

### **Interview Log**

**Interviewee:** Andrea Jacquette

**Tape #:** MAAF/KF/MD/FT4.28.308/411

**Interviewer:** Kelly Feltault

**# of Tapes:** 1

**Date:** April 28

**# of Sides:** 2

**Location:** Rock Hall, Maryland

**Topic:** Delmarva Folklife Project

### **Corresponding Photography Log #:**

**Comments:** Clear recording. Sounds of baby included in recording. Music heard faintly in background.

## **BEGIN SIDE A**

K.F.: So if you could say your name, and we'll just go back to talking about your soft crab business.

A.J.: Okay. Andrea Jacquette.

K.F.: Okay. And you were saying that you had been working at a bank and also doing the soft crab business?

A.J.: We had a seafood store. We've also been in the wholesale retail part of the seafood business for 20 years.

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

A.J.: So I retired from that and became seafood dealer full time.

K.F.: Okay. And was that the Annie J's (phonetic), the truck I see out there?

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: And was it just crabs, or did you guys deal in fish as well?

A.J.: We dealt, we dealt in everything.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Mostly local, local catch. Our retail business was 99 percent crab sales, steamed crabs, live crab sales, because that's mostly what the tourists, you know, the tourists want are the steamed crabs.

K.F.: Right. And you were saying you dealt mostly to the tourists?

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: And that was because?

A.J.: Locally, you got a brother, you got a cousin, you got a next-door neighbor. They're all watermen, so why would you go buy seafood from a store when you can get it, get it from your next-door neighbor or one relative?

K.F.: Right. (Sound of baby crying). And the soft crabs, you were saying you send mostly to Baltimore and Western Shore?

A.J.: Yeah, yeah.

K.F.: Okay. And what is your schedule when you're working the shedding?

A.J.: Twenty-four hours, around the clock, 24 hours.

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Starting in what month?

A.J.: Usually here, mid-June. And then you end up like the first of November.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And you go 24 hours around the clock. They don't have a time schedule.

K.F.: Right. (Laughter). And how often do you have to fish them up?

A.J.: Depending on the temperature of the water, normally if the water temperature stays like at 75, 85 degrees, then you've got like every four hours.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: The cooler the temperature gets, the slower the crabs actually slough. So we like it when the water temperature stays down because that gives you, that gives you a little bit more sleep time there.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So but they don't have a time schedule. They just steady go 24 hours around the clock. And by the time that you finish, finish getting over your boxes and getting all your soft crabs

sorted (baby crying), getting them cleaned, then it's time to start all over again with the next batch.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So –

K.F.: And how did you learn how to take care of these soft crabs, and be able to tell, you know, who's ready, who's not, all that? Was it just –

A.J.: Born and bred in you. (Laughter). From the time, from the time that you can pick up a dip net and go soft crabbing (baby) around the shore till you get down to the more scientific parts of it, making sure that you have the right nitrates, and the right nitrites and the right pH levels and whatever. We started off, you know, kids with dip nets walking around the shore. And then at that time, you could just take them down the – down the shore where it was nothing but seafood, you know, stores and stuff and sell them.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And you learned whether you wanted one that really, really crunched in your mouth or you wanted one that was soft when you bit into it (laughter). That's how you tell the difference. Or you want one that bit you, or you want one that just kind of like sat there in your hand when you held onto it. And, of course, you want the one that kind of just sits there. You don't want the one that kind of goes up and grabs at you. You want the one that kind of just sits there. It depends, really too, upon your market. If you're shipping your soft crabs out live (baby crying). If you ship your soft crabs out live, depending upon where they're going, is the toughness or the tenderness of them.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: If they have to be shipped long, long distances, okay, if I take them from here and I should take them, say, to United in Kent Island –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Okay, and they're going to be shipping them – bless you, bless you, if they're going to be shipping them, say, to New York –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Okay, then you've got to have that crab a little bit tougher than if you would be putting it in a showcase and selling it to the public.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: Because the tougher they are, the longer they live.

K.F.: Right, okay. Okay.

A.J.: A soft crab will turn from soft to what we call a buckler within 12 hours. And you would want to take him out of his – out of the water within a half an hour after he sheds.

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

A.J.: And then he's at his most tender stage. The longer you leave –

K.F.: Twelve hours to get him to the market.

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Now he doesn't stay, he doesn't continue on to get hard. Once he comes out of the water, he stays at whatever texture he is --

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: -- when he comes out of that water.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: But say if you're going to be shipping those crabs out and you know that they're going to go for a distance, and they're going to be, say, 24 hours or 48 hours getting somewhere, then you're going to want to let him stay in that water until he gets a little bit harder.

K.F.: Okay, okay. (Baby crying).

A.J.: You've had enough time in there, haven't you? And basically, that's it. Now that, I mean you have two ways to still shedding. You have the old way, which is the one I actually prefer, which is you pump water overboard into boxes and slough them, versus the new way, which is the in-ground systems where you pump your water in and you maintain that water and make sure that your pH balance is right, your oxygen level is right, your nitrates are right, your nitrites are right, and there's a way of balancing all of that.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Chemically balancing.

K.F.: And what, what is the balance you prefer or that works better?

A.J.: You have a, we actually have test kits that actually show us where it's supposed to be. And you can actually tell by the crabs themselves too.

K.F.: Yeah, do they react differently?

A.J.: They react a lot differently.

K.F.: Oh.

A.J.: The water's too cold, they're sluggish, they won't slough. Water's too hot, they slough. And if the water is – when your water temperature gets extremely high, like above 85 degrees, crabs get real, real sluggish, and they actually don't – usually when the water temperature gets that high, the oxygen level in the water actually decreases and your crabs will actually die.

K.F.: Oh, okay, okay.

A.J.: I can't tell you how many parts per million that your nitrates have to be, and your pH has to be and whatever. It's kind of like you know by the way that the crabs act whether your water is right or not. You also can smell the water, and you can tell the difference by the way the water smells. So, and you have, you know, you've got ways of combating it. You can always – we aerate ours, we pump a lot of oxygen into them. You have to make sure your salinity is correct. There are times when different things will grow in the water, and you have to change water. We use water from overboard.

K.F.: Okay, right.

A.J.: Pump water into it. A lot of people start with fresh water and add to it, make it the right salinity and whatever, but we usually use overboard water. And then if it gets a little low or something's actually wrong with the water, we just kind of pump it down and restart it again.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We have an algae that we try and get to grow, which actually puts – there's good algae and bad algae.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We want the good to grow. We use oysters for this algae to attach to and grow to, use oyster shells.

K.F.: Oh, okay, okay.

A.J.: Which, the algae actually feeds off of the bad things that are in the water, and then puts out the oxygen for the water. So – and you usually get your system started, which I'm very far

behind this year, you usually get your systems up and running like 60 days before you actually start –

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: -- doing any kind of sloughing. (Baby). Maybe you might want to come back in the summer, and we can give you a low blow.

K.F.: Oh, yeah. That'd be great.

A.J.: What's going on. We really won't start here until, like I said, mid-June, late-June before anything really gets going here.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Of course, you never know. This has been an early crab season here too. We may have, we may start earlier than that.

