it, and they didn't want me to lose the boat. They said we can't let that boat die. It's the oldest boat in the country still working under sail. We're going to have to help. So they put, they okayed a deal in 15 minutes that they sent a crane, and a barge out of Baltimore they had under contract, and they were down here the next morning, 6 a.m. they were alongside the boat, sunup. And by mid-afternoon, they had the boat up. So that was the State of Maryland. I don't think they would've done it for a lot of other boats because of the - but I mean they just knew the boat, and they probably would've helped other people, but they wouldn't have agreed to it as quick, I don't believe, this boat is well known, and being the oldest boat. After I got her up, I took her to dry dock in St. Michaels. Soon as I sank, people were coming to help. The guys that worked for the Maritime Museum come down the next day. The couple of them that were managers of the boatyard and they said look, anything we can do, we'll help. And they volunteered. Bring her up to our railway, you know, we'll help. So that was good, the Maritime Museum did this. And then I took her up after we got the boat up. After we got the boat up, we found out the pumps were clogged up. That's why she sank. But we got her up there, and it took, it was going to take about \$60,000 to rebuild the boat to get it Coast Guard certified. And I didn't want

to go in debt like I had done in 1984 or '85 when I rebuilt the boat the first time. So I had a daughter that was watching all this, and she seen all the publicity. She went to the news people and said look, if you want to help Rebecca, why don't you put in the newspaper, TV, that you can donate to the Rebecca T. Ruark Fund. We have a restoration fund in the Easton Bank and Trust. I didn't tell her to do this, but I appreciated it. I wouldn't have asked, but she did. \$20,000 was donated to the boat by people I didn't even know. Because of the boat, they didn't want the boat to die. They want it to be rebuilt. Then to get the rest of the money, I took the original mast out of the boat, and I had it carved into decoys. I sold these, I sold the first six for \$500 apiece, and then I sold 40 of them for \$1,000 apiece, and I've got 15 left that's going to be auctioned off when we need the money for the boat. It's a special fund. It goes, it goes into the - everything goes into the boat. Everything goes into the boat, I don't take anything for anything except the boat. I mean I don't take any money out, so a lot of people don't mind paying a lot of money for a decoy that's going to be for to save something historical like Rebecca. You want to shut her off a minute?

(OFF THE RECORD.)

K.F.: All right. Well let me ask you a couple questions. When you were crewing with your dad -

W.M.: Yes.

K.F.: -- how did he divide the take?

W.M.: The pay? It's always been, it's always been in Tilghman that the boat takes one-third of the catch for maintenance and - the boat takes one-third of the catch. Then they take, they take the daily expense out, which would be gas or maybe food. And then that's deducted from the two-thirds that's left. And then the captain and crew divide the rest equally. So if you had four men and the captain, you start off with 33 percent for the boat, 66 percent left. And if you had like 6 percent expenses, then you would have 60 percent left. Five people would be 12 percent apiece, and that's how they split the money up. In the lower bay, I've heard on the big boats, the great big boats that used to be was more they took 50 percent for the captain and the boat, and the crew got what was left. Well if they had five men, if they had five men, counting the captain, the boat got 50 percent, the captain of the boat got 50 percent, it was 50 percent left for four men, so you come up with 48. You come out with 12 1/2 percent, so it equaled pretty close. Now on that deal, the captain paid for the grub and the expense. The captain paid for the expense. He took half and paid for the expenses. The other way, we took a third and the crew, the crew and the captain paid for the expenses.

K.F.: Okay, okay. So what would be a good take when the seasons were good with you, what was a good take?

W.M.: Well the good take is the bottom line, what the bottom line is is what you take home. I've caught 350 bushel of oysters and gotten \$2 a bushel. I've caught 20 bushel of oysters and got \$25 a bushel. I mean and then when you got time, when you catch 150 bushel, you might get \$10 a bushel. So it's the supply and demand. And it used to always be when we had scarce oysters, the price would go up 32, even as much as \$35 a bushel. But that was when Maryland had, that's when it was all dependent on Maryland for the supply and demand. But when it got to the point that our oysters got scarce and we could only catch, we had to get at least \$20 a bushel to make a living, when our oysters went up

to \$20 a bushel, then Texas, Louisiana started shipping their junk in here as a supplement for these, and oysters are oysters to some people. So that got our price so it never would get over 20 or \$25 a bushel. But before they started shipping their oysters in here, we would get up to \$35 a bushel. And they messed that up when they started shipping. They have loads of oysters at times though. They can ship oysters up here for 10, \$12 a bushel. But as long as we could catch oysters here and sell them for 10, \$12 a bushel, they were never no threat to us because our oysters are better oysters in the Chesapeake.

