

Interview Log

Interviewee: Patsy Higgs

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Interviewer: Kelly Feltault

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of Sides: 2

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Topic: Delmarva Folklife Project

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: Sound quality is distorted; the tape speed fluctuates radically distorting Patsy's voice. Note that this interview was done 30 minutes after the interview with Andrea Jacquette and those tapes sound crystal clear. The distortion clears up early in the tape.

BEGIN SIDE A

P.H.: -- watermen that used to be years ago, and the town has changed. It's not really a waterman's town like it was 30 years ago. Because –

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). When did the changes start to happen?

P.H.: Oh, gosh, back when – when we lost Hubbard's Pier, and all them places. Condominiums going up, you know. It wasn't like that when I was Sarah's age.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). How old is Sarah?

P.H.: Seventeen.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: It was watermen here.

K.F.: Right, right. So all the houses were owned by watermen, and –

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Or –

P.H.: Now you've got a lot of –

SPEAKER: City people here.

P.H.: Delaware, Pennsylvania people coming here in the summertime, and down around the shore, I don't know whether you've been down there. It's all –

K.F.: Yeah, yeah.

P.H.: It's for your –

K.F.: Tourists.

P.H.: -- a lot of your pleasure.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Boaters. Not your watermen.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: It's like they would just push the watermen right aside.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Are they down on one end of the pier now or sort of –

P.H.: What?

K.F.: The watermen.

P.H.: The watermen?

K.F.: Have they been pushed –

P.H.: The watermen have mostly went to their own little place, or like we have Piney Neck and Skinner's Neck. Now that's mostly all watermen.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But when I worked on the water, we had a place down here where Watermen's bar and everything is.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: That was all seafood, retail place.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

P.H.: And you park, the watermen park, dock their boats there. It was nothing like it is now.

K.F.: Right. And what did you do when you worked on the water? Did you pound net or –

P.H.: No, we – in the spring and wintertime, we anchor net, gillnet.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: And then we'd have, you know, like a month in between, and we'd paint the boats up, and then we'd go crabbing.

K.F.: Okay. So in the summer, you were crabbing then.

P.H.: Trot lining, and we oystered. But we never, you know, clammed or anything like that, we were just fishermen and crabbers and oysters.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: 'Cause when I first started working on the water, what I started doing was oystering with my dad.

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

P.H.: And my brother. And then we started going, you know, anchor fishing. And I don't know what else you want to -- (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well so your dad taught you how to do most of the --

P.H.: My dad, yeah, taught me everything. Taught me how to gear net.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: How to tie bowlines and different kinds of knots.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: My brother and myself worked with my father. And we had a fourth man, a colored man worked with us in spring and winter. But in the summertime, we'd go out, you know, crabbing. Ronnie would crab, my brother, he would crab for his self and I would crab for myself.

K.F.: Okay, right. So you all had your own gear for doing that.

P.H.: For crabbing.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But we were all together with fishing.

K.F.: Okay. And how, how would your dad go about teaching you the skills you needed for fishing? Did he just show you, or did he sort of sit down and, you know --

P.H.: He showed me everything.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: And, of course, you got to want to know how to do it.

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

P.H.: And I always said you really, to be a waterman, you had to be born and raised around it.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: That's what my feelings were always, you know.

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

P.H.: Of course, I loved it. And my father was everything, you know, to me.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: 'Cause he was getting up in age too. But he worked on the water 63 years --

K.F.: Wow.

P.H.: -- before he passed away. And I worked out there 21 years. My brother and I had to get off of the water because we had retinitis pigmentosis. It's an eye disease.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: And my brother had to sell the boat, and the rig and everything. But we worked up until we couldn't do it no more.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: It wasn't long after Lila wrote the book.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). It was maybe, I'd say a couple years after she wrote the book that we got off the water. (Baby noises).

K.F.: Well what was it like when you and your brother and your father were working the water? Can you describe like who did what job as you were pulling in the nets and setting them up?

P.H.: Well everybody, you know, knew what they were doing. Of course, in the fall of the year, you would take your brails and your lines and your anchors out there. And daddy, he was good at, you know, setting the anchor rig. And it stayed there the whole time.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And you would just take your nets out there and put them on for what size fish was in the area at that time.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And we geared all of our own nets. It was interesting life, but it was a hard life.

K.F.: What did you like about it so much?

P.H.: The gamble of making money. One day you make a load of money. The next day, you wouldn't hardly make anything.

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

P.H.: I guess that's why I liked it. But like I said, you had – I was born and raised around it, and I couldn't have went and worked in a, you know, restaurant or – I never done anything like that. One time, I worked in a pickle factory.

K.F.: Was that around here?

P.H.: Yeah, that was in Chestertown.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: It was called Vita Foods.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: I worked in there for a while. I said this ain't for me. So in between having three kids, I just stayed on the water.

K.F.: Now how do you balance having three kids and working on the water? 'Cause I know –

P.H.: You have a family that helps you out.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: I had a mother and a sister that would watch them while I was – 'cause you would have to get up at 4 or 5:00 in the morning.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And they would see that the kids got off to school, and – yeah. If it wasn't for the family, it would've been rough to have to pay a daycare or something like that. I never did have to do that. And then when my two boys got old enough, they started going. My daughter, she never did like it. But the two boys went and started making their living on the water.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Quit school when they were 16. So they said they didn't need an education. They knew what they wanted to do.

K.F.: Are they still on the water now?

P.H.: My one son is. I lost one.

K.F.: Okay. Okay.

P.H.: But he has a 42 foot boat. He has an eel rig, a fishing rig, and he crabs in the summer.

K.F.: Now what sort of changes did you see in the equipment you had to use –

P.H.: Everything.

K.F.: -- from when you started to when you quit? (Laughter.)

P.H.: Everything. Today, a waterman has got it made. They got a winder to pull everything for them. When I worked on the water, you pulled everything by hand.

SPEAKER: -- first.

P.H.: You didn't have no winder to pull your trot line in, you didn't have no dipper to dip your crabs. You dipped them yourself. That's the changes today. (Laughter.) I know it makes it a lot easier for them.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But I loved dipping crabs. But today, they just sit down, run down the line and pull this dipper in, got the crabs and dump them out. It's not like it was. It's been a lot of changes. Well, of course, they don't have anchor netting anymore 'cause they said that they put that ban on rockfish.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Said they were getting distinct (sic). The water has to replenish itself. And my father always told me every seven years it changed. I knew rockfish were going to come back. But, of course, you got to pay these scientists and everything to say why there's no rockfish. The water will always bring herself back. I know it's a lot -- it's worse today because of all the farmers and everything, you know, and the runoff.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: There isn't all that. You didn't hear none of that stuff 30, 40 years ago. The fish died back then too.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But today, they have to make a big to-do out of it.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: 'Cause you would see all these fish laying on top of the water. You didn't know what killed them.