K.F.: Right. I guess that was because the winter was not as cold.

A.J.: So very, very mild. So very, very mild.

K.F.: We've had a (inaudible).

A.J.: Yes, we have. Actually, the winter was warmer than the spring. (Laughter). We got spoiled a couple weeks ago when it got up to like 90 degrees, and now we're right back into actually spring, and I'm not liking it at all. (Laughter).

K.F.: And how did you learn to gear the nets?

A.J.: Passed down from generation, to generation, to generation.

K.F.: So someone in your family did this?

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

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

A.J.: My grandfather started. My grandfather was a waterman, my father was a waterman, my husband's a waterman, she will be a waterman (laughter). My grandfather actually started teaching. Of course, my mother and I geared when we very first started. Her and I did it. And now we just, friends that have husbands that are watermen, you have to learn because, you know, you have to be able to help your husband, so you have to learn. Now I have friends that do it. I've taught –

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: -- people to do it. I've taught the next generation, which is my niece, I've taught her how to do it.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Two of my nieces, I've taught. So they will be, it will continue on. Long fingers here will learn, whether she wants to or not, she will learn. Long fingers do help.

K.F.: Yeah. (Laughter). And what is it about long fingers that really –

A.J.: You have the dexterity with the real long fingers, and you really need them. Little short, stubby fingers, nothing against them, it's like sewing, and long fingers help. And the needles that you actually use are long.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And big. And you need a hand that can actually hold that.

K.F.: Okay, right.

A.J.: (Talking to baby).

K.F.: And is it driftnets that you usually do?

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). We do driftnets. I have tried, and tried. My husband is a cat fisherman. He does what's called a catfish pot, which is actually a netted fike.

K.F.: Right, the ones I saw out there.

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Strung out. He does those. And I can't get the hang of it. There's just something about it that I just cannot get the hang of it. So I just help on the other end of it. (Laughter). He does, he does most of the sewing on those.

K.F.: Okay, okay. Is it that they take a different type of knot, or is it their round structure?

A.J.: I think, I think it's the structure of them. And I just, I want to do it backwards, and it doesn't work.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: I think if I could get inside of it, maybe, instead of trying to work on it from the outside, I may be able to get the hang of it.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: But to me, it's backwards. (Baby sounds).

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: On the nets you work right to left. On the fikes you work left to right. And it's completely backwards to me. So --

K.F.: Okay, okay. And when do you usually do the nets?

A.J.: This year, because I'm home, we're going to be working all year on them.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Usually, we have a frantic time. Most watermen will put everything off to the very last minute, and driftnet season usually starts like in November (baby) so you have a mad rush from September to October. November and December are your hardest months. They're your really go-after months.

K.F.: Right.

(Baby crying).

A.J.: And they're frantic when they come to you, they're frantic. Like I said, they will put it off to the very last minute.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: And that's when they want everything done, at the last minute. So you have it piled up, and piled up. And, you know, you just get to it as you can, and you go as hard as you can, and you have, you know, you have your repeat customers that you do year after year, and you kind of know that they're coming back (cuckoo clock), and you kind of like get on the phone and say hey --

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, we're getting ready to start, you better get it here so you can get yourself in line. And then we also do (clock chimes) -- there's ones out there that you know are just starting or only have a limited amount of gear, and they go out one day and they tear up everything that they've got. So you kind of throw down whoever you're working on.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And do them up something so that they can get back out there and tear up some more so that you've got a job the next day. (Laughter). You know, it's like oh, that's so-and-so, we'll put him in line right now because we know he's gonna take this out and tear this up within a week, and we'll have a job next week. (Laughter).

K.F.: Is that because they're so young, they haven't figured out how not to do that?

A.J.: Well, yeah, but then there's the older ones too that, you know, the bay changes every day. There's new hangs out there, and there's ice, and there's wind. And everything gets, you know, no matter how good you are, you're going to lose some. So, yeah, we do the – we do do that. We do it a lot. (Laughter). And usually, our normal customers know, and usually they're in a mad rush because from season to season, sizes change on the net, and sometimes they have enough to get started with, and maybe this might be next year's supply.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Or it might be something that they're not going to use for a couple months, so you know, we know we can throw them down. And they (baby crying), they would do the same thing. You know, they would put something else off so that they could help somebody, so that's basically what we do. (Talking to baby).

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: Yeah, I was just in Dover yesterday, and talking with this hunter and his sons, and they live outside of Dover so that they can have a pond and build their blinds, their duck blinds and stuff, and have their dogs, and leave the house at 3 a.m. and not disturb the neighbors and you know, and they also said, you know, some – we're sure some neighbors would not think it was good that we were taking our seven and nine-year old sons hunting.

A.J.: Oh, sure. That's just a way of living, and it's not a – for us, when we grew up, hunting was – we wanted, we wanted to eat it.

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

A.J.: I mean that, that was something that we thoroughly enjoyed. I mean I was hunting at 12 years old.

K.F.: Oh, really? Was this duck, or goose, or deer?

A.J.: Duck, squirrel, rabbit, anything like that. I never could shoot a deer. I just, I never could bring myself to do it. It was just something that, you know, I just couldn't do. (Laughter). And I didn't like it to begin with.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: So, therefore, you know, why kill it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: But the others, I loved. So why not? But I mean I don't – I see a lot on television about the game preserves where they go and they go hunting. That's not hunting.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: When they release, when you have tamed things and you release them, that's not hunting. That's slaughter.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: There is no challenge to that.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Animals are dumb to begin with, but I mean don't set out a tame duck in front of you and expect the thing to fly away. It's going to come up to your feet to eat. No, that's not hunting.

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

A.J.: That's just glorified. That is not, that's not a challenge. I raised ducks and geese. We moved here, we'll be here 15 years, 15 years in December. I quit hunting, I guess, when I was in my teens, and my husband continued on to hunt. He never hunted deer either. Ducks, geese,

squirrels, rabbits, pheasant, quail. But since we moved here, we don't hunt, neither one of us do. (Laughter). The only –

K.F.: Why not?

A.J.: The only – because you sit here, and you watch it. You see it –

K.F.: Oh, right.

A.J.: -- every day.

K.F.: Yeah.

A.J.: And you watch it grow from something that's real, real tiny, you know, till it's full-grown. And how can you kill something after you've watched it sit there and grow like that?

(Laughter). You just can't do it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: There's just no way. And he's, I think he's gone hunting twice since we've been here, but he doesn't hunt here. He's gone somewhere else and killed something that he hasn't seen grow up. (Laughter). Last year, we raised a baby deer last year.

K.F.: Oh.

A.J.: Which is against the law. We know it. But he's gone now. Once he got to the, to a certain – when they get to a certain stage, the wildness comes back. He's gone. We thoroughly enjoyed him for six months. Bottle feeding him, raising him, watching him eat out of your hand, watching the things that he would eat and not eat.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Look at you with them great big brown eyes –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Play with the dogs, thought he was a dog. But then the wildness comes back, and he took off. So, you know, you just can't, you just can't kill something when you've seen it like that.

(Laughter). You just can't do it. I just had six baby geese hatch.

