

Interview Log

Interviewee: Orval Jones

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Interviewer: Kelly Feltault
Pete Leshner

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Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments:

BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Your name?

O.J.: My names is James Orval Jones.

K.F.: Okay. And what town are we in?

O.J.: Wittman, Maryland.

K.F.: Okay. And it is July the 25th. Yeah? Okay. All right. And where were you born, Mr. Jones?

O.J.: Well I was bom in this house, a third house from here. This is setting -- that's where I was born. And then my father built this house over here on the other side of us.

K.F.: Okay. And what year were you born?

O.J.: 1919.

K.F.: All right. Now what did your father do?

O.J.: Well he was a waterman. And he also worked for the firm that put some state roads in. He worked down, I think, on the road from Claiborne to St. Michaels. And then he worked on putting a road in from Preston to East New Market. And the mixer that he ran was a real small one, according to these cement trucks that's running up and down the road now.

K.F.: Right, right. I'm going to pause this.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

K.F.: Okay. So your father was a waterman, and worked on the road construction.

O.J.: Yes.

K.F.: What did he do on the water?

O.J.: Well he, I guess, crabbed and tonged. That's about the only thing he did.

K.F.: Now you were saying earlier that he built the workshop out there, the boat --

O.J.: He had it built. You want the man's name?

K.F.: Tell me as much as you want.

O.J.: The man's name that built the shop was John Marshall.

K.F.: And so did your father build boats? What was the original purpose of that building?

O.J.: Yes. He built, he built boats. From, I don't know -- I was very small when he started building them, I do remember. I don't know how old I was. I don't remember that.

K.F.: Okay. Do you remember the type of boats that your dad was building at the time?

O.J.: He built workboats, like they use for tonging and crabbing, and he also built some cruisers. He built two 40-foot cruisers for people in Washington, D.C.

K.F.: Like recreational boats?

O.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yes.

K.F.: And what about your mom?

O.J.: She didn't, she didn't work out much. She worked, stayed home. No, she didn't work out too much.

K.F.: And how many siblings did you have?

O.J.: Well we had three. I'm the oldest, my sister's next, and my brother is still living. My sister died about 8 or 10 years back.

K.F.: All right. Well let's talk a bit about your dad. He built boats, and he was a waterman. I'm sure that was a pretty common occupation here in the Wittman area. What was it like growing up here in this area with your dad as a waterman and a boat builder?

O.J.: Well I don't know hardly how to explain that. It's -- I don't know. It's just, I had two or three friends about my same age. And they're all dead now. So I don't, I can't -- I can't put it in words. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well we saw a few pictures here in the stack of some, I guess, going to the beach and it looked like family reunions. Can you tell me a little bit about some of those types of events?

O.J.: Let me see.

K.F.: I noticed something about the Jones' Family Hot Dog Roast too. (Laughter.)

O.J.: Yeah, we went on a picnic up Miles River for that. And this is one of the boats I worked on. That one.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: Did some railway work on it.

K.F.: That's the Gypsy Girl.

O.J.: Yeah. That was owned by Mr. Edward Gowe from Tilghman.

K.F.: Oh, Ed Gowe, all right.

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

K.F.: That's funny. I'm supposed to interview his son, I guess, in the next week. (Laughter.) All right. Well how did you learn how to build boats?

O.J.: From my father.

K.F.: And how did he teach you how to do that? I mean what was --

O.J.: Just by working with him.

K.F.: And what were some of the first jobs that you had?

O.J.: Probably painting and helping hold lumber and stuff like that.

K.F.: And where did you get your lumber from?

O.J.: Well we got it from someplace here in Wittman. Had a lumber yard here in Wittman, Howeth Lumber Yard. And Mr. Jesse, W.H. Jesse, had a lumber yard in St. Michaels. My father bought most of the lumber from him, and he also got some lumber from a lumber yard in Baltimore. I can't think of the name of it right now. And he got mahogany and stuff from the lumber.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: Lumberyard. And I forget what the name of it is -- was.

SPEAKER: You got a lot of your stuff from Arthur Spicer --

O.J.: Yeah, we got a lot of lumber from them lately, in the later years, it came from Arthur Spicer down -- Fishing Creek, or down that way.

K.F.: Okay. And what type of lumber did you get from the lumber yards here in the area in St. Michaels and --

O.J.: Well my father used to get cypress and oak. But mostly, and then we used edge grain fir for the bottom.

K.F.: Why was that? Why would you prefer that for the bottom?

O.J.: Because Edge grain fir doesn't swell as bad as pine does. And it doesn't warp.

P.L.: How were you building those boats? Were these dead-rise bottoms?

O.J.: Yes. Yes. They were dead rise.

SPEAKER: Some you would build, I can remember some being built upright, and others built, you know, turned upside down -- where you did the bottom and then flipped the boat over.

O.J.: Yeah. Yeah.