K.F.: Did that happen often, I mean throughout the seasons, or was it every five years or something, you would see a fish kill?

P.H.: Well a lot of times, you'd see it just about every year, like in the springtime or something.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Yeah, you would see the fish. But a lot of times, it wouldn't -- I've seen funguses and things on perch, and sores on the alewives and stuff like that.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But you didn't have the people telling you and getting involved in what was wrong with the seafood business, the industry.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Like you do today.

K.F.: When did that start?

P.H.: I mean they hurt the watermen terrible with the media, what you see on TV.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: It just about killed our watermen.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: They didn't want to eat no fish. I wouldn't either if you thought something was in there was going to kill you.

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

P.H.: But the scientist is doing it all. It was nothing wrong with the seafood. Like I said, you got to pay the scientists.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: These people that go to school to learn to be these biologists for seafood on the water and everything, you didn't have that years ago. And the fish got sick years ago.

K.F.: What fish did you usually catch, and in what seasons? 'Cause I know they run different times.

P.H.: In the spring and wintertime, it was rockfish and perch. And then towards, I'd say, the last 10 years that we worked on the water, bluefish started coming up here taking over.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: And we would net them by the tons. I'm talking about 15, 18 pound bluefish.

K.F.: Oh, God. And you were hauling those in by hand.

P.H.: Huh? Yeah.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: Taking them out of the net. And we had to gut every one of them. 'Cause I got pictures, you know, when Lila was down. Because they're a scavenger. They'd eat anything they get their mouths on, and because it was so getting warm in the – this time of the year, you'd have to gut every one of them. You find chicken bones in them and everything. (Laughter.) And we would catch five, six ton a day of these fish this big.

K.F.: And is there a big market for the blues? I mean –

P.H.: It was hard to get rid of them. Back then, we got as little as seven cents a pound.

SPEAKER: That's terrible.

P.H.: And the watermen cried a day if rockfish get down to 75 cents. We sold fish for five, seven cents.

SPEAKER: What?

P.H.: Sold rockfish for 25, 35 cents. But your watermen today, I guess because of, you know, the changes, it cost more to live today too.

K.F.: Yeah, it does.

P.H.: A lot more than it did 30 years ago.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But if you made \$500 a week 30 years ago, you were rolling in the bucks.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But the watermen this day and age, \$500 a week, they're crying the blues. It's all different.

K.F.: Did you guys have to process your own fish? You said you had to gut the blues. Did you have to process the other fish too, the rock and the perch?

P.H.: No.

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

P.H.: No.

K.F.: Just sold them as is.

P.H.: No. Just have to bring them in and ice them up, and they shipped them out. 'Cause they last longer. The bluefish wouldn't last long. They get soft because of all the things they had ate.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: They were dangerous fish too. You had to be careful with them because they could bite. I remember one day Brown, he was gutting them, and one came right up and grabbed him right in the palm of his hand.

SPEAKER: What?

P.H.: A bluefish.

SPEAKER: A bluefish.

P.H.: They're dangerous.

SPEAKER: I need a blanket, Christine.

P.H.: What, are you leaving?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

K.F.: What are some of the other memories you have of being on the water, things that stand out in your mind?

P.H.: The winter times.

K.F.: The winter times?

P.H.: Yeah. The winters today aren't like they were.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Huh-uh (negative). I'll see you, Decoda.

SPEAKER: Say bye, mom-mom.

P.H.: You go six, seven weeks, couldn't even get out for ice. We don't have the winters like that anymore. I mean a few years, I'd say three or four years ago, yeah, they had a lot of ice and stuff, but they wasn't combined to shore like we were back in them days.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And they would go – when you would get out of here, we'd go to Annapolis, 'cause it was a lot more traffic there, and you could get in and out, you know.

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

P.H.: But I had a few experiences in the ice.

K.F.: Can you tell me one?

P.H.: Well we were coming out of Annapolis, trying to get back up toward Rock Hall. And I guess it was three or four Rock Hall boats trying to get back up. And got hung up in the ice. And it would be so, the ice would be so thick that you could get out and walk, and that's – you were stuck in the, in the ice.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But yet it was – your boat would go through it a little bit, but it was still so thick that you could get out and walk on it. And one time it shoved us – 'cause when the tide changes and the ice was shifting, it has shoved us clean up to where we couldn't get shoved any further, we were hitting bottom.

K.F.: Oh, right.

P.H.: And the boat was laying on her side like that, and had to get somebody to come and try to pull us off of there. Ice is dangerous. You got to – my dad always said you got to respect the water, because it can take you away from here.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And it can. 'Cause we had a Rock Hall waterman was bringing his boat from around, I don't know whether it was Piney Neck or Skinner's Neck, and it was a bad day. No watermen were out working.

K.F.: Was it blowing?

P.H.: Blowing a gale. And his boat went down. And seven days later, we caught him in our net.

K.F.: Oh, you're kidding.

P.H.: And that was upsetting, because we knew who he was. And the family, we had been looking for him 'cause Rock – a lot of the Rock Hallers would come out every day searching for him. And one day we were just going over our nets like we usually do, and I looked over, and I said oh, my God, Ronnie, there he is. And we put him inside the net, and had to go to other boats to come there and help us get him in the bateau.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: It took me a while to get over that. But the family was thankful that he was found.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: Yeah. But if I had it to do all over again and know what I know now, I'd never work on the water.

K.F.: No? Why not?

P.H.: 'Cause it's hard on you. (Laughter.) Believe me, it's hard on you.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: I've had back surgery and everything. No, I'd never do it again. And it ages you being out there in that sun seven days a week.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: The glare off the water. No. I – well it's never been that many women that's done it, you know, full time, but –

K.F.: Right. Right.

P.H.: I wouldn't recommend it, you know, for any woman. I don't have any regrets 'cause I enjoyed what I done. Now I sit back and watch my son do it. (Laughter.) Gear net, and all that. I say I've done it, been there, don't want to do it no more. That's the truth. I go out with him one time a year just for, you know, like crabbing. I'll go out on the boat with him one time during the year, and that's enough for me. 'Cause when you went seven days a week, you know, for 21 years, I'd had enough. I was done. I enjoy, like I said, going with him once in a while. But towards the end, I'd say the last three or four years we worked on the water, it was all, it was family.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: My husband was working with us, and my oldest son would go with us occasionally. And, of course, my brother. This was after my dad passed away.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: He passed away in '78. Yeah, '78. So we worked on the water, I'd say six years after he passed away. 'Cause he didn't know anything about the book or anything 'cause it didn't come out till like '83.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: These are my grandchildren.

K.F.: Well most people don't get the opportunity to work with their family like that.

P.H.: No.

K.F.: What was it like?

