

Interview Log

Interviewee: Mini & Elmer Ford **Tape #:**
MAAF/KF/MD/FT5.22.311/414

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault **# of Tapes:** 1

Date: 5/22/98 **# of Sides:** 2

Location: Rumbley MD; in crab shantie

Topic: boat building, crabbing, soft crabs, marsh

Corresponding Photography Log #: yes

Comments: File name: Mdf311.doc. See Fieldnotes: FN05.22.98. *Italics* indicate emphasis; [brackets indicate additional information not on the tape or asides by fieldworker]; "quotations indicate direct transcription."

Mini and Elmer had cancelled on me once, and at the last minute said to come on this morning. Mini also quilts but could not leave the crab shantie because of her duties to fish up crabs.

BEGIN SIDE A

[outside on porch of crab Shantie overlooking marsh and harbor, hum or steamer and shedding tanks in background; bugs biting]

BIO: born in Rumbley, 1925 March 14; now lives in Fairmount; built home still lives in it;

WORKING WATER: started when he could crawl; only time left it was when in Navy; some stories of Navy and war; father did: crabs, fish, oysters, died young in 60s, heart attack; boat building; 25-30; sold a few: Smith, Deal, Crisfield,

BOAT BUILDING: types of wood, why, suppliers of wood; finishing; smaller boats; oysters in winter on one boat; crabbing boats; building upside down; dropping them when turning;

CRABBING: bank trapping; not done much; similar to pound net; drowning turtles; bad crab season; reasons why; fast fortune not really; hard work;

OYSTERING: potomac river; 55 cents bushel; now \$25 bushel [swallows swoop by]; oyster market; now keeps for himself; paying bills;

"you getting this all on tape and you go home and listen to this bull crap ain't you"
[laughter]

WINTERS: moved to other forms of oystering, regulations, quit and moved inland for jobs in winter; truck driving, construction, won't sell boats sometimes; son is a fisherman but worked at saw mill; hated it;

Accidents; steaming crabs for families; relatives now live in GA; was a doctor;

1977: froze in for 7 weeks; story of that; debts, playing catch up;

oystering for long spells; coming home;

[crabs done; dumping them on the shantie floor;]

Time magazine article on Mosam;

How he got his nickname; Mosam was the name of the coffee

[we are picking crabs]

Trapping muskrats; time he was interviewed for Time Magazine;

Wind and working the water; oystering and wind conditions; 1946 muskrating good; paid well; boosted oystering pay; Dorchester still depends on it for lively hood; conibear traps;

Duck hunting; regulations, still buys his license but doesn't hunt anymore; keeps them every year; has them since he was a teenager; in album; brings back old memories;

How he got in time Magazine; how staged it was; got paid for it; people called him from every where when they saw it;

Changes in fishing gear; \$65 dollars bushel for crabs on market; pfiesteria on sales of crabs;

[outside with Mini at tanks]

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

[outside with Mini at shedding tanks; loud]

how to tell if ready; how to handle them; moving crabs into special tanks at certain stages; losing legs; pinching;

[wind]

rather be home sewing; quilts she makes; how learned; sewing all her life but learned to quilt from friend;

[very windy on shedding platform now]

crabs that get hung up while shedding;

quilt guild in Salisbury; too far to go; teaches quilting at Jenny's sewing studio; goes to classes; sews for decorator in Salisbury; makes flags;

schedule while fishing up; truck here at 3; leaves around 4, Mosam home around 6; she returns around 9; how she started helping her husband; other women helping their husbands too; enjoys, outdoors; now hard work;

bank trapping; she goes with Mosam; need a mate; fall Mosam had; post master used to name the town;

her family worked the water too; what they did;

[we go outside to see some of the boats come in, tape still running, sound not good;

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