K.F.: What would determine if you were going to build it upside down or --

O.J.: If the boat was small, up to around 32 feet, we built -- turned it over 'cause it was easier working on the bottom. But longer than 32 foot, we built it upright.

K.F.: So those big 40-foot cruisers, you would build those upright then?

O.J.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

SPEAKER: And what used to fascinate me is, you know, often times they would get a keel which was nothing more than a tree, and they would dress it down completely to the keel itself and use hand lathes, start with the stem and then, you know, each of the bottom boards all in suit. And there were no blueprints to work from. It was all rack-of-eye so to speak.

K.F.: Right.

O.J.: I used to get the keel sawed, get one tree sawed, eight foot saw two sides, eight inches, I mean. And then I cut the keel out to an eight-inch square, and I had an electric chainsaw for that that I used to use to cut that out. And it had a natural curve in the, for the keel

P.L.: How did you secure the boat? Did you bury the stem in the ground or anything like that?

O.J.: No. Huh-uh (negative).

P.L.: You just nailed it to the --

O.J.: Yeah, nail it to the side in the shop, and the ones we built turned over, we didn't nail at all. We just nailed the side planks to the stem, started in there, and then we bent it around in the shop. And the bigger boats was built the same way. We put the side planks on, and then bent them around. Put stretchers in between them to hold the shape till we got the washboards on.

P.L.: How did you build the sides? Was that -- were you using cypress for that?

O.J.: No. In later years, we used, we couldn't get the cypress, so we used pine. That's when we started getting lumber from down Spicer's Lumber Yard.

K.F.: Well what time, when did the two local lumber yards close shop?

O.J.: Well they -- I don't know when Jessie went out of business, but the lumber yard here in Wittman is still operating.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: It's Home Improvement, now it's called, Howeth's Home Improvement.

K.F.: And who were some of your father's early customers that you can remember?

O.J.: Well one of the men's names was from Washington was -- he had an insurance business, his name was H.F. Jim, and that was their first 40-foot cruiser he built. And the second one was built by a man named Waiters, and I don't remember, that's his last name. It was still, it was a 40-foot boat they built on the same order of a Mathews Cruiser.

K.F.: Okay.

SPEAKER: A lot of those customers were from like Washington and Baltimore initially, weren't they?

O.J.: Yes, yes.

SPEAKER: And local watermen.

O.J.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: I guess it was a mix of local watermen, but there are a few clients in D.C. and Baltimore.

O.J.: Yeah. We built whatever -- when it came up, when my father died, 1952, and then I took over the business, and my brother worked with me for a year, and then he decided he didn't like, didn't want that work and went to work for the -- he went to work for the state, the State Roads Commission. And he drove, he drove a bulldozer, and later on, he drove that Grade-All, and he's now retired from the state.

K.F.: Okay. And how did you go about building something that looked like a Matthews Cruiser without any plans?

O.J.: Well just from a picture we saw of it.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So would your father look at it and then draw his own plans, or was it just --

O.J.: No, he didn't draw any, we didn't have any plans. We just -- like I said, just take the two side planks, nail them to the stem and shape the boat up and then shape the timbers, the way we want them, with the flare, and that's the way we built them.

P.L.: So you never, you never made a model, you never --

O.J.: No. Huh-uh (negative). No.

SPEAKER: It was interesting, as a kid growing up here, that a lot of times they had scraps of wood that they used for templates for whatever they were doing, and they would lie around in the shop and, of course, kids being kids, we'd, you know, cut them up and make model boats or something like that. Some of the templates would disappear as soon as the boat was built, practically, and they'd have to, you know, redo some of those. But that was just, you know, the way they did it, not from plans or anything.

K.F.: Okay. Well now if I was a waterman here back in the 50's or 60's, how would I come to you to get my boat built?

O.J.: Well you'd just tell me what you wanted and I'd go out and order the lumber. I got a third of the price when the person gave me the order, and a third when the boat was half done, and the rest and any extra work was when the boat was finished. I built the boat, two boats for a man down in Cape May, New Jersey, and the first time I built him a boat he was just a voice on the telephone. He told me, he saw a boat that I built for a man that he knew down there, and he said he liked that boat and he wanted to know if I'd build him a 26-foot boat. So I built him a 26-foot boat, and he said don't put the, put a cabin on it, but don't put the canopy. I want to make that myself. And I think I got the picture in there, and you'll see what it turned out to be. And then the following year, he called me on the phone again and he said he found out that fishing parties down there in New Jersey didn't like the small boat. Said could I build him a 36-foot boat. I said yes. And all he'd do, we'd just talk on the phone the way he wanted the boat built, and I delivered that to him, and I've got the slides in there of that boat. And I put the canopy on that one.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: I take it you didn't like that other canopy on the first one.