K.F.: Okay. Let me ask you about the oyster beds themselves. And I know some of them have names and what have you, and we're trying to map out some of the oyster beds and what the names are according to the watermen. So what are some of the oysters beds that you like to work in, and their nicknames?

W.M.: Well a lot of the oyster beds are named from the land that they are close to. For instance, you got Cook's Point bar, you got Tide's Point bar, Castle Haven Point, Binony's Point, Black Walnut Point. Then you have bars that are named after people, like out in the river we have a bar named Dawson's. And the original name was named Dawson's Discovery because a fellow back in 1900's found the oyster bed, and they named it after him. And but I'd say more than, more - most of them are named after the land that's around them. And it's a few named after people, and like the lower bay, I've heard of like Sheep's Head, which is a fish the oyster bar is named after. But all in all, I would say that they're mostly after the land around them that's, you know, I could name bar after bar. Like now up St. Michaels, right at the mouth of that harbor, I don't know, it's a bar named Ashcraft. Where that name come from, I don't know. Maybe it was a, I don't never know where that name come from. But out in Poplar Island, we have a bar, and it starts off South Bar which is on the south end of the - then they have Shell Hill, Shell Hill. It's a lot of oysters and shells out, so why they call it shell - then they have one that really would throw you off named Helsinki. Helsinki is a Finland name, and how they got that name, I don't know. But like Sharp's Island, Stone Rock. Stone Rock is down on the end of Tilghman off of Sharp's Island. Stone Rock is one of the largest bars we have, oyster beds. It's a stone pile that came down in the Ice Age. I mean I've heard people say - one time I heard this waterman who wasn't very educated or wasn't very common sense, said I wonder where all these stones come from. Well where in the heck you think they come from? It's only one place. Stone Rock is a mile wide and three miles long. And that's where the stones come from when the bay was made in the Ice Age. Like different places around Tide's Point and different places in the bay, it'll be a natural riprap of natural stones that came, when the bay was made, that's where they come from. Different places in the river, I know there's deposits of scallop shells. They come down with the Ice Age. There's never been any scallops in the Chesapeake. And these scallop shells are, are 12, 13 million years old. When the bay was made, that's when these - but as far as the oyster beds, they're mostly named after the land or the points of land around.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

W.M.: Kent Shore, they got one named Brick House bar. I guess it's because it was a brick house on the shore in front of the bar, I guess. But then a lot of times, like Kent Point, Kent Point's a terrible big stone pile. I mean it's, unless you worked there, you would never have an idea it was there. But out on Stone Rock, I can take you to Stone

Rock. If you want to see stones that are as big as marbles, I can show you stones as big as marbles. If you want to see stones as big as a cantaloupe, I can show you. Big as a watermelon. I can show you stones big as, big as an elephant. The farther to the west, the bigger the stones are. And it's all happened up on Kent Shore. There are several stone piles along that shore, out in the water. I'm talking about out in 20, 30 feet of water. And most stone piles have oysters around them, but you have to be careful because you'll tear the boat up. You got a heavy dredge with a wire line, and you can pull the boat right apart. So you got to be careful when you're working on stone piles. You can't work there when it's any amount of wind. You want a boat, you want the boat just to be going slow. This boat here weighs 30 tons, 35 tons. When she starts moving, you're not going to stop her right away. So this boat will do more, you can tear this boat up much quicker than you can a small boat because a small boat will stop and won't hurt anything. I had twice as much problem with this boat on stone piles as I did my Sigsbee because the Sigsbee only weighed about 20 ton. And the heavier the boat, you got to be careful on stone piles. And, of course, the dredges, you tear dredges up also, but we have five different types of dredges for different types of bottom. And we have a real light dredge, and a little bit heavier dredge, a little bit heavier dredge, and then we have real heavy dredges for stone piles. And -

K.F.: Is there any way to feel through the drudge of the lines what's going on on the bottom?