P.H.: It was nice. I mean you had your ups and downs, you know, your arguments and everything like that, but nobody really was the boss and nobody really told you what to do. That's what I liked about it.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: Working with family. And I was glad my boys went on the water because they had, I mean from the time they were old enough to walk, they were taken out there. If it wasn't for working, it was for pleasure. We'd go out there hook and lining.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And my father taught my oldest son a lot about crabbing and netting fish and all that. That's how you learn from experience.

K.F.: Right, right. Well did he teach you about like certain weather condition and maybe how you need to set your net or what you were going to catch in certain weather? A few people have told me that if the wind is blowing a certain way, they don't catch anything.

P.H.: Northeast? My dad always said a northeaster isn't good for nothing. (Laughter.) He said when I die and it's blowing northeast, don't bury me till it goes away. (Laughter.) A northeaster is nothing. Not for the water. You won't catch nothing on a northeaster. And the springtime, a nice southerly breeze, we'd always say, you know, it would help bring the fish up here 'cause they'd come up here to spawn, to go up the bay.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Yeah. Southerly breeze. And a lot of times on a good northwester.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: When it was too hard for you to be out there working, you pretty well might have a good catch when you got back out there on a northwester. But a northeaster, nothing. I don't think it's good for anything. (Laughter.) Nope.

K.F.: I heard it was better to catch rock when the water was a little rough, that they ran more often when the water was a little rough. Did you find that to be true here? This was someone down the lower shore told me this.

P.H.: No.

K.F.: No?

P.H.: Huh-uh (negative). It was like, I mean when it was time for them to come up this way, they came.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: The only time they'd be a little late is if you had a cool spring.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: No, I think, you know, pretty weather. You'd have a lot better days.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: Of, you know, catching fish. (Background voices.) Yeah.

K.F.: Is there any competition between some of the watermen?

P.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Was there any competition between some of the watermen as to – how much or –

P.H.: Well you had your watermen that had a bigger rig. And –

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: -- things like that. But, equally, we were all the same. I mean one waterman might've had a lot more and a bigger rig than we had, but we still made our living.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And that's the way it is today too. It's the same way with that.

SPEAKER: Your potatoes are boiling.

P.H.: Turn them back on low. But I used to tell my sons about crabbing in the fall, trot lining, and they'd think I'm crazy when I tell them about how big some of the crabs were.

K.F.: Like how big?

P.H.: Big. It would only take like 36, 38 crabs to fill a bushel. They were big crabs.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

P.H.: My father always said they wasn't going to survive the winter. They were ready to die, those big black crabs. I've seen rockfish 110 pound.

K.F.: Oh, my God. You're kidding.

P.H.: No, I'm not kidding.

K.F.: That's a huge fish.

P.H.: Yes, they were huge. I mean we called them cows, in the springtime they come up here, and you couldn't keep them if they were 15 pounds. We could keep anything up to 15 pounds. Then we had to turn them loose. And strong, oh, they'd almost break your wrist trying to get them out of the net.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: And she'd almost drown you when she'd take off too. (Laughter.) With that tail. I've seen them. Every bit of five foot rockfish.

K.F.: Oh, gosh.

P.H.: Big old cows going up that bay to spawn.

K.F.: What are some of your other memories of the fall?

P.H.: Fall? I never really cared for fall. That's when you had to do all your work getting the rig ready to put out there. (Laughter.)

K.F.: So you were gearing the nets then?

P.H.: Yeah. Once the rig was out there, then I liked it. But then it got to, I'd say the last five or six years before daddy died. We didn't pull the rig up anymore. We left it there.

K.F.: You left it there?

P.H.: Yeah, because the nylon rope, that doesn't rot.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And, boy, that saves so much trouble when you had to pull all those anchors, and yank all those anchor lines up and wash them, and so towards the end, daddy just left them there. And they're still out there today.

K.F.: Are they really?

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Now do you guys have a specific location?

P.H.: Area, yeah.

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

P.H.: Every waterman back in them days had a specific area where they sat, and nobody, you know, came in there where we had our anchor nets.

K.F.: Okay. And today, do they have to like apply to the Department of Natural Resources or something for a spot? I mean is that something they have to do?

P.H.: Well, see, no. Today it's different. I mean except, I guess, for the pound netting.

K.F.: Oh, right, right.

P.H.: But it's just drift netting now for the watermen. And they have their like November to February, they can catch their rockfish.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And, no, they can go anywhere. And another difference today too is it cost a lot more to be on the water with licenses.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: They're a lot more than they were when I was working on the water.

K.F.: How much were they then?

P.H.: I didn't have to have an oyster license because I was a woman.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I had to have a crabbing license, and it was like \$10. But today, they have those TFL's, they call them. And I know they have to pay \$100 intent to rockfish. They have to pay, I think it's 650 or \$700, I don't know what it is for the TFL. It's 6, \$700 just for the TFL.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: Then if they want to oyster, they got to pay a surcharge of \$350.

K.F.: So there's like \$1,000 right there.

P.H.: Yeah, just to work on the water wit your \$100 with the intent to rockfish.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: When I worked on the water, it cost us, just for the license to fish, like \$350.

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

P.H.: And like then you would go get things separate. If you wanted an oyster, you go get an oyster license. And back then, it was like \$50.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But like I said, I didn't need one because I was a woman.

K.F.: Why didn't they make the women get one same as the men?

P.H.: I don't know. I don't know. And then towards the end, the water cops came to us one day, and he said something to me that I had to go get a license, but I didn't have to pay for it. It wasn't going to cost me nothing. I said well that was stupid. Why have a license if you don't have to pay for it? (Laughter.) Yup. And crabbing, it was like \$10.

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

P.H.: It's a lot of changes.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: It is. But like I said too, it cost more to live today, and they make more money than I did.

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

P.H.: If we'd have got \$2 a pound for rockfish back then, we wouldn't be living in Rock Hall. (Laughter.) I mean 'cause a lot of times, you catch 6, 7,000 pounds of rockfish, \$2 a pound. But, see, they're limited as to what they can catch now.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: The state tells them what they can catch.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: We didn't have that. That's sad. But I guess they're trying to, you know, get the rockfish to come back. They ain't never went anywhere. I've seen winters you were lucky if you, if we went out there and caught 50 pounds. And I'm not exaggerating. So where were the rockfish then?

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

P.H.: I don't know. Of course, it's a lot more people in the world today too, and a lot more sportsmen out there than it was.

K.F.: Right. Are there a lot of sportsmen now here in Rock Hall?

P.H.: That go out of Rock Hall?

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

P.H.: Yes. That's all the marinas have is these pleasure boats. Like Haven Harbor, Sailman Point, they're all pleasure boaters.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: I mean 'cause back in them days, you had to – everything was marked out there. And if you couldn't tell it was an anchor rig there, then you were blowing.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: And you get these people coming up, you know, from Florida in the springtime, of course, we'd have our nets floated up. They'd have jugs on them.

