

Interview Log

ORAL HISTORY #29

Interviewee(s): Clarence Cox

Interviewer(s): Richard Dodds

Others Present: Jane Tucker
Louise Cox

Date: June 12, 1987

Location: Oxford, MD

Topic: Seafood industry
The Lady, Clarence Cox's first boat
Bugeyes
Skipjacks
Oyster houses in Oxford
Boarding houses
Crabbing
Trot lines
Nets
Eeling, eel pots
Shops in Oxford
Fires in Oxford

Comments: Background noise such as bells, sirens and fire engines throughout.

Documentation: Audio: Tape OH #29

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BEGIN SIDE 1

Richard Dodds: Jane was telling me, Mr. Cox, that you are one of the few people around that was born and bred in Oxford, is that correct?

Clarence Cox: I was raised here. I came here...I was 1-year-old when I came to Oxford.

Louise Cox: You were six months.

CC: Or less than a year old when I came to Oxford.

RD: At a time when you don't remember when you came to Oxford.

CC: No, I do not remember (laughter).

LC: Well, he lived over in Bellevue.

CC: I lived over in Bellevue and I came right on the Island in the house now where uh the original house was tore down where Jerry Valliant's house is situated today.

Jane Tucker: You know what he means by the Island?

LC: Down where Jane lives.

JT: Vancouver Island.

CC: People call it Vancouver Island or Stuart's Island.

LC: We still call it that.

CC: Some call it Stuart's, some call it Vancouver Island.

LC: It was an Island and the back channel came through there.

CC: My father remembers when he said he was sailing boats through there.

RD: Huh. What year if I may ask would that have been when you came?

CC: Uh, 1912.

RD: 1912. So the seafood industries were probably still going strong that year in Oxford.

CC: Well that was the main staple for Oxford, the livelihood for all the people in the village. They derived their livelihood from the water. Always nothing to see any amount of boats on different parts in the river and when he came in he had piles of oysters and you had these oyster houses. We had, oh a half a dozen oyster houses in Oxford, and each one of 'em had anywhere from 30, 40 or 50 shuckers into it shucking oysters.

RD: Yeah, big business in those days.

CC: Yeah, that was the thriving part of Oxford. And your storekeepers were popular too. They depended on what the watermen were making.

RD: You obviously grew up near the water.

CC: As a kid I went to school until 1930 and I finished school. I graduated in 1930 at the new building. Most of my time was at the school that's on (unintelligible) in Oxford, and it was tore down and homes were built out there.

RD: So when you finished school, you took to the water at that time.

CC: I took to the water, yes. As a kid I liked the water and would run home from school and all I had to do was jump in a skiff and nipper some oysters.

RD: (Laughter).

LC: He lived right next to me.

RD: Yeah?

JT: Was Captain Louis, your father, was he a waterman?

CC: Oh yes, oh yes, a waterman. Yes, and his father before him.

JT: And your uncle was a marine police?

CC: My Uncle Willie was a marine police for a long time. He was over a certain district here in Easton. They spent a lot of time out on the water, a policeman then. They were very strict and watched things very, very close, especially the drudgers because the drudger would go over the line and poach on the tonger a little bit.

RD: Yeah? It sounds like obviously a lot of your family made a living from the water and you probably got your interest from them I imagine.

CC: I don't know. Maybe it was the freedom of it, I guess. Worked on my own and I didn't like being under somebody and somebody telling me something what I had to do and how many hours I had to put in. I'd rather have more freedom on my own. And the harder I worked, I figured the more I could make.

JT: You did very well.

LC: He did very well, Clarence did.

JT: Clarence, when you were young, did you go out on the steamboats that used to come in?

(Sounds of bells from firehouse in background)

CC: No, no, I would watch 'em. I tell you, us kids, we went to school, when we come back, we had our chores to do at home and we hardly ever left at all. We watched what was around us. I tell you as far as I believe I went as a kid was to the Crosby family who lived there for (unintelligible, fire engine sirens in the background.) I would go up and play with those children, all those boys. That was a big family. And he and his father ran the ice plant.

LC: This is where the apartment house is.

CC: Where the apartment house is now they had a crab house and an ice plant there and they had a big one (ph) cylinder diesel, fire pax (ph) diesel that operated it and Mr. Crosby was the operator and his sons helped him quite a bit and they did do ice all the time for storage for the seafood.

JT: How did he store it, in straw?

CC: Oh, no, no. He had cold storage. He had a big cold storage area.

RD: Your father, I thought Captain Bill (ph) mentioned that your father owned a seafood packing company. Is that right?

CC: No, no. He only worked on the water and he ran a fishing party. In his later years, he ran a fishing party.

LC: And that was quite, well even up until the sixties, right next door to me, they had fleets of what size boats would they be he'd rent to people who wanted to fish?

CC: Well, he would rent skiffs, what we called skiffs. And he'd put outboard motors - --16 foot skiffs and they would go out right out the front of the house and catch all the (unintelligible) you'd want.

LC: The tourists or visitors didn't have the money then or the inclination, or maybe not the availability to have their own boats and they didn't trailer of course, so they came over here and we rented the skiffs and you went rowing or you fished.