W.M.: What's that now?

K.F.: Is there any way to feel through the drudge or the lines what's going on on the bottom?

W.M.: Yeah. When the dredge is on the bottom, you don't feel that dredge on a stone pile because she's jerking like, jerking like hell on the stone pile. You can't take and feel that line. But on a hard bottom or even semi-hard bottom, you take and you feel the vibrations from the dredge. You can tell, you can tell if you're doing, catching oysters or not catching oysters by the feel of the line, yes. Nowadays, we don't feel the line as much as we do depend on our video depth sounders. That's technology. We never had them when I started. My dad never did have a video depth sounder. I got a video depth sounder that I can tell you exactly how deep it is. And, for instance, if you're on an oyster bed and it's 18 foot of water on top the oyster bed, it might go down to 19 feet and still be oysters. But if you get in 20 feet, maybe it's nothing. So you can take with your depth, video depth sounder, and you can feel your way right around. You can stay, pinpoint exactly where you're at. It can be foggy, you could never do that in the fog sailing without a video depth sounder and without a GPS. We have a GPS that'll put you right wherever you want to be at anywheres. And technology has made dredging easier and more efficient since we've gotten the equipment, the electronics.

K.F.: You think that's a good thing?

W.M.: No, I think it's not good for conservation, no. Just like the crabs. They have methods for pulling the trot line up now. They have a crab line puller. And where we used to use a normal 2,400 feet of line crabbing, that's all you could handle, pull by hand. Now they'll use 4 or 5,000 feet. And they just, that's only one factor. It's a lot of things enter into crab harvesting, crab over-harvesting. But I don't think the technology is good. Like diesel motors. I have diesel motors now. I can go faster and farther than I could

with a gas motor. And all that is technology, and I don't know, it's just progress, I guess. Sometimes it's called greed when they use this stuff. But anyway, what's the next question?

K.F.: (Laughter.) Well I'm wondering if you can tell me what it feels like to be at the helm of the Rebecca.

W.M.: Well it's nothing prettier than catching oysters under sail. Most of these guys dredging now don't know what, they don't love sailing the way some of the older ones do. I love to sail. You are part of the boat, you are part of the weather, you live by the weather, you live by the wind. And it's - you have to, when you're sail dredging, it's different. You have to be precise with the right speed, the right place you want to be at, and it makes a lot of difference when the boat's a good sailboat because oyster beds sometimes are small. And when you make a drag across the oyster bed, you have to turn around and come back. And a boat that'll sail better will be a better workboat, and you'll make more money, you'll catch more oysters. I can catch a third more oysters with this boat under sail than I could the Sigsbee.

K.F.: Why is that?

W.M.: Under power, it doesn't make any difference. Everybody's equal under power. But because the boat is so - people don't know. They think it's stupid when people say a boat is smart. But the boat will handle. She is built to sail better than some of the other boats. And the reason this boat sails better is because of the design. We have a different design than any of the other boats. This is a round bilge boat. Soft chime. A soft chime boat means that the chime line is where the boat sits in the water with the sides of the boat hitting the water. That's the chime line. A soft chime boat, which would be a round chime boat, is smoother, less resistance in the water. That makes them a better sailboat. A hard chime boat is not as efficient. But in the 1880's, all they built were round bilge boats. Now they had a law, 1865 law, that said that you must use a sailboat to harvest the oysters with a dredge. In 1885, they had 15 million bushels of oysters harvested. Everybody wanted to go oystering with a dredge, with a sailboat. They could not build boats like Rebecca fast enough for the demand. So in 1891, somebody designed a skipjack, which is flat bottomed, straight sided, which is hard chimed. Much simpler to build than a round chime boat. I've read in history books that it's written, any backyard boat builder can build a skipjack. But any backyard boat builder can't build a Rebecca. You got to be a master carpenter to build a frame boat. It's like all the sailboats you see, that sailboat there, it's fiberglass. You see how round his side is? They can mold fiberglass anyway they want to mold it, so they mold it to the best shape, which is round bilge. But in a wooden boat, you have to build the roundness into the boat, and it takes a master carpenter to do this. Now when it comes to dredging oysters under sail, the skipjack, flat bottom, is suitable for the job. It can do the job of harvesting oysters under sail. When it comes to the five points of sailing, racing, Rebecca is superior because of her round bilge. The Sigsbee, the Sigsbee was one of the worst sailors. Now we have some good sailboats, like the Martha Lewis is a good sailboat, the Lady Katy, the Rosie Parks. They're good sailboats. They were designed in the 50's, but they still can't beat Rebecca, one on one. One on one, they can't beat Rebecca. A lot of times, those boats draw three feet of water. I draw five feet of water. Sometimes they can get where I can't get at, and it may be more wind there, and they may win the race, which is fine. That's nothing I can