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

P.H.: And you'd – and you'd have 12 nets in a row.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And between each row, you'd have a space, I'd say, from here to that house over there.

K.F.: Okay, so like maybe 100 yards.

P.H.: For boats to go through.

K.F.: Right, okay.

P.H.: They wouldn't do, they'd run right over our rig, tear your nets up. One man got hung up, you might've read that in the book, and we had to go cut him out, setting up their drink and highballs and all that.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And he handed daddy \$20. Daddy said no, he didn't want it. I took the \$20. I said it takes more than damn \$20 to make these nets.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And they would holler to you and tell you to take them Goddamn nets out of the water.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Well that was our living. I mean we wasn't riding around in no 60, \$70,000 yacht like they were. And I guess you still have it today 'cause I know my sons when they were crabbing, they'd have boats go by them wide open, have no respect whatsoever what they were doing to try to make a dollar 'cause they were out there pleasuring it.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And how would you guys choose a site to set up your nets? I mean what made one set better than another?

P.H.: When we're anchor fishing?

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

P.H.: I don't know. Daddy just, he liked that spot, and of course, he was a lot older than me. And he had written everything down, the marks and everything. 'Cause when you're out there in the bay, you look on shore, and he would always have a mark of where he would first start, you know, to set his rig. And he had written all that down for my brother and me if anything had happened to him, you know, before he got old.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Right.

P.H.: But like I said, towards the end, daddy just left the anchors there, and that was a blessing. Dirty, dirty work. Mud, 'cause those anchors being down in that mud all that time.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Anything else you want to know?

K.F.: Well how many crab pots did you guys, well did you put out in the summertime?

P.H.: We only crab pot once.

K.F.: Really? Just trot lines?

P.H.: We didn't like crab potting. We trot lined.

K.F.: Okay. What was, what did you like better about trot lining versus the crab pots?

P.H.: I thought it was easier.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: And it was a more pleasant way, I thought, to catch crabs. And, of course, we crabbed in the river.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And you always got more money for the river crabs than you did the bay crabs.

K.F.: Oh, why?

P.H.: They always said they were bigger better crabs. I don't know.

K.F.: I've never heard that.

P.H.: Haven't you? Oh, yeah. We had – my sons had a man come in from Glen Burnie, and all he wanted was Chester River crabs. You'll find that a lot.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: It's a difference between a crab pot crab and a trot line crab. I think a lot of it is taste too because that crab pot's in that – I mean that crab's stuck in that crab pot with that bait.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Where on the trot line, he's just eating on it for that time, you know, while he's coming up that trot line.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: I didn't like crab potting. Oystering was hard too.

K.F.: What can you tell me about that?

P.H.: Hand tonging? (Laughter.) It's a hard way to make a living. You go home at nighttime, be so tired. It was all you could do to eat your supper. I look at – I tried it one day. I got up there on the side of the boat and tonged. I had so many oysters in the rakes, my brother had to grab hold of. And it's a knack to it too. You got to know how to dig for them.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: I mean 'cause if you don't, you're going to get a lot of mud or you got to know how to feel for them oysters.

K.F.: Through the tongs?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yup. And, of course, today they use a lot bigger heads. My youngest son, he was excellent tonger. Excellent. My oldest son couldn't tong with him.

K.F.: Oh.

P.H.: It's born in you, I think, the tonging part.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And everybody said that, you know, Brown was one heck of a tonger. And I got my oldest son, he keeps an album now.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: Of different things, you know, that they've done on the water.

K.F.: Like photos, or just written down?

P.H.: Photos.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: And I made an album for my grandchildren.

K.F.: Oh, you did?

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

K.F.: Would it be possible to see it?

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: Absolutely.

(OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: And where did you guys usually get the tongs made? Were they made locally or –

P.H.: They got them made at – I mean, oh – daddy, see the boards, the shafts are made out of a certain kind of wood, you know, so they –

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

P.H.: -- bend with you, so they wouldn't snap in other words.

K.F.: Okay, right. Right.

P.H.: And where daddy got his heads and everything, I don't know. But I know Brown and Donnie would always go to a certain person down, I don't know whether it was around St. Michaels or someplace, to get their heads made. They use a lot bigger heads too.

K.F.: Oh.

P.H.: Big heads.

K.F.: They do now than you guys did?

P.H.: Yeah. I don't know how in the world they, you know, even handled them heads. They'd be like four foot. That's –

K.F.: That's a very big cumbersome thing to swing around in the water and haul up.

P.H.: Oh, yes. You stand up on that boat, and you work them tongs, you know. You're like this all day long. And then you have to pull them up. But now they got winders. (Laughter.) They didn't have that.

K.F.: That's right.

P.H.: They got winders to pull them up out of the water. Yeah. They have a lot of pictures. They're rock fishing mostly.

K.F.: Right, right.

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

K.F.: Where do they usually get their boats made?

P.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Where are the boats made?

P.H.: Made?

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

P.H.: My son's boat was made right here in Rock Hall.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: But the state owned her. They would take – she was harbored over in Baltimore somewhere. They would take people out on the, you know, like for surveys or stuff like that.

SPEAKER: Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: Huh?

SPEAKER: Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

P.H.: Yeah. Chesapeake Bay Foundation owned her. And when she went up for sale, my son bought her. Nice boat.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: Very nice.

K.F.: Somebody's putting together some eel pots.

P.H.: Yeah, they do that. That's what he's doing right now. Eeling.

K.F.: Eeling. Okay, okay.

P.H.: In the springtime, he eels.

SPEAKER: How come this is bent?

P.H.: Huh?

K.F.: And does somebody locally make his eel pots?

P.H.: He makes them.

K.F.: He makes them himself?

P.H.: Yup. He makes them. He has somebody make, you know, to sew the funnels for him and everything.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But he puts the pots together.

K.F.: Okay, okay. And where do the eels go? Are they bait food, or are they shipped up to New York?

P.H.: They're shipped. A guy comes from North Carolina.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: They're shipped overseas. They're a delicacy overseas. Big bucks over there.

K.F.: Yup, yeah. It's been interesting talking to some folks. In Virginia, a lot of the eels end up as bait.

P.H.: We use eels here for bait too, you know, like in the summertime for trot lining.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But 90 percent of them are shipped out of here.

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

P.H.: They put them in ponds so they'll get bigger.

K.F.: Oh, really.

P.H.: Yeah, because they want them big eels over there for eating.

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

P.H.: I heard that over there, they go as high as \$10 a pound. I don't know whether that's true or not.

K.F.: I don't know. I just, I've seen them in like Chinese restaurants and Japanese restaurants.

P.H.: Have you?

K.F.: And they're usually smoked.