K.F.: Oh, really?

A.J.: They're about yo big. The only thing I pick my gun up for here is snakes, water snakes. That's the only thing I pick my gun up for. Nothing – and an occasional fox that I think is going to be threatening my duck or my geese.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: That's the only thing I pick my gun up for. And I know it's in their nature, but I've also raised these things, (laughter) and I don't expect them to be dinner. I really don't like it. But you just, you know, once you raise them, you just, you just can't, you just can't shoot it (laughter). You just can't. Okay, we're back. I'm actually very blessed. She's a wonderful child.

K.F.: Right. Goes right to sleep.

A.J.: She gets up, she sleeps all night. She has since the day she was born. So I'm very, very fortunate.

K.F.: Yeah. Hopefully, she'll stay like that.

A.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: She won't, you know, when she's two; she won't go through a period where she just doesn't want to sleep anymore.

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). All right. So back to –

K.F.: The netting, I guess.

A.J.: Okay. Do you know anything about it? Have you ever seen it done?

K.F.: I've not seen it done. I have talked to one other netter, and he's also a pound net fishermen.

A.J.: Oh, okay. Which is?

K.F.: Roger Schwindeman (phonetic), he's in Virginia.

A.J.: No.

K.F.: Is there somebody here who's a pound netter?

A.J.: Yeah. I can get payback too for this. Do you know anything about Kent Island at all?

K.F.: Not too much.

A.J.: Okay. We have really, really good friends in Kent Island who is – that's what he does for a living is pound net.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And his wife, Karen, she does most of the mending and all that kind of stuff.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: You might want to call them, and talk to them, and tell them that I referred you. I have payback (laughter). I owe her one for doing one of these things. So I got elected to the title Fishery Advisory Board.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: Last year. And I'm not a photographic person. I hate having my picture taken.

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

A.J.: And we had been on vacation with Karen and Johnny.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: So Karen kind of found like a photograph and sent it because they wanted to put one in the – so I have payback for Karen. (Laughter). This will be payback. She's, Karen's very good at it. Karen's very good at –

K.F.: Okay. And what are their last names?

A.J.: Their last name is Lassahn, Johnny and Karen Lassahn. It's L-A-S-S-A-H-N. These are like the original needles.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: These are hand carved.

K.F.: Did someone in your family make these?

A.J.: No. We don't use anything like that anymore.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Those we collect.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Now what they go to is like a plastic needle.

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

A.J.: Okay. If you break it, who cares?

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: They're a dime a dozen. And you break them. (Laughter). I mean you break them. You either break them, or you pull on them with such force that the tong will bend, and the twine that you use won't come off of it properly. So it's like throw it away and get another 10-cent one and go on with it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: This is my gold one. And it's, it's a very easy job. It's just a monotonous type of work. That's why you need to have somebody do it with you.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Because it's very monotonous. And if you don't have somebody going down the line with you talking to you, you know, while you're doing it, you can get a year's worth of work – a year's worth of catching up with somebody in 15 minutes going down a line, you know, gearing this net.

K.F.: Right. And who do you gear with usually?

A.J.: Janet Norloff (phonetic). Somebody that just a really, really good friend. Her husband's a waterman, so she does it for a living. She does the catfish pots that I'm talking about.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: She does those. She's very good at it. She's tried to teach me. I'm lost. I just don't have the knack for it.

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

A.J.: I can show you how to do this here.

K.F.: Okay.

(OFF RECORD.)

A.J.: That you can wind on a machine, and they're called an H needle. We don't, I don't like them. Some of the people like them. I don't. I don't care for them. We'll sit down, and we'll fill say 100 needles a night when we're gearing. And that's how you fill them.

K.F.: So you go the other side.

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Uh-huh (affirmative). Usually put that in a bucket so it doesn't fall off, and it comes off very easily. And this is your idle-time work, like when you're sitting down watching television at nighttime, you sit and you fill your needles. Keeps you from smoking a lot of cigarettes too. (Laughter). And like when you're eating lunch –

K.F.: Right. Just take --

A.J.: While you're eating, you sit there and, you know, take a bite of sandwich and fill your needle at the, you know, while you're sitting there eating your lunch. And, of course, you have to take silly breaks too because you get to the point where, you know, everything is very – you get monotonous, and you get tired, because you do this, you know, depending upon how really, really strapped you are, how many piles of it that you have to do –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, you get to the point where you go, and go, and go so very, very hard that you get, you know, silly. So then you just stop and you sit down and fill needles to get you through. (Laughter). Some days, most days we'll work eight hours. Some days, you'll work 12, you know. It just depends.

K.F.: And you were saying that you, you and your mom did this for your dad?

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). No, not for my dad. My dad was a shad fisherman.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: And they didn't do, use these. Used the nets that we use. We just did it for other people.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: We do nets for a lot of the boys over on the Western Shore.

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

A.J.: A lot for, we go clear down to Crisfield.

K.F.: Oh.

A.J.: They bring it to us. We do it, and then they come pick it up.

K.F.: Wow.

A.J.: There are a lot of people that do it still, but apparently not enough. (Laughter).

K.F.: That's what I've been hearing.

A.J.: Either there's not enough, or there's not enough pay in it, or one thing that, one reason that we do have a lot is because if John Doe brings us his net and he says, when he brings it he, you know, you tell him this'll be done by next week –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: This'll be done Tuesday. Tuesday comes, and that's done. It's not a thing, oh, I'm sorry, it's going to be another week.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Tuesday, it's done.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And I think that's one of the reasons that we have, you know, a lot of repeat customers is because when we say it's going to be done, unless there is something, you know, disastrous that comes along, it's done.

K.F.: And how long will that one needle last, I mean as far as say a space of net?

A.J.: Maybe, maybe, maybe 15 foot.

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

A.J.: And then you start again. Now there's all different sizes. I mean they start, it depends on the size of your net, how big the meshes are in your net, what size needle you use.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Okay. We use, we gear anything from three inches up to like five and three quarters.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: So and our basic size is this, which is like a six or a six and a half inch needle.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: The bigger the hand, the bigger the needle.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Most men use like a 12-inch needle. It's a really long, you know, they have bigger hands.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So, but for us, these little six or six and a half inch needles work really well. I don't have any net to do this. (Laughter). But basically, what you do it you have a top line and a bottom line, okay, which is stretched out taut.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: All right. And then you have the actual net itself. Okay. And what you do is actually sew this to the top and the bottom line. Your top line is what's called your float line.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And your bottom line is your lead line or your sandbag line, which is, which makes it stay down on the bottom.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Okay. And then you have your float line, which makes it float. Not necessarily on top of the water, but it keeps the net itself –

K.F.: Straight.

A.J.: Straight, so that the fish can swim into it. And basically what you do is, this is going to be hard, you wrap it around it, and this is usually tight. You can't do that. That's tight.

K.F.: Do you need like a pencil maybe?

A.J.: And you'd have to hold it. (Laughter).

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: This way, this way. Okay. What you do is you go around it like that, and then through it, and then back through it again. Can't really do it on a plastic pencil. Okay, right?

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And then that's how it's lashed down. And then you pick up. These will sew through –

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: -- little meshes of the net.