do about it. But one on one in deep water with the same amount of wind, they can't beat Rebecca. We've did this, we've won 9 out of 10 races. And Rebecca started her life out as a two-masted schooner, supposedly. I know she didn't start out as a skipjack, because a skipjack wasn't designed till five years later. So I know she wasn't designed as a skipjack. They changed the rig to a skipjack rig in the 1920's, and she'd been sailing under a skipjack rig since the 1920's.

K.F.: Who did that change? Do you know?

W.M.: They just took the two masts out and put the one mast in and put two sails on instead of three sails or four - three sails, they just used a regular skipjack sail plan because it's more simple, and it's easier to, it's easier to sail a skipjack with a crew. You don't have as many sails to handle. And they served a purpose. So there was at one time schooners, sloops. A schooner is a two, three mast. In the bay, the oyster schooner never more than two masts. But other places where they use them for other work, they have two masts, three masts, four masts, five mast schooners. Lumber people, hauling lumber. But dredging oysters, a two mast was the most they've ever had. A schooner is a two mast gaff rigged boat. That means they got a gaff up top with a boom down bottom. They were kind of square sail. They have a two mast bug-eye, which is two masts, but it's got sharp sails. A skipjack's got sharp sails - sharp sails. So they had - now a sloop is a one mast gaff rig. So you got a two mast gaff rig schooner, one mast gaff rig sloop, a one mast sharp sail skipjack, and a two mast sharp sail bug-eye. That's four different. Today, we have 13 skipjacks left in the whole bay, when years ago we had schooners and sloops and bug-eyes and skipjacks.

K.F.: Right.

W.M.: But because skipjacks are the easiest to handle the sails, that's why we ended up with - the crew doesn't have much problem with the sails.

K.F.: You've been taking people out for how many years in the summertime?

W.M.: I've been taking people out for eight years now, charters. And it's - I started doing this as a way to supplement the income to keep Rebecca floating. It costs 10, \$12,000 a year to maintain the boat, and we don't do that good dredging oysters anymore, so I started doing charters. And it's picking up every year. Because I guess the economy is better, people are taking longer vacations, more vacations, and Maryland has skipjacks, they have museums in St. Michaels, they have other things that draw people here, seafood, and it's getting more and more touristy every year. And I always say it's easier to catch a tourist than it is to catch an oyster.

K.F.: Why is that?

W.M.: Because oysters are being less and less, and the people are becoming more and more. So you have to adapt. You have to adapt if you're going to make it on the water, especially with skipjacks.

K.F.: Why do you think the tourists are so interested in these vessels?

W.M.: Well it's the last sailing fleet in America that's still sailing, working under sail to harvest any seafood. They don't have the Grand Bank Schooners anymore, they don't have any boats in North Carolina. They used to have boats in North Carolina, Virginia that harvest oysters under sail, and they don't have these boats. This is the last sailing fleet in the country, and we've dwindled down to 12, 13. Right now, Rebecca has just been nominated to like the National Historical of Places. She's already in the National

Register of Historical Boats. She's just been nominated for National Historical Places, like Thomas Jefferson's home, and she is going to be - she's nominated, I'm sure she's going to make it. There's not many boats nominated for to be a National Historical Place when they're a boat. And she's going to - she's been nominated already. So that's going to be even better publicity and get more attention. People's going to come to see her. So I don't know. It's a unique way of harvesting oysters, and it's a dying-out thing, and people want to see them before they're all gone. I'm hoping I'll be able to keep this boat until I retire, and I don't know when that's going to be. My dad bought a new boat when he was 83 years old, so hopefully, I'll be able to do the same thing.