P.H.: Smoked?

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

P.H.: Now this man from North Carolina, he brought up some smoked eels Sunday, but my sons had – he spit it out. (Laughter.) It's all in what you're used to, I guess.

K.F.: Looks like they're catching a few sharks every once in a while.

P.H.: Yeah. Caught a –

K.F.: That's kind of interesting.

P.H.: -- a small shark. Uh-huh (Affirmative). Surgeons, they catch them.

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

P.H.: In the wintertime.

K.F.: What kind of changes in the fish did you see while you were working the water? Did you see certain fish come and go –

P.H.: Oh, yeah.

K.F.: -- as time went on?

P.H.: Usually, it's sturgeons, you know, and you catch some weird things once in a while, like my dad was in the – he took it, it looked like a skate or a stingray, you know what I'm talking about?

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

K.F.: I've never heard of something like that.

P.H.: Yeah, this is one I made. It starts -- but I wanted them to have it when I was gone.

K.F.: I have never heard of a fish getting up and walking.

P.H.: That was me. No, I hadn't either.

K.F.: That's weird.

P.H.: And when I told dad, I said dad, look, it's walking. I mean it wasn't far off the floor, but it was actually coming up towards us.

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

P.H.: And that's why he brought it home, and they took a picture of it. And I remember it was in our local paper, daddy standing there holding it. Flying fish. It wasn't, you know, nothing that was really scary or – I saved everything from the book signings and –

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: 'Cause Lila had had a party. It started out really as a – she never dreamed she'd win. And it was like seven or nine states entered in this contest.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Yeah. And she won first place for Waterwomen.

K.F.: It's a good book. I have it actually in the trunk of my car.

P.H.: Yeah, she autographed a copy for me, and she spent, you know, quite a few days up here.

K.F.: I'm sure.

P.H.: Went fishing with us.

K.F.: Yeah. (Laughter.)

P.H.: And I mean a writer has a special kind of way of putting down words.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: About the kind of day it was she was out there with us, and the stench of the smell from the fish. (Laughter.) 'Cause she was there when we were gutting them.

K.F.: Oh, right. I guess you met some of these other women that were in the book?

P.H.: Yeah. I met them all.

K.F.: Did you see that you had anything in common with them other than working on the water?

P.H.: No.

K.F.: No?

P.H.: 'Cause they didn't do it full time.

K.F.: Oh, they didn't?

P.H.: Huh-uh (negative).

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: The one with the – in the book with the mother that took the baby out oystering, she only done that, you know, in the fall of the year.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: I done it 12 months out of the year.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: Whether it was freezing cold, or hot, 100 degrees.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Oh, you'd be so cold out there sometimes, you didn't know whether you had fingers, toes or rear end. (Laughter.) I mean that.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: And dad, you're going to think I'm crazy, but dad always – 'cause your hands would get so cold that you just, I mean you could cry they hurt so bad. And he used to tell me stories about how they would actually urinate on their hands to get, you know, the circulation back in them.

K.F.: I guess that would be warm water, basically.

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Not hot water, but warm.

K.F.: Warm, right.

P.H.: Yeah. No, you'd bundle up. I always said as long as my feet didn't go cold, I was all right.

K.F.: Now what did you have to wear, say, in the wintertime?

P.H.: I wore insulated underwear, I wore sweatshirts. Of course, you had your foul weather gear.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And you had good boots.

K.F.: What kid were they?

P.H.: Insulated. Northerners, to keep your feet warm. I mean you'd be out there, it'd be so cold that the fish would freeze no sooner than you threw them in the boat. That's cold.

K.F.: That's cold. That's right. And I guess you get back to the dock, and your catch is sort of frozen –

P.H.: Yup.

K.F.: -- and you have to haul it out and weigh it and pack it.

P.H.: Huh?

K.F.: Did you haul it out and weigh it, or pack it there at the dock?

P.H.: We had the, when we got in, we had the – they went up on a conveyor. One of us would be in the boat, the other one up there weighing them up, icing them up.

K.F.: These are great photos.

P.H.: Yeah, she took really good photos. They're all bluefish.

K.F.: All this.

P.H.: All that.

K.F.: Oh.

P.H.: And they're all gutted. We'd have them in the big boat, the bateaus. Lila took every one of them pictures in that album.

K.F.: Now what was it like sort of on a daily, an everyday schedule when you were going out to work on the water really early in the morning, then coming home? Did you have to fix dinner for your family and stuff?

P.H.: Oh, yeah. When we got home in the evening?

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

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: So you were really working two jobs.

P.H.: Right. I had took care of my home, plus worked out there every day. But it was, like I said, back then, my husband, he pitched in, would help with the dishes. 'Cause when I worked in the wintertime, I didn't do dishes. You know, I didn't want my hands in hot water.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Because they were so used to being out there in the cold water. So he went and bought me a dishwasher. But in the summertime, I done the dishes myself, but wintertime, you don't want your hands in hot water a lot. They got to be, you know, you'd be out, sometimes you'd think you were going to fly from here to North Carolina to try to get your hands, you know, the circulation.

K.F.: Right. (Laughter.)

P.H.: Oh, honey, many times, like this out there. (Laughter.) God, no, I don't miss it. No. No, I don't.

K.F.: And what did you do around the holidays as far as like trying to have Christmas dinner for your family or anything like that?

P.H.: Oh, we did not, never did we go on Christmas day.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Dad said never. He said he didn't care if it was 10 ton out there, we never went on Christmas day.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And then when I got, my boys got older, like on Thanksgiving and things like that, they would go in my place when they got older. No, we never went on Christmas day. But you went every day except for Christmas. And I always had the dinner here. But then, I was younger then too. And it wasn't, it didn't, at that time, seem like it was a lot.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: I was tired. I remember in between, I had divorced my first husband, and I was living back home. And I had two, my two oldest children. And it was a bad winter. And we would have to get up like 3:00 in the morning, ride to Annapolis, and then get in the boat and ride another hour and a half to where our anchor rig was.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And by the time we got home, it'd be 9, 10:00 at night. Now they were long days.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But thank God, I was at my mom's then, you know, and I didn't have to fix no supper or anything then. But after I remarried the second time and had my own home again, then it was different. But the winters got better too.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: As – I'd say for the last 10, 12 years that I worked on the water, the winters wasn't hardly nothing like they were when I was younger. Nothing. You would set ashore, like I said, anywhere from 6 to 8 weeks wondering when you were going to get out there. And when you did get there, 90 percent of your fish were rotten.

K.F.: 'Cause they'd been frozen into the water.

P.H.: It was hard days back then.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: You were – where were you going to get your next loaf of bread.