O.J.: No, it was his idea. (Laughter.) It was real sharp in the front, had about maybe a foot or, two or three-foot window made two-foot window maybe in the front. And then it came in when the side, when he said his idea was to keep the front window down all the

time, and so he could raise the other, a side window like up, or not -- at an angle. And he said get air through there and not the waves maybe. So I don't think it worked out too good for him, so he sold that boat, and he got me to build him another one. I built, the first one I built, I never knew from New Jersey was a 38-foot boat. And I think I have a picture of that in some of the pictures here, snapshots.

P.L.: When a watermen came to you with an order, did he just know what your model was and say I want a 36-foot boat?

O.J.: Yeah, I guess he figured out I knew how he wanted the boat built, and well they'd tell me. A lot of times, they'd give me some kind of -- or ask me to go look at a boat. I went over to Kent Island one time. Man told me I could go aboard with a certain boat there. He give me the name of it and said take, take some measurements off of it. And the watermen around there were hollering, said are you still measuring that boat, haven't you got enough measurements yet? Going all like that. And I built that boat for him. And another man came down here one time, and he just -- he told me he wanted the boat built, and he said he didn't have too much money with him. He gave me a little bit. He said I want you to build me a boat, and he said I'll be down Monday with a more substantial payment. And that's the way I built -- I never took a written contract on a boat, just word of mouth.

K.F.: I'm wondering how many times does anybody ever, in the middle of you building the boat, decide okay, I don't want the boat?

O.J.: No.

K.F.: No?

O.J.: No, I've had a few railway bills that never were paid, but I won't go into that. (Laughter.) I live with it just as long without it, and it don't bother me. But I, you learn the hard way who you can trust and who you can't. But most of them, well the new boats I had, before they got the boat turned over in their name, it had to be paid for anyhow. But I got hooked a little few, couple times on railway builds. People would say make it out to -- paid me, they remembered paying me on the street in St. Michaels and I didn't put it down and all that stuff, but I did put it down when they paid me. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Now tell me about some of the tools that you used to build the boats.

O.J.: Well we used like Gary sad ads, and I had an electric plane, 3-inch electric plane. I had the electric chainsaw, and the circle saw. All hand, you know, handsaw. And that's about it. And the hammer.

SPEAKER: We had a large plane that was driven by --

O.J.: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we had planers that we could plane lumber down to suit ourselves.

K.F.: Right.

SPEAKER: And pretty good-size band saw.

O.J.: Right. Had a right good-size band saw. And we had, that band saw, it took a blade that was 13 foot, 9 inches. And my father told the man that, and he used to get, he used to get his blades from James Walker and Company, a hardware company in Baltimore. And the man, I forget that man's name now, but he told -- my father told him that one time, and he always remembered. My father called up and said I need a band saw, and he would say you need it 13 foot 9 inches, don't you? He remembered it from just that one time that my father told him that.

SPEAKER: What about -- explain to them, which always used to fascinate me, when you would cut the shaft hole through the skeg and the keel.

O.J.: I had a long auger bit, it was an inch and -- inch and a quarter auger bit, and on a long shaft that the auger was about like that. And on a long rod. And I'd start it with, at the end of the keel and go in, I put the board, the shaft hole before -- put the skag on before put under the boat when it was, unless it was built bottom upwards. And I knew how I wanted it to -- I knew what kind of motor the man was going to put in, and what kind of gear he was going to use on it to know what size propeller he was going to swing. And --

SPEAKER: How would you know how to get the angle right so that you ended up bedding the engine?

O.J.: Just site it, just site it down there. And sometimes the word shaft, it would hit a knot, the auger would hit a knot and it made it come off a little. Then take a hot iron and burn it over to the center of the keel, if it didn't come out in the center of the keel. I never had any burn come out too far that I couldn't use the keel.

SPEAKER: I imagine that would've created some problems. (Laughter.)

O.J.: Yeah, that's what I say. Yeah, so I never had that to happen, but it would vary some. Very seldom one ever came right directly in the center because it always was something that made it go one side or the other.

SPEAKER: But didn't you tell me that when you're turning this auger, and I think that thing had -- it was like about an 8 or 10-foot shaft to it.

O.J.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: But you could tell by the shavings that were coming out of the hole whether or not it was being drilled straight, boards straight?

O.J.: Well you had to pull that amount, you had to pull it out, you make so many turns and pull it out. If you got, if you turned too many times and it gets jammed in there, you have to back it up and pull it out a little at a time. I've had to do that a couple times. But, yeah, you can tell the difference in the shavings whether it was going through -- the skag was put on out of its construction grade fir, three inches in diameter was about two and seven eights inches actually. And we put board, the shaft in the center of that, and it would stay there. We didn't burn that. We were just burning in the keel is where we had to, where it would come off at, off the center.

SPEAKER: That's right, 'cause you had that forge down there.

O.J.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: You hand craft -- that thing that heated the poles.

K.F.: Let me back up just for one second. Before we had turned on the tape, you had mentioned that your father-in-law had run a tomato canning factory that was here in the area.

O.J.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: And I'm just curious what other industries were here in Wittman. We have a lumber yard, and your --

O.J.: Well the -- George Jackson had a boatyard down there.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: Now where David McQuay's boatyard is.