K.F.: Well what do you think's going to happen to all these skipjacks when the current captains are not able to work them anymore?

W.M.: Sometimes I wonder, for instance, like the log canoes. The log canoes have been bought up by mostly rich people. They've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars fixing these boats up, and they use them in the summer season for sports, racing. I don't know if maybe some day when it gets to the point - if it gets to the point that you can't catch oysters enough that maybe a group of people will buy these boats and use them just for maybe playing, racing in the summer or whatever. I don't know that would happen, I don't know if it would be too much upkeep, but I know they've done that with the log canoes. That's what saved what few log canoes left.

K.F.: Well are there young captains that you see coming along?

W.M.: We don't have a lot of young captains. We got a few, we got a few, but what I see, the young captains coming into it now -- it was just a boat sold a couple weeks ago. Young guy. He's not a dredger. He'll probably never dredge. But he bought it to take tourists out.

K.F.: Oh.

W.M.: That's all he -

K.F.: Who is this?

W.M.: This boat here, the Nellie Bird.

K.F.: Okay.

W.M.: It was just bought by a young guy. He sees us doing fairly good, me and the other skipjack captain, and he thinks that he can make good money. I hope he can. But it ain't all, it ain't all gravy when you got these boats. It's a lot of maintenance. Also, the equipment, I just bought a new motor for \$9,000. I just bought three new life rafts for \$2,500. You got to keep updating, and it's all a lot of expense. I like what I do. The reason I do it, not because I'm getting rich, because I'm not getting rich. I've done this for 44 years, and I like to sail. I like the people. But I'm not doing it because I make a lot of money doing it. If I wanted to make a lot of money or more money, I would move this boat to St. Michaels where the people's at. There's a hundred times more people in St. Michaels, tourists, than it is in Tilghman. I could get a lot more people. I just had these two people walk in, four people just walked in, there'll be 104 people up in St. Michaels walk in, so but I don't like the St. Michaels harbor because it's so congested. And I live in Tilghman and I want to be able to work out of Tilghman. But this fellow that just bought the Nellie Bird, he's not certified yet. The boat's not certified. So, hopefully, he'll be able to get the boat certified, but it takes a lot of doing to get her Coast Guard inspected.

K.F.: What do you have to do to do that?

W.M.: You have to take all the rotten wood out, you have to put watertight bulkheads in, you have to get all kinds of safety equipment, you have to do a ballast test to make sure the boat's seaworthy - ballast, and it's a lot of stuff you got to go through, a lot.

K.F.: How about as a captain to take passengers out, do you have to have a Coast Guard license?

W.M.: Oh, yeah. You got to - that's the first thing, you got to have a Coast Guard license. And to somebody that's got any kind of education, it's no problem to get, and anybody can get them. I got them myself. I don't have any education. It was hard for me to get them. I knew everything you're supposed to do, I knew common sense, but I didn't know the book. For instance, there's 20 - there's 40 rules of the road. And they say there's 20,000 ways to ask them. You may, you must, you shall, you should. They can change one word and throw you off. And it's hard unless you're - I was in class with these watermen. It was about 10 watermen. A couple, one college kid that never been on the water before. He took a test, passed it 100 percent. We had a lot of problem. The only thing he didn't have was the time logged on the boat. But as far as the bookwork, a smart kid, even a high school graduate that can read and remember, that knows how to learn can get a license with no problem. But it's hard for you to get it with no education, but you must have one.

K.F.: Well what classes, where did you take the classes at?

W.M.: I took a class right here in Tilghman. They come down and give a course, a license - police from over in Annapolis come over. And then I done another one in Cambridge. I went to a couple different places. And I give up a couple times because it was so hard. And finally, I decided I had to do it so I went through with it, and I went through one over in Annapolis. And then I took the test in Baltimore, Coast Guard, Customs House in Baltimore. It's hard, but it's something you got to do.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah, I've heard the test was really pretty difficult.

W.M.: Yeah.

K.F.: Navigation charts, and everything.