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

P.H.: 'Cause I remember that one year, the state did give us help. And the day we got back to work is when we got some money from the state. (Laughter.) Went all them weeks without any money, but like I said, when we got – it still came in handy, because a lot of our fish were, we had to throw away. They were rotten. I don't care how cold the water is, a fish is not going to last forever, not 6, 8 weeks.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And we lost a lot. In them days, the ice breaker would come and break us out so we could get out of this hole in Rock Hall. (Laughter.) There wasn't much traffic up, you know, only the watermen.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And when the watermen wasn't getting out everyday, she just got harder, and harder, and harder, the ice did.

K.F.: What would you do while you were sort of iced in and here at home?

P.H.: Work on nets, and have things ready for when you got out there because you knew when you got there, you were going to be limited to, because of the ice, you'd wait around for hours just to get a little hole.

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

P.H.: And when you did, you'd get in the bateau, go there, pull off maybe three or four nets, and put three nets right back over, you know. As my brother was pulling them in, I was putting them out. So there'd be new nets there. And if you got three or four nets, you were lucky till the ice switched again.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Oh, you'd ride around, and around, and around just waiting to get that brick, to get out there and get maybe three of your nets. Sit there, and sit there, and sit there and wait.
 (Laughter.) 'Cause, I mean, that's nature. We couldn't –

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: A net – if we'd have went over there and started getting our nets with the ice, it would've tore the hole rig up.

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

P.H.: Ice is powerful.

K.F.: Yeah, yeah.

P.H.: So when you caught the chance, that's when you hurried up and done what you could do. But before we, like I said, when we were in 6 or 8 weeks, you'd work on the rig, what you had, you know, in your building.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Gear more net. And a lot of times, you'd ride around up Tolchester, see if you could see a hole opening up or something, you know.

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

P.H.: Done that a lot. (Laughter.) Get in that truck with daddy and go see if you could see a hole. 'Cause if you knew – if you seen a hole, maybe that was getting ready to break up.

K.F.: What about in the summer? What kind of things do you remember about the weather and its unpredictability in summertime?

P.H.: The storms, the thunderstorms. I got caught out there many a time in a storm that came up so fast. It was all you could do to get your trot line back in, and lightening and everything right around you. And here you're out there in a open boat.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: 'Cause we've had watermen, we had one watermen, he got struck by lightening.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: And killed him. No, when you see a storm coming, I was taught, you know, go in.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: There's always another day. 'Cause that's, I think that's the main thing that stuck in my head, and I tried to teach my kids. Respect the water. There's always another day.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But when them days were pretty, it was, you come home. You'd be so brown (Laughter) from the sun. Burnt to a crisp almost. 'Cause we didn't, when I trot lined, I worked out of a little 20 foot bateau that was my dad's. But now they have canopies, you know, and things like that to keep the sun off of you.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And I tell my, you know, my boys, please wear dark glasses. That glare off that water is worse than the sun beating right down on you.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: 'Cause you're down there looking at that water, and you're getting it right –

K.F.: Yup.

P.H.: Yup. And that's what they told me over to John's Hopkins when I went about my eyes.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Yeah. The glare was what really was worse than anything. And my brother, now he's just about totally blind.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). And I've been legally blind for the last 10 years. But it's a slow thing. You don't see it overnight.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And they always told us, they told us too over Johns Hopkins, it's worse in the boys than it is in the girls. I don't know why.

K.F.: That's interesting.

P.H.: My brother's five years older than me, and he can't – all he can see is a form. And it was sad. I mean you worked on the water all them years, and have to sell everything. Had a beautiful boat. But like I tell him, thank God you had them years.

K.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That's true. No, it's a good way to make a living. And it's a hard way. But it's something that you're born and raised around, and it's in your blood. That's all I can say.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And it's in my son's blood.

K.F.: Why do you think more women didn't go into it? I mean if there were watermen who had daughters, like your father did, why do you think the women didn't go into it?

P.H.: I don't know. I don't know. I guess I can, you know, I'm going to go back as far as when I was 8, 9 years old. Daddy used to, in the springtime then, would go to Havre de Grace. And they would drift for shad. You don't have that anymore. And I lived for Fridays. 'Cause I knew daddy was coming home to get me and mom, and take us to Havre de Grace and stay on the boat for the weekend. (Laughter.) And sleeping on that boat, it's heaven.

K.F.: Yeah?

P.H.: He had four bunks in the cabin; in the upper part we had a stove where mom done the cooking and everything. It was living. You didn't buy things at the store. You ate, you know, homemade shortbread, stuff like that.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: Fried fish. And I guess from that time on, and in the summertime, dad would get me up to go trot lining. I'd sleep till maybe 10:00. (Laughter.) He fixed the thing up – I'd fix a thing up in the bow of the bateau –

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: -- so the sun couldn't hit me. Life preservers tops the baskets.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And when I'd get up, then I'd make daddy something to eat. But he'd be crabbing, you know, from daylight, and I was sound asleep in the bow. And that's what I loved.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: So maybe a lot of, you know, daughters never done that with their fathers.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But I can hear him now. I didn't want to get up that early in the morning, but I'd go.

K.F.: What kinds of things would you cook him for breakfast?

P.H.: Huh?

K.F.: What kinds of things would you cook him on the boat?

P.H.: We didn't, I had to make him sandwiches. In the summertime, you lived off of tomato sandwiches.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And I had a cooler to keep the mayonnaise and everything, you know. And I can hear him now. Sweets, he'd call me. We'd get up and get daddy a sandwich, and we'd take our own sodas. It was just a good life. And like I said, I didn't, I couldn't have a boss telling me what to do.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And I think that's why my sons like it too 'cause they're their own boss.

K.F.: I hear that from a lot of the watermen and crab pickers and stuff like that too, that they like being their own boss, and that's the main part of the reason why they like the job.

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Like my son, he shoots pool on Monday nights. It was late when he got home last night, 12:00. And he had been up from 4:00 that morning eeling.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: It was a little bit of wind blowing. He said I'm not going. I'm tired.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But if he worked for somebody else, like my husband, he works at a marina now as a painter. If he gets up and he's tired, he says I got to go to work, you know, or you'll get fired.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But who's going to fire him when he has his own rig?

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: So that's a picture of his boat up there.

K.F.: The black and white one?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative), at a boat docking contest. We have a big watermen's thing here around the 4th of July.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: All the watermen get together, and they dock their boats. And whoever does it the fastest, or gets a trophy, you know.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And my two sons, well he'd never been in the boat docking contest, 'cause he's the type, you know, he works too hard for his money. He's not going to tear anything up, which I can see is point too.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: He's got about \$25,000 worth of boat sitting there.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: When you tear it up, you're out of work.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But my youngest son said come on, Donny, let's get in it. He said I'll be the stern man, the one that threw the rope. Thirty seconds, she was docked. The trophy's in the middle. But he'll never get in another one, you know, it was just one of them spur-of-the-moment things.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And he wins first place. And we were all tickled. We were all on the boat with him. But I've seen a lot of people tear their stuff up too at these boat-docking contests.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: And it's not worth it. The only thing about working on the water is I miss the money. That's it. I don't miss having to pay the government any money. (Laughter.) Believe me. 'Cause when you're self-employed –

K.F.: Oh, yeah.