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

A.J.: Okay. And then you bring it up tight again, and you go again.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Okay. And then how do you sort of gauge the mesh, how wide it's going to be?

A.J.: Okay.

K.F.: Because I know the net comes, and you can either stretch it or –

A.J.: Right. It's either full or tight.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Depending on the size of the net, depending on what they're doing with the net –

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

A.J.: You use percentages. And most of these, most of the ones that we gear the net for, because it is a gill net and you do want some kind of play in the net, you don't want it actually taut –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We do a 40 percent ratio. So you would take however many meshes that you have –

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And that will tell you how far to make your ties, actually, apart.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

A.J.: So if you have – we usually do, I think, most rock net which is like five, five and a quarter, five and a half, you do six and a half inch ties to it.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And you also will pick up three meshes of net.

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

A.J.: To those ties. (Cuckoo clock, chimes). So you'll have 18 inches of net –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: No. Yeah, close to 18 inches of net in a 6-inch tie.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

A.J.: Now in your perch net, which is real, real small, you, like on a six-inch tie, you would pick up like five or six meshes of the net.

K.F.: Right, right. Okay.

A.J.: So to keep it so that it does actually, you know, it's not tight. The fish aren't going to hit it and bounce off of it. They're going to hit and go into it.

K.F.: And gill it. Right.

A.J.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: If I had my stuff set up, I could show you out in the garage, but I don't think we're set up. I geared until the week before I had her, and I haven't done any since. (Laughter). Kind of got a little on the lazy side. (Laughter).

K.F.: And how much do you guys charge for a net? I mean –

A.J.: Depending on the size of it. Rock net is usually by the box, and a box is usually 1,000 foot.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: So it's usually \$100 a box.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Perch net is usually, is done by the coil.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And it's usually a 600-foot net, and it's \$80. It's a little bit more expensive than the rock net even though you're doing more rock, you're doing more, but it's a lot more tedious because the meshes in the net are so much smaller that it takes you a little bit more time. You can actually do a thousand foot of rock net faster than you can do 600 foot of perch net because of the size of it, because of what you have to handle.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: So –

K.F.: And what about some of the other fish that – well maybe I'm thinking of the lower shore, the fish they catch on the lower shore. I know –

A.J.: We do rock up here and perch.

K.F.: And perch. What about croaker and –

A.J.: That's down the bay farther.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And it basically is done the same exact way, is done with the driftnet. I think they – yeah, I'm pretty sure they drift.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah.

A.J.: And it would basically be done the same exact way.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

A.J.: So, and then the only difference that you have would be like the fikes or the, or the catfish pods, or your pound nets. That's the only difference.

K.F.: Right. And you don't work on the pound nets at all?

A.J.: Huh-uh (negative).

K.F.: That's a whole different rope as well.

A.J.: That's a whole different, yeah, ballgame. It's a very, very thick twine.

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

A.J.: Really, really have gauge.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So, no, we don't do any of those.

K.F.: Okay. And you said your family's been here for generations.

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

K.F.: If you can tell me about some of the family history here in, the Jacquettes or your family.

A.J.: I don't know a whole – that's a terrible thing to say. We've been married 25 years. I – basically, the Jacquettes were farmers.

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

A.J.: And all of this was Jacquettes (laughter), all farmland. And they also were, some of the Jacquettes that lived farther on down the road were in the dairy business.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

A.J.: And I, that's a terrible thing to say, but I really never really went back into their history. Ours, my family, which are Ashleys and Colliers, have all been watermen as far back as I know.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Clear back to like great-grandfathers. Watermen. That was it. That's all we've ever been.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: My grandfather was a sein haul, or haul sein?

K.F.: Oh, right.

A.J.: He was a – they sein hauled. That's what they did for a living.

K.F.: And where did they do that, up in this upper part of the water?

A.J.: Yeah, in the Chester River.

K.F.: In the Chester River?

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

K.F.: Okay. And farther down, like down the bay farther. They would be gone for weeks at a time.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Weeks, months at a time. My father was a charter boat captain. They also netted for shad, they rock fished, and they he retired as a tugboat captain. He went, came to shore, and then went back out to shore – out of shore, and retired as a tugboat captain. My brother is a waterman.

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

A.J.: My sister's married to a waterman. Jimmy's sister is married to a waterman. Her son is a waterman. You're either a farmer or a waterman. (Laughter). That's about it in Rock Hall. You know, basically, that's it.

K.F.: Now are there many guys coming into the waterman business, or –

A.J.: I think the ones that their fathers will retire as watermen, their sons will grow up as watermen. The ones that don't really take it seriously will not become watermen.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We sat down, somebody called me one time and asked me about that, how many, you know, of the younger generation were going to become watermen, and I really sat down and I thought about it, and I thought about all the ones like now, like would be our children.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: How many of them are out there. And I really couldn't count a handful, which is sad.

K.F.: Yeah.

A.J.: You know, I just could not come up wit over a handful that were actually going to become watermen. And I don't know whether it's – a lot of people say that it's because it's a dying thing.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: It's all what you make of it. If you want to really work hard at it, and that's like at anything, if you really work hard at it, you can be successful at it. Sure, there's a lot of rules and regulations, and there's a lot of people that don't believe that we should be doing what we do, but they sit down and eat seafood at their dinner table every night.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And if it's not for us, they wouldn't be eating it. I mean, where's it going to come from if we don't go get it for them.

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

A.J.: But I think if you really work hard at it and your heart is in it, that you'll succeed at it.

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

A.J.: And I can't imagine, and I know if you've talked to Ronnie at all, I imagine, I know Ronnie probably has reservations about leaving it on one hand, but glad, maybe, that he's out of it on the other hand. I can't imagine my husband, he grew up as a farmer –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And started at like 15 working on the water. And I can't imagine him sitting behind a desk. I think it would kill him.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: I don't think he could be closed in. When we started the seafood business, when we actually started it, we did it out of our home.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And then it got to the point where it was so large that, you know, we just couldn't handle it out of the house. And it was 24 hours around the clock, you know, you had people coming to the house. And it was like, shew, you know, you have no time on your own at all.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So then we moved it and opened up Annie J's, and then you really still didn't have any time on your own, but at least you could walk out of that building, and come into your home, and it was like okay, they were two separate things.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, it wasn't that you walked out the back door and you were in it. You know, you were away from it. We were a mile away.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And it's not that the telephone didn't ring and you had to go back to it. It's the idea that you did have a separation there. And for the first couple years, because I was working in the bank, for the first couple of years, my husband ran it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And he basically gave up working, going out on the boat every day. And he was miserable. The walls were closing in farther and farther all the time. (Laughter). So, yeah, I think if your heart is in it and if you have a really strong will to do it and make a living out of it, I think it will always be there.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: But there aren't a lot of them, you know, growing up and staying in it. And I don't know whether it's a thing of kids today just think that there's an easier way, they've seen their parents work, you know, 24 hours around the clock, and maybe they think, you know, there is an easier

life out there than what the water business is. You know, I don't know what it is. But I would like to see her stay in it (laughter). I've done it for years. I crabbed, I trot lined, I loved it.