W.M.: It's mind boggling. I'm going to tell you that. It's mind boggling. But I got them, and I wouldn't be doing anything else now. I love what I do, and I hope to be able to continue to do it, and I hope to be able to keep my health and take people out. It gets old after a while, when you go seven days a week. I've started to cut back weekdays 11 to 1 and 5:30 to 7:30. Every once in a while, somebody will call and they've got to go 3 to 5, you can't - so I'll have to take them. But eventually, I'm going to cut back to two times a day. Weekends, you have to go four times a day. But it's in and out, in and out. And you have to tell the same stories more or less over and over. And it gets old after a while. But I don't complain because you make a good living and you keep the boat floating is the main thing.

K.F.: Well let me ask you about the stories that you tell over and over. What are some that you don't tell people?

W.M.: One of the ones I don't tell?

K.F.: That you don't tell people.

W.M.: Really and truly, it isn't much that I don't tell really. It isn't, I normally tell them on the way out about the ospreys. They're interested in the birds. I know a lot about

them. I know everything about - not everything. I know most everything about ospreys from day one in their life until they die. And I tell them about the Tilghman Packing Company out here. I've got pictures of before and after. I've got pictures when it was an oyster shell island. And then I tell them about how oysters spawn and live and grow, and how we harvest them. I do a demonstration with my dredge. We put the sails up, they participate, put the sails up. I let them steer the boat. And I tell about crabs, fish, and it's all according to how long I go into each story. I can dwell on one for an hour about every aspect, or I can just tell the fundamentals and then go to another I talk about my family, and the boat sinking sometimes. I tell people, sometimes I don't get that out. But just whatever comes to my mind. And then sometimes if I just get tired of talking about, I might talk about - I might tell jokes or something.

K.F.: Really?

W.M.: So - right. I do lectures also. I've been from Mystic Seaport, Alexandria, Virginia. I did a lecture for National Geographic for the - raise money for the Maritime Museum last October. I've been in many, many museums doing lectures. I got a slide presentation, and I'm, I'm going to do more and more and more of these - it's something, we have a few other captains older than me that are not going to get up and do what I do. They're not going to let people get - you're not going to get in the confidence, let the people get in your confidence.

K.F.: Right.

W.M.: They don't have the pictures that I have. They could get them, but they're not going to go through - I've got pictures, slides that I've paid 8, 10 bucks apiece for. I've got hundreds of slides of different things. And I've got a lot of money in slides, believe me. And I've been paid \$1,000, I've been paid \$500, I've been paid \$50, I've done it for free. I've done the Maritime Museum two or three times over the years, not lately. The Historical Society in Easton. A lot of places. And I'm going to continue to do more and more. It tell the people, I had a fellow yesterday from California. And I told him what I do. I'll go to California. I'll go to California and do a lecture. He said they had a big museum there, and he thought he could get me out there. I said well I'd love to - I vacation in the winter. That's when - I work seven days a week in the summer. In the winter I work two days. This winter, I may not work at all. I want to be playing. I want to be traveling. And I'll come to California. I'll do a lecture for you. And I like to get paid. If I don't get paid, fine. But I'll guarantee my lectures. If the people is not satisfied when they get finished watching it and saying it's one of the better ones, then I don't have to pay me nothing - they don't have to pay me anything. And I'm not being arrogant or smart, but I love what I do and I know I can do a good job. I'm not bragging, I'm just saying facts. And I want to do more and more. I've told them I'll go anywhere. It doesn't matter. If they want me to go to England, I'll go to England to do a lecture. It's something - he was talking yesterday, this fellow was talking yesterday, that he knows they would love to have a lecture on the Chesapeake Bay. They're a sailing, they have a lot of sailing there, and he said he's going to get me lined up to come out. And when they do things like it, like Mystic, they get the whole town involved. They get a motel to donate a room for me, and it's something that'll come together, I think.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah. Well let me ask you about -- the jokes reminded me of something. Somebody had told me that the crew and captains in the harbor will play jokes on each other.

W.M.: Yeah. Yeah. I guess one of the better ones would be back in the 70's, a lot of oysters, and we were dredging Poplar Island. A lot of oysters. I had a friend, an artist friend that used to go with me all the time to take pictures of other boats. She painted by the pictures. I don't know if you know Mary Ecrews (phonetic)?