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

O.J.: And my father-in-law also built boats, and his sons built boats with him there.
K.F.: Okay.
O.J.: Roland and Melvin Marshall, and William Marshall.
K.F.: Okay.
O.J.: William, Melvin and Roland.
SPEAKER: And he did seafood packing too.
O.J.: Yeah.
SPEAKER: The oyster house.
O.J.: He had a oyster house.
K.F.: Okay. So there were about three boat builders here in the Wittman area?
O.J.: Yeah.
K.F.: What would be the difference in the styles, say, between a boat you built versus a boat that, you know, Roland, William and Melvin built in terms of --
O.J.: Well they all had different, a little different -- they're built on the same order.
K.F.: Right.
SPEAKER: Other than his were better looking you mean?
O.J.: No. (Laughter.) I wouldn't say that.
K.F.: I'm going to let him answer that.
O.J.: No, we're not going to get into that. (Laughter.) But we -- usually there's something about a boat that if you see it, you could tell pretty well who built it.
K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).
O.J.: Well we went over to Kent Island here the other day to try to find some boats that maybe I built, but that's been quite a while ago that I built them for over there. When Hazel came through, three men over there lost their boats, and one fellow told me, said if it would do any good, he could've busted out crying. He stayed there on the shore and watched his boat being busted to pieces. And he said he knew it wouldn't do any good, so he didn't do any crying. But they gave me three orders at different times. And I built them. And one time, I built the boat for a man, and he got a loan for it because his boat was tore up in a hurricane. And I didn't get any money until the boat was done. So and I went around to the people that I get lumber from, Mr. Spicer, Mr. Howeth out here, and told them what my situation was. They said that's all right with us. You go ahead, go with it. And when I got the boat done and went over to Centreville and got my check, I come back, sit down and paid the bills off.
K.F.: So what would be -- if I'm looking at one of your boats versus one of Mr. Jackson's boats, what would be the difference? What would I be seeing different?
O.J.: I don't know. It's hard to pinpoint. Maybe the way the -- brackets were put under the washboard, or a snubbing post we used to put in a boat, everybody had their own style of them. Now, of course, in time, the original one may have rotted, somebody put a different one in. So we can't go by that too much either. And usually, by the way the timbers look in the hull, the distance they were set apart, we used -- I used to set them apart, would be about 18 3/4 of an inch, whichever, some of these rulers that opened up, well me and my brother one time had two different kinds of rulers made from different companies. And we marked out the timber and we started putting them up. We found out that they were different. So what we did it took one -- one ruler and measured it and put a stick down in there on the workbench, and put on there that was for the distance

between the timbers so he wouldn't throw it away. And that's the way we solved that problem. Don't trust the rulers because different companies make them different ways.

P.L.: What did the brackets under your washboards look like?

O.J.: (Laughter.) Well --

P.L.: Didn't George Jackson like his flat, flat end on the plank?

O.J.: I believe so.

P.L.: As --

O.J.: The way we used to do it, we put -- I made them out of about a six-inch board, but they would also go under the way the angle set of that, they also go under a 15-inch washboard and leave a space in between in back of it and just brace the front end, and it would be six inches, and the board would be a little -- with the angle, it would be more angle to it. We did it with an adjustable bevel. I have the bevel out there in the building now that we used to use for it. And we have a rough pattern, and when we sold -- my mother sold the shop to a schoolteacher, and I don't -- he did a lot, he did something with some of the patterns that we had left in there, I left them in the shop, like pattern for the stem, and we used to -- that's about all we have, pattern for the stem and some for the timbers, and then we just make the timbers by sliding that pattern up and down whichever way we wanted it.

P.L.: What sort of stern styles did you build?

O.J.: Just straight across.

P.L.: Box stem?

O.J.: Yeah, box stern, straight across. My father, on some of those cruisers, he framed the stern up, and that -- they were made out of either mahogany or -- yeah, most of them were made out of mahogany that he framed. But I never tried to frame one up, I just used a straight stem, straight stern. Used edge-grain fir, and that always varnished up, if somebody wanted it varnished, it finished up right pretty. And then they usually varnish them maybe for a year or two when it was new, and then after a while, they'd paint over it anyhow.

K.F.: Well you were telling us a little bit about the work you did on the Bivalve.

O.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: And, unfortunately, it was off tape. So we're going to backup and have you talk a little bit about that.

O.J.: Well the man's name was Mr. Thompson, and he bought, he bought the boat from a fellow, I don't know who, I don't know who owned that boat when he bought it. I don't really know because a woman owned it one time, and I don't know when that was.

(Cuckoo Clock chiming.) But and I don't know her name. But anyhow --

SPEAKER: She was the last owner, wasn't she? Because -- didn't it end up eventually down at Uncle Henry's?