K.F.: Oh, really?

A.J.: I loved it. I never was really good at it because I knew I had a husband that was going to provide for me, and I also had a bank job, but I loved it. I loved being out on it and working at it.

K.F.: And what was it about it that you liked so much?

A.J.: You're your own boss.

K.F.: Now I hear that from everyone, and I'm just wondering, you know, what is it about being your own boss that –

A.J.: It's your own self-satisfaction that you can do that job, and you can do it well. I mean, if something goes wrong, it's your fault.

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

A.J.: (Laughter). And if you have a good day, then you've done well. It's – and you don't have anybody, you don't have anybody to blame. You know, you don't have 10 people underneath of you, or 10 people above you that say well, it went wrong because. You know, you can pass the buck off to somebody else. If you didn't succeed, it's your fault. And you just, it's a self-satisfaction that you're doing a job well, you're doing it right, and you're doing it well. That's the whole main thing.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.F.: I've talked to several watermen in Virginia, and the lower shore and the mid-shore, even the ladies who pick the crabs, they say the same thing about picking, that you're your own boss. There's nobody telling you to do whatever. You come in and you do it, and you do a good job, and leave when you're done.

A.J.: Right, and that's basically, that's basically the whole thing. And it's, I've worked for – it's like we say, and I'm sure probably you did, when you came up, your mother and father didn't hand you a car.

K.F.: Huh-uh (negative)

A.J.: You worked for it, you earned it, you took well care of that car.

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

A.J.: That's the same way with this. This – that's your boat, that's your livelihood, that's what you know you're going to support your family with. If you want things for them, then you know you've got to work hard at it. And if you are a good provider for your family, that's the whole thing in a nutshell.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, you can do it. You can make a living out of it, you can provide for them. It's self-satisfaction. You know, that's the whole thing in a nutshell.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: My mother and father didn't give me a car either (laughter).

K.F.: Nope. We got a job, and they drove us to it, and when we got enough money, actually my sister and I pooled our money together and bought something.

A.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I was very fortunate because when I got my driver's license, the first couple guys that I dated had cars, and they worked during the day, so I got to drive their cars. And my husband, we dated four years before we ever got married, and I worked in the summer.

And so, of course, he did too. But it seemed like he was working when I wasn't, so I had his car. (Laughter). But I did take good care of it. (Laughter). It wasn't mine, and I didn't pay for it, but I did take care of it. I don't know many jobs out there that, that are as hard, but are as rewarding as what working on the water is. I really don't know of many out there. I really don't.

K.F.: And I guess there's also an element of not every day is the same.

A.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Every day is different. Every day is different. And there's a new challenge to be met every single day. It's not that same thing of coming in, shuffle that one pile of papers from this stack over into that stack, which I did for many a year. Yeah, it's every day is a brand new one, and there's something new with every day. And there are things that are coming back in the bay that haven't been in the bay for years. So the boys are getting a treat when they go out. I mean we've got sturgeon coming back.

K.F.: Oh, really?

A.J.: We've got, we've got shad coming back, we've got blue gills coming back, we've got yellow perch coming back. Things that, you know, haven't been seen for years and years.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So, yeah, it is something new every day.

K.F.: And what are the challenges of being married to a waterman?

A.J.: Not much different than anybody else's. The only, the only difference of being married to a waterman versus being married to somebody who has a 40-hour a week job is this week we may not get paid (laughter). Next week, we may get paid.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: There's just a difference of the way you handle your money because of the way you get paid, and because of the seasons. You don't know whether, you know, you're going to have a really good summer and a really good fall and come January 1<sup>st</sup>, the bay's going to be froze over, and for three months, you're not going to be able to get out. You know, you don't know whether that's going to happen or not. You know Uncle Sam's coming April the 1<sup>st</sup>, and you better have that money waiting for Uncle Sam, whereas the guy that has his 40-hour a week job, he's already got Uncle Sam paid for –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Because they take it out every week. But you've got to save up for Uncle Sam, and you've got to save up for that rainy day because it may very well happen.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Jimmy's very versatile as far as the water goes. Last year was a really terrible, terrible catfish season.

K.F.: During the summer?

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

K.F.: Is that when he fishes for catfish?

A.J.: They usually start March and usually end up like in November because it all is dictated by water temperature too. Temperature drops below 50 degrees, and the catfish don't feed any longer, they go dormant. They've stored their winter fat up and they go dormant. Last year was, in the past 15 years, is the first time he's had a terrible catfish seasons. So he's very fortunate because he's done a lot of the different phases on the water. And he crabbed last summer, and they had a good crab season.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So he left cat fishing and then went into crabbing. But there are those that are not as fortunate that don't have the experience, you know, or the – the experience, the know-how or the gear to be able to do it.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: Because from one job to the other, it's just as costly to go into crab potting as it is to be cat fishing, so you know, you also have to have the ability to be able to get into doing something else, plus have the knowledge of it too, so – the other challenges are that dinner is not on the table at 5:00 everyday because there are days that they're not done until 10:00 at night. So it's – do you get dried-up steak at – good steak at 5:00, or do they roll in the door and have something that's sat there and dried up and looks like sawdust? (Laughter). The other, another disadvantage is that they normally work seven days a week. I think that was my biggest thing. Of course, I was used to it because I grew up around it. And during the summer, you know, everybody else is off on vacation, you know, enjoying the summer, and they're working.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You don't have vacation in the summer. You just don't get it.

K.F.: Heavy work season.

A.J.: Yeah. Advantages, they're happy because they're doing what they want to do. (Laughter). So that's one of the advantages. And if you want to take a boat ride, you know, you're really really stressed out and you really need to take a boat ride to get away from it all, which is weekend boater's thing, you know, we work all 40 hours a week in a closed-up room, you know, we go down and get on the boat for the weekend and we'll take a ride. We can do that at any time. That's an advantage. And I, one of the most important, I think, is that there is, there's a – I don't know what the word would be, but it's like a kinship – a kinship between watermen that if this waterman is down, these 20 are going to come over and help him. Or if that family's having problems, they're going to be there to help. And I think that's one of the most wonderful things in the world.

K.F.: Right. And that still goes on even today?

A.J.: Yeah, that's still to this day, that still happens. Oh, there's fighting and bickering, and it's always, there's always been a thing of don't tell so-and-so that we're catching crabs here, or you know, there's always been that. (Laughter). It's a big joke. Because if John Doe was down and out and destitute, and he was fishing, or he was crabbing or whatever he was doing on the bay, if he was down and out and somebody knew about it, they're going to say hey, well I'm catching this here, you know, why don't you come here, you know.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: I think that's one of the most important things of it is that it's, they're a close-knit bunch of people.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: They might fight and bicker, but they really don't mean it. (Laughter). So what else? So much for the net-gearing business. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well, I guess, is that something that most watermen's wives do? Do they try and help their husbands in the business or –

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

K.F.: And learn some aspect of it to be able to do it?