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

W.M.: Don't know? She's a real good artist. She's good. And she used to go with me. And finally, she said Wade, I don't have any pictures of your boat. I'm always on your boat. I said well I'll fix you up another boat to get on. So I went to see this old captain named Bill Buridge (phonetic), and he was dredging about the Ralph Webster. Another fellow owned the Ralph Webster, but he was captain of the boat for him. So I said, Mary, I'll get you lined up on this guy. This guy's a nice guy. He'll take you out. So I went to see him and lined it up. Okay, tell her to be here 5:00 tomorrow morning. So no problem. So I told her, she met him, we were all at the same dock up to the Narrows, up Knapps Narrows, and that night, somebody had ran over a raccoon and it was laying in the road. So me and - I took it to this fellow's boat. I picked the engine box top up on the yawl boat and I put this raccoon laying there like he was getting ready to jump out, and I put the top back down. The next morning, I left early before they got there. And I went out, I was over Poplar Island. I got my limit, I caught my limit about 9, 10:00 in the morning. It was a lot of oysters. I caught my limit, I come into the dock, and I unloaded. And then I pulled my boat up out of the way. After a while, Ralph Webster come in, and Mary got off the boat, she walked down to the docks, she was talking to me, and talking, and I said how did you make out? She said good, I got a lot of pictures, you know. And I said anything exciting happen today? No, no, she said. I said nothing exciting happened today? No. She said no. And I said well how about this morning when you first went on the boat? She said you did it, you did it. I said did what? You put that raccoon on that engine. I said what engine? She said it almost scared that man - said when he picked the engine top, he said come here, come here, lady come here. And she said I went back out, said look. And that coon was, raccoon, but he was dead. And then she said we figured that you did this, but anyways, that was one of the funny things. (Laughter.)

And it was other things, you know. One of the things with maybe putting these little car bombs. They make a squealing noise and they explode. They don't hurt anything. But we put them on, we used to put them on an engine sometime, and then we would get off and kind of hide. And the fellow would come down. And when he started the engine up, it would make a squealing noise, and it would backfire or make a - and that was another joke. And a lot of little things they would do. They would - I've seen these guys before, crabbers. And, for instance, they would get together. They would have one guy they were going out with. And it was friendly joke. They would get one fellow, I remember one up in the Knapps Narrows. And they took this one fellow, and they said we're going to load his boat up with whatever. So, for instance, that barrel over there would be put on his boat. That old stove over there would be put on his boat. And it was all kinds of stuff, junk around the dock. And they, it would be two or three men maybe pick up something

heavy, and they took it down. The next morning when he'd go up to go crabbing, the doggone boat was loaded. And, you know, just little things. And then I've seen them take and take everything off the boat and set it on the dock so when he comes out, he had to put everything on his boat before went to work. So it was just - I've seen them one time take and they took this goat, Frances. The name of the goat was named Frances. And it was like, I think it was Robbie, Robbie and Greg, two brothers who are grown now, and their father, Big Daddy was his name, he's still living. That's, he's still living. They took, somebody took his goat and stole her from whoever owned her, and they took her and put her in the cabin of this boat. Well the next morning, these guys were going out crabbing or something, and the two boys went on a boat, and they said dad, dad, Frances is, Frances is in the cabin. He said who the hell is Frances? And it was this goat that they had put in the - so it's a lot of little jokes (Laughter) they play. And this same fellow, I think about him, he had a moped, this fellow did, named Big Daddy. He's a nice guy. He lives over there. And he had a moped. So one Sunday he decided he was going to ride over to Chesapeake House to have a drink. It happened to be the same day that a motorcycle gang came into Tilghman. Friendly motorcycle gang come into Tilghman. And they went into Chesapeake House to eat and whatever. Well he parked his moped alongside of those motorcycles. He was inside. Well in the meantime, the motorcycle gang came and left. They took his moped and put it in a dumpster 'cause they didn't want no moped alongside, you know. So he found his moped in the dumpster. So it's a lot of jokes being played, and a lot more I can't think of now, but it was all friendly. You know, it's just things they do for jokes.

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

W.M.: So what else you got to ask?

K.F.: That might be it for now, unless you want to add anything.

W.M.: Okay. If you need to know anything else, you come back and I'll try to tell you what you want to know.

K.F.: Okay. All right, thanks, Wadey.

(END OF INTERVIEW)