O.J.: Well, no, it went over on the western shore somewhere after it left Henry's. And I don't know who owned it then either, but they had -- they did away with it from then. But Mr. Thompson wanted me to put an 18 inch railing on the front of the boat, and he wanted me to put another one on the back end of it around the boat, and I did that, and plus painting the sides and we did some work on the bottom. And he used to, he used to go around taking pictures of people's boats sailing, and then he'd send them sailing and he said he made enough money to take a trip to Florida every winter by taking pictures of

people's boats sailing 'cause nobody -- a lot of them had pictures of their boats tied up to a dock or a stake or something, but they never had them sailing.

P.L.: What was it, what was it called before the Bivalve? Because --

O.J.: I don't know if it had a name, but when Mr. -- it was built for Mr. Sam Bridges, and he died at 104 years old, but he sold it to Bill Haddaway in Claiborne for --

K.F.: Oh, okay.

O.J.: And Bill Haddaway used it as a buy boat for oysters. And I think Mr. Haddaway sold it to Mr. Thompson.

SPEAKER: And you've got pictures of that, right?

O.J.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: The Bivalve.

O.J.: I showed them a while ago.

SPEAKER: Oh, did you?

O.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: And then she was turned into sort of a pleasure boat.

O.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: About what time? Do you remember?

O.J.: That was about in the 50's, I think, 50's, maybe 60. Late 50's or early 60's, I'd say.

P.L.: As for the style of your boats, the ones that you were building, can you tell something about how they changed over the years? Did you build, did you build boats that looked different in the 60's than the way you were building in the 50's?

O.J.: No, they're all about the same, about the same style.

P.L.: So the only difference was in what, the customer --

O.J.: What the customer wanted, yes. The way it was finished up and put the floors in it, the way they wanted them and everything.

SPEAKER: Did you lay the hull out differently if they wanted a pleasure boat versus a --

O.J.: Oh, yes. Yeah, you -- usually, that first boat I built for a man down in New Jersey, I had the stern drawn in too much to suit him. One day he came down and looked at it. And he said could you make that boat a little wider? I said yes, but I said now it's going to cost a little bit more money because I got to buy a little bit more lumber for the bottom. And I said I can, I can open it up. So he told me about how wide he wanted it, and so I opened it up to that width, and then made it stern board to suit it. I hadn't made the stern board yet. Just drawing it in, and he happened to come down, he said that was too narrow, he wanted to be able to put about four people across the stern fishing. And so I built it and made it wider for him and he agreed to pay me more money for the bottom, and that was all taken care of. And the first, that boat, I went down with him to take, to see what it was like going through the canal, going down the Delaware Bay, and that got me into that other man I was telling you about that I built him two boats, and I had to deliver them myself. And so I took him down there, and I had some people go with me. It's a long trip to take by yourself. So I had some people go with me.

P.L.: Can you give us an idea of how much -- how many of our orders were for pleasure boats as opposed to watermen's boats?

O.J.: No. I don't -- I didn't have, I don't have any kind of record on how many are built like that.

P.L.: Were most, did you do mostly for --

O.J.: Mostly, I guess, were -- more of them were for workboats than pleasure boats, or those fishing party boats.

K.F.: Let's talk about the bombing of Pot Pie. (Laughter.) I've got several photos around here.

O.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: And now what day did this occur?

O.J.: June the 2nd, 1947. There they are. They're the loose ones.

K.F.: This bomb fell where exactly?

O.J.: Well one fell against the side of the shop, and then another one fell out here just about on my property boundary now, and John Into (phonetic), and we had a pigpen there, and we had two pigs that weighed around 150 pounds on July the 2nd, and when we killed them in November, they still only weighed about 150 pounds. They didn't grow much, if any, after that.

SPEAKER: Did it hit in July or June?

O.J.: July the 2nd. Just a little bit more than a month before you were born.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

K.F.: And were you home, were you around when this happened?

O.J.: Yeah. My father and my brother were working in the shop. One of these pictures got us both, all three standing there. I don't know where it was at now. I don't see it right now. But anyhow, there's three of us standing there. That's me and my brother there.

Now these two people, these two people, one of them is Vance Straussberg, that one, and this is Duddy Soleman (phonetic), I mean Ronnie Soleman, his brother, Ronnie Soleman.

K.F.: So what was -- tell me about that day when these fell. I mean you guys were working in the shop and, you know, it's not every day you get bombed. (Laughter.)

O.J.: Yeah. We were, we were dressing lumber with a planer, and my father was working in the middle of the, up to the front of the planer, and my brother was taking the boards from the planer, and I was bringing them up and helping hold, we had to hold one end while we were taking it through the planer, and my father was guiding them through. And when the bomb hit that shop, it made some kind of a noise, and we turned around, I kind of turned around and looked and seen that shop coming in. It felt like I was going to burst open inside. I remember that in the service, they told you that if you got that feeling to hit the ground, and it would relieve you, and it did. So my father got under part of a workbench we had there, and my brother ducked under a table, the boards were coming out underneath of a table we had built over the planer with some machinery on it.