A.J.: Oh, yeah. Like I said, there's Karen who does the pound nets. There's Janet, whose husband is a cat fisherman. She did – and he eels. She works on the catfish pots, she works on his eel pots. I think basically any wife, unless, unless – and I would say 95 percent of them have other jobs too, but there are still aspects of it that they still can, you know, and do work. I know when the boats are hauled out, the women go down and they paint, and they polish and they clean.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And 90 percent of them take care of the bills, paying their debts. They pay their fuel bill once a week, and their bait bills, and make sure everything's paid. But, yeah, they all do some part of it to help their husbands. Some more so than others. Some aren't as interested in it as others, but yeah, they do most – yeah, most all of them take part in it in some way as far as helping them. But it's a wonderful business to be in. Sometimes you don't think so, but most of the time, yeah. (Laughter.) When that bay's froze up, and they're under your feet, you know, that's another disadvantage. You know, years ago when they fished and fished so very hard, they would be gone for a week at a time, you know.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: But then the bay would freeze over and you would, you know, you got accustomed to coming home and turning on the television and not having to cook dinner because they weren't here. And then all of a sudden, the bay freezes up, and they're here, and they're like underneath of your feet, and it's like oh, God, will they ever go back to work? (Laughter.) Just, please, bay open up so they can get back to work. I don't think I could ever change, change from it. I really don't. Like I said, I was born and raised around it, and I don't think I could ever leave it. It would be very, very hard. I did work in a bank for 20 years, and I can't say, other than the friends that you acquire –

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: -- I can't say that I ever really enjoyed it, being cooped up, you know, that's just not my thing. I'd rather be out digging in the dirt any day. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Now the watermen's wives, I know I've met a couple of women on Smith Island who – well behind their husbands' backs, actually sometimes to their face, they have several jokes and little, funny little songs that they have made up about their husbands, and the very fact you were talking about them being under your feet all the time.

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

K.F.: Do the women around here do that? I mean is that something that –

A.J.: No, we just kind of congregate together and do it, just kind of talk about it. (Laughter.) And not necessarily in front of them either. (Laughter.) And one of the other, one of the other things about watermen is they don't really – they will accept any of the help that you give, but they're not real, not real talkative to the wives about what they do.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: They kind of exclude you from that.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: They really don't, I mean they'll accept any of your help, and most of the time, I'm fumble fingered when it comes to it. And when it comes to gearing net, my husband's on the very bottom of the list because he doesn't pay either. (Laughter.) We've laughed about that quite often because winter before last, he doesn't usually rock fish, but he decided he was going

into rock fishing year before last. And he needed net gear because he hadn't fished for so many years, and it was like well, so-and-so's ahead of you, and so-and-so, and so-and-so. You don't pay so, therefore, you can't get in line, you know. You will be done when everybody else who pays is done. (Laughter.) That's terrible. We did kind of sneak him in there a little bit, but it wasn't something that we were hard pressed on. It was like he ain't paying, so we're not going to do him right away. It was like we got almost everybody else done before we put him up. Like I said, they will accept any of your help, but it's – some may disagree with me in saying that it is a man's job, but it is a man's job. It is, it's a hard, grueling, weathering job.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: I know there are women that are very successful at it.

K.F.: Who are still doing it today?

A.J.: Yeah. The only reason Patsy Hicks is not is because of her eyesight.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

A.J.: Otherwise, she would still be into it. Most watermen look 20 years older than what they are if you look at them.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And it's because of the work that they do and the conditions they do it under. Yeah, we do talk about them, but usually behind their back. We don't usually say anything to their faces about them. (Laughter.) Most definitely not. That's a no-no.

K.F.: And I guess –

A.J.: And if you do hear them talking, if you do hear something, it's usually they're talking to another waterman about it. You know, it's not a thing they would sit down and have a conversation with you about it. They're just talking so you overhear. What you learn, you overhear with it. So –

K.F.: Right, right. Now do you guys usually have these conversations while you're gearing the nets, or –

A.J.: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Uh-huh (Affirmative). And most, I don't – yeah, because we're not people for lunch, or going out shopping or, you know, you know you have your girls' day out or whatever, your girls night.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We don't have those. We don't do those kinds of things. So, yeah, it's usually while you gear net, or you just happen to maybe really be down about something, and you would call somebody and, you know, start chitter-chattering. That's when you would really get off on it. (Laughter.) And there are a lot of days that, don't get me wrong, because I wholeheartedly believe in it, there are days when you know it's blowing really, really hard. It's a really shitty day, and the guys have worked really, really hard, and you know that's going to be bar day. You know they're going to come through that door with a half-assed grin on their face, and they've been sitting at a bar.

K.F.: Right. (Laughter.)

A.J.: You know it's going to happen, you know, you can go for months, and months and months. And all of a sudden, you look out, and you say uh-huh (Affirmative), today's going to be the day. And they'll come walking through that door, and you'll know where they've been. It's not that, you know, they don't have 5:00 Friday afternoon and we're going to head for the bar

to have a drink before, you know, before we head home or whatever, it's just that one day that happens to hit, and you know that's where they're going to be. (Cuckoo Clock).

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: So there are, you know, different quirks about it. But I don't think I could trade it for anything else.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Now with the net gearing, I know that's very similar to sewing as you mentioned.

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

K.F.: Do you do any other needle work?

A.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative), Uh-huh (Affirmative). I crochet, I do needlepoint, I do cross-stitch. I used to sew a lot of clothes, but I kind of got out of that.

K.F.: Yeah.

A.J.: I used to do eel pot funnels.

K.F.: What?

A.J.: Eel pot funnels.

K.F.: Oh.

A.J.: Who'd you interview did those?

K.F.: I haven't talked to anybody who made those. And the ones I've seen have been metal –

A.J.: Metal funnels?

K.F.: Yeah.

A.J.: For eels?

K.F.: Like mesh.

A.J.: All theirs are done out of material, mostly out of polyester. I used to do those – of course my husband, bless his heart, bought me a brand new sewing machine to do, not because I really loved to sew, because we could do eel pot funnels also (Laughter) on the sewing machine. That is one time, and my language is really bad. I really cuss a lot, and that's why I'm having problems talking is because I'm not using a lot of cuss words (Laughter.) That is, I think, the very, the one and only time that I have ever refused to do something for him that has been within my power to do.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Why didn't you want to make these eel pot funnels?

A.J.: I did. I made them. I tried making them, and I had a sewing machine that spent more time in the repair shop –

K.F.: Oh, no.

A.J.: -- then it did making eel pot funnels. And it was a thing that it was, it was drudgery to do, and every time I would get going, the sewing machine would tear up, and we'd haul it back in and have it fixed. And the material that they used, the sewing machines have to be adjusted just to that type of material.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And then it doesn't sew anything else.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And mine just, even though we would have it adjusted, it just would not sew these things. And the last time I think I broke the palm of my hand, I totally gutted the sewing machine because I hauled off and struck it and kicked it so hard. And I came in and I sat down, and I said that's it. Not in those words, but in some very, very harsh words, I sat down and said I will not

sew another eel pot funnel the rest of my life (Laughter.) And I have not. And that has been the only thing that I have said that I would not help him with. Anything else that is within my ability, I will help him with. But that's one thing I will not do, and there are plenty of people around that will do them, and they do them because I do not. There was just something about them that I just –

K.F.: What kind of fabric do you have to use?