P.H.: -- it takes a big chunk of your money every year to pay them, unless you got an awful lot of write-off. No, I don't miss that. I don't know what else to tell you.

K.F.: Well let me ask you about oystering, one other thing. Did you guys have specific beds that you would work?

P.H.: Had different areas. (Television in background.) I mean you knew where you could go hand tong.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And everybody worked, you know, the same areas in the oyster. And that's the same way today. There are certain places where the hand tongs can work, and where the divers work. The divers can't go, you know, where the hand tongs go.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But it wasn't no divers back in my day. (Laughter.) No. It was either patent tong rig or hand tonging. Now there's a lot of divers.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: A lot of divers. Yeah. It's hard on you, though.

K.F.: Yeah. I can't imagine diving into that water in the wintertime, even though you have on a suit, I mean it's still cold.

P.H.: They have to use hot water, you know, keep it in the wintertime going through that suit to keep warm. But it's hard on – being down there too, and all that hard swimming. 'Cause I've got nieces' husbands that dive for a living.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: It's hard on them.

K.F.: So I guess people who are going into the water business now, it's still within families who've always been in it. There's nobody sort of from outside coming in starting their own business.

P.H.: Yeah. I mean you have a few that have come here, you know, and went to work on the water, but not that awful many. Most of your watermen that you have, were born and raised here.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Yup.

K.F.: Now did you guys have – well, I know around the shore, I've heard different names for the fish. Sort of local names for fish, and local names for equipment and stuff like that. Did you guys have that too?

P.H.: What do you mean a local name for your fish?

K.F.: Well like I've heard rock called different things.

P.H.: Stripers.

K.F.: Yeah. And croakers I've heard called different things –

P.H.: Hardheads.

K.F.: -- particularly in the lower shore. And on the western shore too. Did you guys have –

P.H.: About the same. Stripers, rockfish. But see, that's how Rock Hall was supposed to got her name from a big haul of rockfish.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: 'Cause back in the olden days, they seine hauled for them.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: 'Cause my dad done that.

K.F.: Oh, he did?

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

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: Yup. They would have to get out in the water, they stand in the water with the seine haul.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: And that was a pretty big crew you needed.

P.H.: Oh, yeah. It was a big crew. And they would, you know, they had like these little shanties, they would pull them around, and you had somebody that done the cooking. But when they had a big haul of fish, it was nice. Yeah. Yeah, my dad done that.

K.F.: When did that sort of go out of –

P.H.: Seine hauling?

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: It had really dwindled down. And I don't think in the last, around here, I had knew a couple men that done it. You'd see them, you know, while you were in the river or something.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Crabbing. You'd see them go by with the seine on the back of the little boat.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But I bet it's been, I don't know how many years since they've done it around here.

K.F.: Are any of those guys still around that used to do it, or have they all passed away?

P.H.: Well, yeah, but they're old. Yeah. And I mean you got to have a big crew too to do that, seine haul.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: Because you're outside this net, and you like circled around for the fish.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And they stand in the water. No, that's the thing of the past, I think.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: But it was a big thing years ago.

K.F.: Yeah. Well I've seen a few, well I guess it was in Cecil County a couple weeks ago. Went through a little town, and on the edge of the water, there were a few of the – looked like a crew house, because it had two doors in the front of it, and the exact same number of windows going down each side, and chimneys next to every window so it had been divided up into little rooms. But it looked like someone had sort of emptied it out and turned it into somebody's house.

P.H.: Oh, yeah.

K.F.: But, you know, and there was a beach there. So it looked like someone had been hauling fish out at some point in history.

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That's where they would haul them up on the beach to where, you know, they could get them out of there. Yup. I was a little girl then, you know, and daddy used to do it. Beautiful rock fish.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: Beautiful. I mean they were like this, you know. It was, you lived for them to catch a haul.

K.F.: Yeah. (Laughter.)

P.H.: 'Cause I remember that. I mean everybody has something that one thing sticks in their head, and I remember that one year, daddy said next haul they had, I get a new bike. And I got a new bike. And my brother got a 20-gauge shotgun. And they'd had a good haul. And the man he used to seine haul with, he's got, you know, a son now that works on the water, and he's – well I guess Danny's about my age. I think they were the best and happiest days.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Yeah, I think they were.

K.F.: Why?

P.H.: Because it was more the watermen stuck together.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: And things, I think better back in them days. Now you got one trying to outdo the other, or thinks he's better than you are.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But time goes on. A lot of times, I wish my kids had been brought up in the old days.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: The way it was done then.

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

P.H.: Everything's so modern today. I guess my father would turn over in his grave if he knew they didn't dip crabs by hand. (Laughter.) He would.

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

P.H.: To think that there's a thing that just catches all the crabs for you. (Laughter.) It's amazing. It really is. I'm telling you. Maybe that's why a lot of your watermen didn't live to be real, you know, too old.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Because of the hard work and everything that they had to do. I mean you wouldn't catch one of these watermen today going out there on the ice, cutting a hole in the ice big enough to try to catch a bushel of oysters.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: You wouldn't do that today. They had to do it back then. It was either that or starve to death.

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

P.H.: And you caught a bushel of oysters, of course, back in them days, you bought flour by the, you know, in the barrel and things like that.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: 'Cause they made all their bread and everything. And I guess for a bushel of oysters, you could buy a lot. But not today. I know my father's done it working, you know, went out there on the ice, tow something, like a big sled or something, you know –

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: -- to bring the oysters back in.

K.F.: Right. And he'd just take his tongs out there and cut the hole in the ice?

P.H.: Yeah. To make a dollar. And back, he used to tell me about back then they used to sell crabs in barrels.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: It would be like three bushel in the barrels. And that's how you got paid for that barrel. And you got like maybe 50 cents or a dollar for that barrel. What do you think crabs cost today?

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Right now, they're \$70 a bushel to the watermen.

K.F.: Oh, wow.

P.H.: But if you went out to try to buy a bushel, it probably cost you \$110, \$115 for that basket of crabs. Lot of changes. (Laughter.) Oh, my. I said when my son's in his 50's, he'll be telling his children, a lot of changes. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Where do you see the water business going the next couple of years?

P.H.: Not too far. I don't. I mean I was glad my dad didn't live to see them put a ban on the rockfish because like I told you, he always told me that God takes care of, you know, things – I don't know how to say it. Replenishing itself.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: God takes care of that. And God did take care of it all them years for them watermen back in them days. They would see years when, I mean, catch tons and tons of fish. And then they would go for the next year and not see hardly any.