P.L.: You said it threw cinderblocks quite a distance.

O.J.: Yeah. Two cinderblocks were on the roof, about like, you know, stuck together. And when I hit the ground, I kind of slid a little bit on the ground, and my head was at the shop door, and a lump of dirt hit me in the back of the neck. And when I got up and looked up there and happen to saw these two cinderblocks up there, and I was glad that it was some dirt hit me instead of them. I probably wouldn't have been here.

K.F.: Now when you guys got up from underneath everything and looked around, what did you see?

O.J.: We just saw the shop. Well I've got a picture of it out here in the sunroom of how lumber was strewn all over the place in there, and the side of the shop was -- and it was

messed up like you see in those pictures. And my mother, she thought that we were all dead in there.

K.F.: I bet.

O.J.: She come down there. And my wife was out getting the mail, and she was always used to going getting the mail when I was in the service 'cause I used to write to her every day, and she'd go, she would go on out and get the mail, and people living in this house up here on the other side of this cape cod house, was trying to prepare her for what she was going to see when she turned in this driveway. And she didn't know what they were talking about when she come in there and saw that, she was a little upset too. But everything worked out pretty good, as luck would have it.

K.F.: Now you're saying that it turned out to be a Navy bomb. Is that right?

O.J.: Yes.

K.F.: So, I mean, did you call the Navy? (Laughter.)

O.J.: Well, yeah, we had to -- my father had to write, get permission to sue the government.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: And then, like I said, Judge Clark then was State's Attorney, and he also took private cases too along with it, and he took that case. So he -- we got right ready to go to court in November, and they made us an offer, and Mr. Clark advised my father to take it rather than go to court, 'cause said if the Navy lawyers swayed the Jury, we wouldn't get anything. So my father decided to go take his advice. So he took the settlement out of court.

K.F.: How much was the settlement for?

O.J.: I don't remember now. I don't remember. I don't remember.

SPEAKER: Didn't they say it was the shackle that burst --

O.J.: Yeah, the bomb shackle came with it or they wouldn't have known that it was a bomb, I guess.

SPEAKER: And it was sand and water?

O.J.: Yeah, make 1,000 pound weight. The Navy had accepted the plane from Martin, and they -- something was wrong with it and they sent it back, and this fellow was testing it again, and it was -- he said while he was flying it, he felt the plane lurch, and he knew something happened, but he didn't know what. And when he got back and heard the news, he found out what it was. (Laughter.) Lost two bombs over Wittman. (Laughter.)

P.L.: These were essentially dummy bombs.

O.J.: Yes.

P.L.: That's --

O.J.: The casings, the casings are still down there. They said they were worth more than it would be to get them out. And we had a piece of half-inch bolt rod that came to us in 21-foot sections. And I stuck it down in the bottom of that crater, which was about maybe 8, 10-foot deep. And I just had a handhold on it, and it went down the whole, full 21 foot, and that's solid clay under the ground here for quite a ways down. And it loosened the ground up that far down, at least 21 foot. So they're still there.

K.F.: Goodness. (Laughter.) Now what has happened with the boat building business here in this area? I know a lot of folks are going to fiberglass.

O.J.: Yeah. Well I didn't get into that. I decided to leave the boat building business in 1972. I went to work for Memorial Hospital in Easton.
(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.F.: And so are there any other boat builders left in this area? Mr. McQuay.

O.J.: Yes. David McQuay.

K.F.: Yeah.

O.J.: And no other boat building's going on here now that I know of.

P.L.: Why is it that you decided to give it up in 1972?

O.J.: I don't know. I just got tired of doing that type of work. And I thought there's got to be an easier way of making a living. I tried that for a while, and then I've stayed there until I retired. Somebody told me, says when you, you won't last up there at the hospital six months. Said you've been used to being your own boss, and you're not going to let somebody tell you what to do. I said well everybody I've built a boat for told me what to do. I built the boat the way they wanted it. (Laughter.) And I did the work the way I wanted it, but not -- I built the boat the way the man wanted it.

K.F.: I wonder if we should have you tell us about some of these photos that we're looking at. I know some of these are Ocean City.

O.J.: Yeah, that's Ocean City.

K.F.: Were these family trips that you all would go on?

O.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. I don't know what they were doing in there with boots. But anyhow -- but that's where that, we went on that -- well that girl was getting, her husband's taking sand off of her feet and legs down there.

K.F.: What was Ocean City like back in the 50's?

O.J.: I don't know, about like it is now, I guess. I don't know. I don't see where that's changed much.

K.F.: Who are these folks? Tell me about these people?

O.J.: That is Victor Harrison. That first one there on the left is Victor Harrison; his wife, Laura Harrison; and this is their daughter, I can't think of her name now. Gosh. And Dirk Cummings (phonetic), young Dirk, Bernard Cummings was his name. And this is Bernard and Eleanor was his wife's name. And this is their daughter, Linda, and this is our son, Gary. And this is my wife over here on, on the end.