A.J.: You have to use 100 percent polyester, and it's only a certain type of stitches that they can use that will not pull out when they actually put it in the pot, and it's a certain tension that has to be on the sewing machine to actually sew the polyester, and it has to be sewn with a certain type of thread –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: -- that does not rot when –

K.F.: In the water, right.

A.J.: Water is – you know, when the pot's overboard. And my sewing machine just would not do it, and I just refused. I didn't go out and buy another sewing machine that would do it. I just said, nope, I will not do any more of these. (Laughter.) And that has been the only time where I have said no, I will not help. So but anything else comes along, you know, if it's in my ability, I will tackle it, anything else that he says that I can, you know, that he needs my help with, I will try. But that's one I will not. Will not. But my main, my main thing is my net gearing business, and my soft crabs. And they're two things that, the soft crabs, you don't need anybody. There are times when you wish you had people, when you have hundreds of dozen that need to be cleaned, and wrapped and froze. And when you would think that, you know, you just really needed to crash and get 8 or 10 hours of solid sleep, you know, you really could use somebody. And the net gearing business, you can do it by yourself, but I mean it's just monotonous work.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And as long as you've got somebody to sit there and talk to, the day goes by so fast. And what you do, you can do so much faster because you've got – and there's a, there's a thing of trying to outdo somebody too. You know, going down the line.

K.F.: Oh, competition?

A.J.: Yeah. There's definite competition. And so far, I mean I really haven't tried a whole lot of people, but because we did it at the seafood store for so long, during the winter, it's kind of laid back, and the guys kind of like, you know, on bad days and stuff, they can't work some days, and they'll come up, you know. And so far, I haven't got anybody to beat me yet. (Laughter.) But we haven't got into real, real competition, full-blown competition. And I'm sure if I did, I probably would lose because, you know, when you get that certain –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, you're going to mess up and you're going to lose. You have to have the right frame of mind to be able to do that kind of stuff, but just to sit there and know that, okay, I'm racing the guy that's on the other side, you can blow them away. (Laughter.)

K.F.: So where do you gear your nets now that you don't –

A.J.: Out here in the shed.

K.F.: In the shed.

A.J.: Yeah. We have, we have a 40-foot stretch. We can do four corks at a time, and it's nice. We have, we have heat, we have a refrigerator. We have run into the house for our plumbing.

(Laughter). And we run in, you know, you can sit down, you can have lunch and you still don't have to leave so, yeah, it's nice.

K.F.: Yeah.

A.J.: And you don't have to leave home. And now like with her, next year, this year coming, she'll be there with me.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So I don't have to leave home, all the comforts of home. And I'll have her there with me, so you can't beat that.

K.F.: Right, that's true, you can't. Well who in the area does make the eel pots now?

A.J.: Miss Lois Crouch still sews eel pot funnels.

K.F.: Miss what's her first name?

A.J.: Lois.

K.F.: Lois.

A.J.: Crouch. I'm pretty sure that Skins's wife, Susan, Susan Mench still does the eel pot funnels. Her husband is a major eeler, so I'm sure she does. I'm not – yeah, Rebecca Clark still does hers for her husband and her girls have done them. I'm trying to think who some of them – Kathy Ashley, Danny Ashley's wife, still does them. 'Cause those are the major eelers that are here.

K.F.: What's – does Miss Crouch have a husband who eels as well?

A.J.: No, her husband died two years ago. I'm trying to think who else actually sews them. I don't know. There's a lot of net gearers still in Rock Hall though.

K.F.: Oh, really?

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

K.F.: Okay. Because Ron named you and one other lady. He said I should really call you first.

A.J.: Oh. Miss Marge Beck.

K.F.: I think that was her name.

A.J.: Boo and Marge Beck.

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

A.J.: There's Boo and Miss Marge, there's Tommy Baker.

K.F.: You were mentioning some of the changes that have happened in the last 15 years as far as tourism coming in and that kind of stuff. And you said you thought it hit its peak?

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

K.F.: Meaning?

A.J.: I think about, I think actually the town is as populated as it can be.

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

A.J.: We really don't have the facilities to really take care of any more population explosions.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And most of the waterfront has been snatched up and either torn down, disappeared and redone so there's nothing left there. It's at its full capacity.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: The harbors are at their full capacity.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And like I said, as far as land goes, other than actually getting out of the town, the town itself is just about done as far as growing, just, it just, there's no place for anymore growth.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: There isn't any more place. The only bad thing about Rock Hall, which is one would say is a good thing, and one would say is bad, there's one way in and there's one way out. Once you get here, and we've often wondered why it is such a – why people come to Rock Hall. We've often wondered why.

K.F.: Like the retirees who are coming?

A.J.: Yeah.

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

A.J.: Because there is nothing in Rock Hall for people to do.

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

A.J.: We don't have shopping centers. We don't have dance clubs.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We don't have, there's no real kind of community center for any kind of events.

K.F.: But do the churches sometimes function as those kinds of centers?

A.J.: We have – no.

K.F.: No?

A.J.: No. There's just nothing here. (Laughter.) Which is kind of like the way we like it. But we don't have a movie theater, we don't have a bowling alley.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, our big thing is to sit on the porch in the evening. That's our, you know, or a gang get together, and have a cookout.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: A fish fry.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So what draws them? (Laughter.) We've all been wondering what draws them, or whether it is maybe that, you know, the tranquility, maybe that's it. Maybe they don't want that anymore.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: But, no, I kind of think it's at its peak. And the sad thing about it is that there is nothing, other than being, being a farmer or a waterman, there is nothing for young people. You know, we don't have something that is going to draw a lot of employment. We don't have it, so the young people have to go somewhere else for it because there's nothing here for them.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Nothing here to keep them here that they can make a living at, unless they want to be a farmer or a waterman, and it takes a special person to be one of those too. So we often wonder why they come. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well, have they made any suggestions or anything like, hey, we want to put in a community center, or hey, we'd like to have a shopping mall?

A.J.: Huh-uh (negative). We hope it don't come either. (Laughter.) There's a nice one 13 miles up the road or another hour to Dover. So, you know, or you can drive an hour to Annapolis or you can go to Kent Island to the outlets or somewhere, you know, you don't have to – it doesn't have to be next door.

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

A.J.: So, but that's the only bad thing that – and because of the growth that Rock Hall has had, housing is not affordable to young people.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Which is sad, because you know your son or your daughter is not going to be able to, you know, buy a home because it's too overpriced.

K.F.: Right, right.

A.J.: Gosh, we don't even have a community doctor anymore. (Laughter.) We don't have a pharmacy, we don't have a doctor, we don't have any of that. No, you've got to drive 13 miles. So we do need the tourism, 'cause like I said, our business could not have survived without it. The people that bought our business could not survive without it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And you do know that you're going to get a break. You know come the end of October, those boats are going to be put up on their little pedestals, and those people aren't going to be back again until May.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: When the weather warms up. And it's kind of like we say the bridge has gone up. They're out of town, and the bridge is up, and they're not coming back. We've rolled the carpets up, and turned the lights out, and she's back asleep now. And I think we value that when, you know, when the fall comes and the winter comes, it's back to our town then.