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

P.H.: That's why I'm saying, he would turn over in his grave if he knew they had put a ban on rockfish. You could go out there and catch all you wanted. I would take my kids out there in walkers, and they'd go around in the boat in a walker, and we'd just catch the heck out of fish on a hook and line, you know? (Laughter.)

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: Now everything is limited. You go out there in the summertime for a pleasure trip, you're allowed, what, one fish per person. We used to go out there and catch all we wanted. Can't do that no more. Everybody's telling everybody else what to do. So it's changing big time. I don't see the water business going too much further.

K.F.: Now are the watermen going into the charter boat business, some of them, or who's going into that?

P.H.: It used to be in this town too years ago, charter boats. My father was a charter boat captain.

K.F.: Okay, okay.

P.H.: You don't see that no more. It's all dwindled right away. I mean you go down to that shore, and you'd see boat, after boat, after boat lined up. And they were all charter boats.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: And you had your all, you know, everybody had their different parties.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: 'Cause when I was little, I remember answering the phone daddy's fishing parties, you know, verifying their trip. That's all gone. I mean they would make two trips a day. Morning and afternoon.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But everything's, I mean everybody's got their own boats now. That's the change.

K.F.: More people with boats.

P.H.: More people with boats. And it was like that, I'd say, in the 1970's, daddy was – early 70's, daddy was still running fishing parties. And you'd take a party out there, and next thing you know, you look around, you got 25, 30 small boats 'cause they knew that they knew where the rockfish were.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: The watermen. So it got to that point where they, everybody, you know, had their own boats, and they didn't need the charter boat captains anymore.

K.F.: But they couldn't find the fish.

P.H.: Well I guess they got smart enough after so many years, you know, following the watermen. Yeah, this town, I forgot about that. It was loaded with charter boat captains. All their boats. And that was a pretty site, seeing them lined up.

K.F.: Did he have a different boat for the charter business than he did for his fishing business, or the water business?

P.H.: No –

K.F.: No? Same boat?

P.H.: In the spring boat, he would paint them up. They looked brand new again.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: After you worked on them all winter and everything. No, we worked out of them boats. 'Cause when I got older, I'd go with daddy as his mate.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: On fishing parties. It was good money 'cause you got tipped.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: From the people in the party.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Daddy only gave me like \$10 for each trip.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But you could, you got anything from 25, \$30 from tips.

K.F.: Oh, okay.

P.H.: 'Cause you would help them, you know, take their fish off the hook, you know, and all that kind of stuff. It was good tips.

K.F.: Yeah. And then who cleaned the fish once you brought them in?

P.H.: They took care of that. They took them.

K.F.: Oh, they did that.

P.H.: Yup. They took what they caught. Yeah, they were good days too in the summertime. And I'd go with my brother too.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: He'd run parties too. When daddy didn't have a party, I'd go with my brother on his boat. Yeah, they were good days. I used to like, you know, showing them how to catch a fish.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Yeah.

K.F.: Well how would you show them how to catch a fish? Let's say I'm someone who's on the charter boat.

P.H.: All right. I would throw the line out for them, and if you got a, you know, a fish playing around in your bait –

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: -- don't be real anxious, you know.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: A rockfish, he wants to kill that bait before he takes it.

K.F.: Okay. (Laughter.)

P.H.: 'Cause you use soft crabs. You cut soft crabs up.

K.F.: Okay.

P.H.: You put soft crab on there. And he'd be hitting it, you know, he wants to kill that bait before he grabs hold.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And when you've pretty well figured him out, he'd done, you know, killing it, you know, I kept putting the line out, you know, my rod out there. Let him take it. And then you just, when you knew he had it, then you set the hook.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: Many a rockfish I caught for the parties. They couldn't catch a cold, some of them. (Laughter.) That's the truth. (Laughter.) I don't think they could've caught it if it had been right in the boat with them. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Who would be on the charter parties? Who would come and –

P.H.: What kind of people?

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: They were your, I'd say a lot of them were your regular day workers.

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

P.H.: You didn't have too many that – you had a lot of Mennonites and Dunkers.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). But they were, I don't know whether I should say. (Laughter.)

K.F.: You want me to turn the tape off?

P.H.: They were, I mean they had no respect for your property. They would spit in the floor.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: Yeah. Of the boat and everything. They had no – 'cause daddy used to ask them, is that how you live at home? I mean that was my father's living, that boat.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: We're the ones had to keep it clean. They wouldn't have wanted to got on that boat filthy dirty.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: But they were dirty people. And you'd have, we'd have priests.

K.F.: Really?

P.H.: A lot of time. Yeah. And they would be just like us. Drink. (Laughter.) And call him father. But a lot of your fishing parties was everyday people. And they were good people. They worked for a living, and then just lived for that day to come down and go rockfishing.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: And it would be, you could take six. But the best party would be like between four and five. 'Cause then if you got too many on the boat, it's crowded.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: So most of our parties was like four to five people. And they were from Pennsylvania and them places.

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

P.H.: Didn't take out too many rich people.

K.F.: No?

P.H.: My father took out a boy that became the Governor of the State of Maryland.

K.F.: Oh, really?

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative), when he was a child.

K.F.: Who was this? Who was this?

P.H.: Oh, let me think. (Laughter.) I got to go back. I can't think of his name. But when he was a, you know, a boy like 10 or 11 years old, he was on my father's boat, and became the Governor of Maryland years later. But I got a plaque that they gave dad one. It was either, they were offering \$50 for the biggest rockfish, or the plaque. So dad took the plaque because \$50 you spend it, it'll be gone, but you always got the plaque.

K.F.: Right.

P.H.: I'll show it to you.

K.F.: Oh, you still have it?

P.H.: Yeah, I still got it. (Laughter.)

(OFF RECORD.)

P.H.: It's heavy. Got it.

K.F.: Oh, God. (Laughter.)

P.H.: But can you still read it? I mean it got tarnished and stuff.

K.F.: Yeah.

P.H.: It's from the Maryland Sportsmen – I don't know what year it was, whether it says that on there or not.

K.F.: So Captain Melvin Glen, that was your father.

P.H.: That was my dad.

K.F.: Whose boat brought in the largest fish caught on the Club's fishing party at Love Point.

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

K.F.: August 31st, 1937. Where's Love Point?

P.H.: Down there by the Bay Bridge.

K.F.: Okay. I think I know where that is. All right. Wow. And it's the Maryland Sportsmen's Luncheon Club.

P.H.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). So he took that instead of the money.

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

P.H.: I wasn't born then.

K.F.: Right, right.

P.H.: But mom gave it, you know – daddy gave it to me. And I’ve, I never get rid of it. I’d pass it down to my, you know –

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

P.H.: But I think it’s brass.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)