K.F.: And what was her name?

O.J.: Ella. And this is my wife's sister, Louise, and my wife, Ella, and her -- Louise's son, Tommy, and this is Gary again having a hot dog roast down on our shore.

K.F.: Now was this something you all did every year? Was it a family --

O.J.: Well we did it quite often. And this is just my wife sitting there in a chair.

K.F.: Having a good cold Coke.

O.J.: Yeah, and that's another dude came down to visit us in the afternoon. That's about all.

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

O.J.: And this is a picture of Melvin Marshall's wife. They lived across the road from us.

K.F.: Okay.

O.J.: Her name is Iva, and she's dead now. And this, this is a picture of Pearl Cummings with a parakeet. Gosh, I don't know who that is. (Laughter.)

K.F.: We all have photos like that.

O.J.: That's all right. And there's a bunch of kids that Gary had a birthday party. We wasn't going to have a birthday party, and he invited every kid in Wittman, and they're all down there. (Laughter.) So we had to have a party for him.

K.F.: Well Wittman looks like a great place to grow up.

O.J.: Well it was pretty quiet. Always has been pretty quiet. And we got a good bunch of neighbors around us now. People are kind of new coming in.

P.L.: I found a picture of a boat that you labeled -- that you built for yourself.

O.J.: Oh, yes. That's -- I named that after my son, I named it Gary Boy 'cause we didn't have any daughters, and my wife didn't want me to name it after her, so I named it after him. But it was still went by the -- it didn't go by the name, it went by the number, Coast Guard number, or Custom House number, rather. And that was a 32-foot workboat.

P.L.: What, why did you build yourself a boat?

O.J.: Well sometime in the wintertime, it got a little slack, and had good, I had to go tonging, so I built a boat for two reasons. If I had to go tonging, I could use that. If somebody wanted to buy it, I'd sell it. So I did finally wind up selling it. And me and my brother built a boat, he built a workboat similar to that, only 38 feet long. And we wanted to put new wharves in after my father died in 1952, we decided to put new wharves in, and they're down here now, the pilings, but they've had new deck put on some of them, one of them. And he sold his boat before I sold the Gary Boy, and so we put the wharves in with the money he got from that, selling his boat. When I sold my boat, I gave him half of the money, the expense of the wharves for -- I gave him my half of the bill when I sold my boat. And my mother still owned the shop until after I had decided to quit and go to work for the hospital, then she sold it to a school teacher in -- lived in Pennsylvania, and he had it for a while, and then he died of Lou Gehrig's disease, and his wife sold it to John Into and his wife now.

P.L.: So the boat's still around?

O.J.: The boat, must be over around Kent Island, I think, is where the boat went over there, I think.

K.F.: That's your pile to copy.

P.L.: I've been sorting that carefully.

K.F.: Okay. Do you have any other questions, Pete, that you want to add to this?

P.L.: Oh, just one other. Did you, after your brother left the business, the boat building business, did you employ anybody else?

O.J.: Yes. The fellow lived up the road here a little ways from me. Avery Fairbanks. He worked for me until I quit down there in the boatyard. Then he got a job up in Memorial Hospital as a painter.

P.L.: So it was just the two of you all those years.

O.J.: Yes. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And onetime, I had another fellow hired herein Wittman helping on the railway work, one thing or another. His name was David C. Jones, Senior. And he worked for me for a year or so in the summer anyhow.

P.L.: When you haul a boat out on the railway here, did you do all the work? Did you and your --

O.J.: Yes.

P.L.: -- people did, you didn't let the watermen do --

O.J.: Oh, no. They could do it if they wanted to. They did what they wanted. Of course, most of the time we had to wash them off and do the copper work, or caulking and stuff like that we did ourselves. And one man had a boat here one time and he says boat was leaking real bad, said he wanted the garbered seam caulked. So me and my helper, he was right handed and I'm left handed, so we started like on the -- I started on the side that was right-handed for me to work, and he started on the other side, and we went right back to the stern, launched his boat next morning early. I told him to come up and get it. After a while, I went out to see how his boat was doing. And I told Avery, I said my goodness, we didn't get that leak. I said it's still over up to the keel. So we had, we're pumping it out, and I went and looked for the leak, and the water was coming in from a pipe fitting in his toilet that they had right up in the front of the boat, and a hole was about the size of a pencil maybe a little bit smaller, and it was a steady stream running in there, and I went up and got a new fitting for it, and screwed it on there, and it stopped his leak. And when the man came in, he said I don't know, you're not going to like this, I don't think. We just, we caulked your garbered seam and found out it wasn't the garbered seam that was leaking. And I said it was -- I said it was just a fitting that was on the toilet. And he said well, said it's been quite some time since it was caulked anyhow, so he said that don't make any difference. He knew we did the work on it anyway. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Do you want to show us some of those slides you have in the other room?

O.J.: Huh?

K.F.: Do you want to show us some of the slides you have in the other room?

O.J.: Yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative).