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

A.J.: A lot of people would disagree, but a lot would approve.

K.F.: And when do the tourists come here and –

A.J.: They get on their boats, they eat at the local restaurants, some do. And they, and they sail, or they have their little power boats, and they do that. And that's basically it because there is nothing else for them to do. That's it. They come down and just plop on the boat. And I'll not get into the other part. (Laughter.) We'll not get into the other stuff.

K.F.: Okay. And then what about, I know there was a big, it was sort of a tourism thing, with the hunters coming here for the goose hunting before the moratorium that happened.

A.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). A lot of the restaurants in town have closed during the winter because of that. And I could see the effects on the seafood store also when that happened too.

K.F.: Oh, really?

A.J.: Because we would have the hunters come in, and a lot of them have hunting lodges, and they come down, and they buy the seafood and –

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: Because they're either going to eat out, they're either coming down for the day and they're going to eat out and then they're going to go back, or they have their lodges and they're going to stay.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So they buy, you know, the local, the local seafood and take it back. And it has put a big hurting on the town. It really has. Yeah, we have a duck season, but nothing compared to, you know, the goose season that we had.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: And it shut down quite a few of the pickers. We had local pickers, that's hurt them. We have one restaurant in town that actually you went out and killed your fowl, went out and killed your goose, had it cleaned, picked, took it to them, they cooked it and you ate it that night.

K.F.: In the restaurant?

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

K.F.: Oh, what restaurant was this?

A.J.: Fin Fur and Feather.

K.F.: Oh, okay

A.J.: So it's hurt them. And that was, they did a lot of that. You know, the hunters would go out during the day, kill their goose, have it cleaned, picked, take it to Fin, and Fin would cook it for them.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: And it's hurt them. And then there are some of the gunners that, you know, did just eat out when they came. They didn't sit there, you know, sit at the lodges and stay there or bring their food or whatever and stay right there and eat.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: A lot of them did go out to eat. So, yeah, that's hurt too. And, of course, it's – there was a lot of guiding, awful lot of the guides, their business are, you know, cut by three quarters.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So they've got to depend on something else for a living versus what they did. It's hurt the landowners because the properties are not being rented like they were.

K.F.: Right. Now people had to sell their land or farms?

A.J.: Huh-uh (negative). Huh-uh (negative). No. That was in addition to their annual crops.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: So that was just an extra thing there. But, yeah, it's definitely hurt them. But we can't do anything about it. So until them little geese up there start hatching a little bit faster than what they are, we can't do anything about it. But we are looking at, because we live where we live, and I know other states have a problem too, and Maryland has a problem in some areas with resident geese.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: We look like we're getting ready to get into that problem too. We had, I would say maybe a dozen that would stay here all year round.

K.F.: Nesting pairs?

A.J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That would stay here all year round. Now, which are out there now, I have now, and I don't know whether they're at maturity or not. From the looks of them, they're not, they're new geese, they're young, we have about 50 that are staying here now.

K.F.: Wow.

A.J.: So there's going to be a problem.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Well I know in certain areas in Maryland, they're letting them hunt –

A.J.: Yeah.

K.F.: I've talked to a few hunters who got permits, mostly in Western Maryland. But –

A.J.: Yeah, we're going to have a problem with them most definitely. Not – we won't have a problem, per se. I'm tickled to death to have them here. (Laughter.) They keep my grass cut

down. The farmer that actually tills our property, tills the property around us doesn't particularly care for them. But as far as I'm concerned, they can stay. I enjoy feeding them and watching them. So I don't have any problem with them. (Laughter.) But like I said, the farmer tills the place is going to have a problem with them because they're going to be eating his corn and his soy beans.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: But we don't have a problem with them. But I can foresee that it's going to be a problem because even the wild geese that migrate every year are getting to the point where they're getting very, very friendly. The wildness is going away. They know they're not going to be shot, and they really don't care. Used to be they were very, very flighty. Now you go out, and now it doesn't bother them. We go out and cut grass around them now and they just stay right there. They don't care. Used to be if you did that, man, they'd take off. But they don't do that anymore, they stay. Doesn't bother them. They just move from one spot to the other, you know. So but there is going to be a definite problem. But maybe before that happens, they'll have the wisdom to bring it back so that that's taken care of. Anything else? I've talked you to death.

K.F.: Are there any duck pickers still working?

A.J.: Duck pickers?

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Or the duck pluckers.

A.J.: Duck pluckers? David Haas still picks. David and Sherry Haas still pick. Miss Madeline and Mr. Robie Cornelius still pick, I think. David and Sherry Haas. I think they both still pick, both of them still pick.

K.F.: There aren't any crab pickers up here, are there? There's no –

A.J.: Legal? No. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Okay. So ladies picking in their homes for their husbands?

A.J.: We're not going to discuss that.

(OFF RECORD.)

A.J.: You can shock them, which doesn't kill them, it just stuns them.

K.F.: Okay.

A.J.: Or you can put them down in vats of ice water. Okay, and then they kind of like go dormant. Or you can stab them. You take an ice pick and go back in the back of their fin, jab the ice pick in and hit their heart, which kills them, and then they don't drop their claws or lose their fiddlers when you steam them.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: You know, when you hit the heat, you know, they don't shed them. So we shock, but we also would make sure that every crab that goes in that steamer is alive before it was steamed. Dead crabs do not, you don't cook a dead crab. You just don't do it.

K.F.: Right.

A.J.: That's something that – that's a no-no. Other people may do it, but I've tasted them, and I don't want anything to do with them. (Laughter.) But anyway, we were in the process of doing this, and we had started like at 6:00, and we would probably be done like 7:00 that night, because it takes you, the big steamer takes like 45 minutes, and the other steamers take like 22 to 24 minutes. So, I mean it doesn't sound like it takes a long time, but by the time that you cull through them, and you shock them, and then you steam them, and then you got to wait for a few minutes to let steam go out of them so you can actually pick them up and handle them, you

know, it takes time to go through that many crabs. And in the middle of this process, this was getting like late in the afternoon, say like 4:00 in the afternoon, and you know, you're getting tired, and it's 100 degrees outside, plus it's 150 degrees inside the steam room, you know, and this guy comes in and we were stacking the crabs, putting the crabs back in the bushels, and seasoning them and putting lids on them to be sent out, and this guy walks in the back room with his crabs to be steamed, and he starts playing with this bushel of crabs, picking these crabs up. And he said – I said would you please not do that? And he said why not? And I said because they're not yours. And he said well I'm a doctor. I said well I don't give a damn if you're the President of the United States. Those crabs don't belong to you, and you shouldn't be playing with somebody else's food. (Laughter.) Well he just, he said well aren't you going to touch mine? I said no. I said when we steam crabs that are coming from my store that are going to somebody else's store, or to a crab feast or whatever, I said we handle every single crab. I said but when your crab comes through that door, we take that bushel with them crabs in it and stick it in that steamer with that lid on it, sprinkle it down with a little seasoning, pick that bushel basket back up out of that steamer and hand it right back to you. I said –  
(END OF TAPE.)  
(END OF INTERVIEW.)