(OFF RECORD.)

O.J.: Oh, that's the second boat I built that man from down there in New Jersey. And that's a place called, it's called Bedwell's Creek. It's about 14 miles from the end of Cape May Point. I don't know what that, that's a bad picture there. Now that's one of the boats I used to, I worked on.

P.L.: You didn't build that one. It was just hauled in that way?

O.J.: Yeah. We just hauled it in on the railway and just finished painting it. I took a picture of it.

P.L.: Can you tell whose boat that is by the style?

O.J.: Yeah. That was -- shucks, I know that man's name. Can't think of it now.

P.L.: Not one of the, not one of the local Pot Pie builders.

O.J.: No, no. I don't know where he had that boat built, but I can't remember the man's name now. I built that boat for a fellow who lives over in Wye River. His name was Kenneth Snipeman. And I've got a picture that shows in here of him taking the boat home. It's in here somewhere. We'll come to it in a minute. There's some of the boats that was here in my storage for storing. And that was one of the new boats I had built waiting for the --

K.F.: On the right?

O.J.: -- on the right. Yes. Uh-huh (Affirmative). There's two masts, there's some dredge boats I had working. One of them was for Mr. Leonard Murphy, and the other

one was for David Faulkner. And I did some work on the decks of them. They were too big for me to pull. I couldn't pull them boats on my railway.

K.F.: So you just did deck work and --

O.J.: Huh?

K.F.: You just did deck work?

O.J.: Yeah, I did --I did some work on them. I forget what I did. I think, yeah, on the deck I think, or at least above the waterline. And there's some boats that were stored at my place. Now that one out there froze. I built that boat for some people in Wilmington, and I built this one in here closer to the shore for a fellow over in Washington, and he was going to put his own cabin on that one. And it was just -- now my father built that second boat there with a cover on it, and that boat was named The Wanderer. And -- the school teacher that lived over here next door owned that boat then. And that other boat outside, it belongs to Mr. Herman Harrison down in Tilghman. Herman Harrison, Senior. And that boat's name was Hermada II (phonetic). That's that boat I was, that Island Star, but I can't remember the man's name that owned it. And that other boat out there in the creek, that's a boat I built for Avery Fairbank, my helper. That's some ice down here in the wintertime. There's some more boats that I used to take care of during the winter. One of them was the Shirley G from Tilghman, and the other one was a Dorsey, Mr. Randolph Harrison owned it, and Shirley G -- Garvin, owned it. That's one of the hurricanes that came through here with, Tide up the foot of the road here, Tide Road coming in.

K.F.: Is that Agnes or Hazel or --

O.J.: Yeah. Hazel, I think that was. I was showing these pictures to a man one time, and he lived in Wilmington, and he said that boat there looks like mine. I said it was yours. (Laughter.) I said I didn't think you'd mind if I took it up there and helped people get across that water. He said no, he didn't mind, but he was wondering what it was doing up there (Laughter.) And that's another, that's how I had a boat on the railway there that time. I was afraid it was going to float off, but it didn't get up high enough to do that. And that's a picture of the same boats that are in a different place. That one out the end of the wharf, I built that one for a fireman in Baltimore, and he just wanted a little 21-foot boat with -- no, no cabin or nothing on it. And I don't know his name either now. Can't remember that. And there's some more picture of boats stored there in the summertime. They were being made there mostly by -- waiting to be worked on the railway or just been railwayed. That's that same boat -- back to where I started. No, I ain't. Now that's a fellow people lived in Wilmington, the boy was their son, and that's Gary in the middle, and his nephews, his cousin, Scott Jones, on the right. That's a low tide we had here. It's the lowest I ever saw it. I got two or three pictures of that in here. I went from one extreme, the tides, to the other. See, there's another picture of it. I have one of those C-3 cameras and you had to focus it yourself. Sometimes I didn't get it focused right. That's that man that I built the boat for, the one sitting down on the left. That's the day we carried it up to Wye Landing where they lived. And that's a boat that Elmer Ranger used to have here, and Sam McQuay built that boat, David's father. And I burned the boat off and painted it. And that's the boat, we went down to -- I think that's somewhere in Smith's Island, that background. We went down there one time with two other people, Bud Roth (phonetic), and Betsy Wander (phonetic). And we went down there in two

different boats. That's about the same one. And that's the Hermada II, just railwayed. Didn't put any picture in that one, I guess. That's it.

K.F.: Okay. All right. Any other questions from those slides, Pete?

P.L.: Not at this point, thank you.

K.F.: Well we should probably see if there's any photos that you want a copy at the museum or anything else that we want a copy at the museum.

O.J.: Yeah, all right.

K.F.: Then I'd like to take photos of the shop. Is that possible? And a photo of you.

O.J.: I don't mind. I don't know if they mind it or not.

K.F.: Well we won't be going in, we'll just be --

O.J.: Huh?

K.F.: Take exterior shots, I guess, down by the shop maybe.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)