CC: For a buck or two that's all we'd charge.

LC: They were still doing that in the sixties.

CC: Yeah, I can remember my mother saying, "Louis, we made \$75 on skiffs this week." That was good pay. He had a half a dozen skiffs.

JT: When did you have your own first boat?

CC: My first boat was in 1932.

JT: What was it?
CC: *The Lady*, 1932.
RD: The same boat that is out there now?
CC: She was launched in May 1932.
RD: Who built that?
CC: Captain Charley Landon. Charles Landon. He was a scale modeler. He built by scale.
RD: (Unintelligible, fire engine siren in background).
CC: Same boat. That's a half model.
RD: Right.
LC: What is that you made for the back of it, the awning type thing?
CC: Oh, the canvas. See, he built half models and he was actually the first person that ever built a power boat (ph) his own power boat (ph).
RD: In Oxford or in Easton?
CC: Here in Oxford. He was actually the first man to build his own power boat. I remember his son had the model. They raced her. I think he built it for Bill Myer's (ph) father.
RD: Is that right?
CC: Bill Myer's father. He had his own Plymouth and he raced those boats.
RD: Yeah. That's interesting because....
CC: These were work boats. These were fast, a little fast.
RD: I suppose a lot of people say they were copied off of the naval torpedo boats, the stern.
CC: Yeah. His lines on boats were, I always thought his lines on the boats...they'd cut the water (unintelligible).
JT: Where was he located?
CC: Captain Charlie Landon. He was on the Strand. He lived on the Strand. He lived on Stewart Street for a little while too.
JT: Where was his yard?
CC: His yard was at the foot of Tilghman Street where the parking lot is today.
RD: Hmm. Do you remember how much it cost when she was new?
CC: When she was complete---engine, hardware, boat and all---\$1,140.
RD: \$1,140 dollars.
CC: The hull was 5 and a quarter. The rest was hardware and engine.
RD: What kind of engine was it?
CC: It was a Ford (unintelligible).
JT: What was her first use?
CC: Party boat—fishing party.
JT: And you still fish party, don't you.
CC: No, not too much. No I won't say I do because I let my license expire.
JT: Oh. Well we'll say until recently.
RD: Did you also start tonging with her right away or did that come later.
CC: I tonged her for 10 years, sure. Absolutely, I tonged her. I'd tong her and crab her, but mostly in the Choptank because of my party business --- taking out parties. If I went up in the river, your legs was hard to keep. You couldn't keep your legs, what you would call a good leg --- crab leg in the river --- and that's where I would go out on the

water where I had more of a chance to take my pots wherever I wanted to go where it wouldn't interfere with somebody else. Most normal people would respect one another on the water. They do respect one another on the water.

(Overlapping dialogue). If you have a trot line leg, always in my time, most time, they'll respect you. Let's say if a man crabbed a certain place, you'd say well, "He's gonna be there."

JT: Did you sell your crabs, Clarence, to a buy boat or did you bring them in?

CC: Sold them to A. B. Harris.

JT: A. B. Harris, and he's at....

CC: He was where the apartment house is today. He had the ice plant and a crab house and an oyster house there.

RD: How much was he paying for the crabs?

CC: A dollar a barrel.

RD: A dollar a barrel?

CC: A dollar a barrel (laughter). You'd pitch them in a barrel then, not in baskets, bushel baskets. And a lot of crabs were shipped then to New York and you might get a buck or two for 'em and you might say it went to the dump and may not get a cent.

That's the way it happened.

RD: Yeah? 'Cause this would have been the time during the depression I suppose...

CC: During the thirties...

RD: The thirties were hard.

CC: Yeah.

JT: And your oysters, you took to A. B. Harris too.

CC: I sold all my oysters to A. B.

JT: Uh huh. Now weren't they shipped out in the shell more than shucked.

CC: No, no. He had counted the trays (ph). A. B. Harris, counted the trays (ph). He really liked the smaller oysters more than the big oysters.

JT: So he wanted them shucked.

CC: Oh yes, he wanted them shucked, yeah.

RD: Sent out by the railroad.

CC: By the railroad, yeah. (Unintelligible) in town. That's all he did you know, is run the freight, you know and did odd jobs around town.

JT: He ran the freight in what?

CC: He ran it right to the railroad station in parcels and that sort of thing.

JT: Did you ever go to Baltimore on any of the schooners?

CC: Never, never took a schooner trip, never in my life.

RD: You didn't work on the drudge boats?

CC: I never worked on a drudge boat.

RD: Was that because you just didn't like that type of life or...

CC: I didn't like it.

LC: He wanted to work by himself. (Laughter).

CC: I was not a sailor.

JT: Well you have another boat out there now in your fleet, don't you?

CC: I have another little boat. She's older than *The Lady*. I call her junk boy (ph).

JT: What was her name? Who built her?

CC: Mitchell.

JT: Which Mitchell?

CC: Eugene Mitchell. He was a boat builder in Oxford, too.

JT: Never heard of him before.

CC: I found a little book of my uncle's when he was having this boat built, one of the same type. He was paying \$5, \$10 dollars, I think he had her built for \$125. (Laughter).

JT: So what year do you think she was built.

CC: About 1927, '26 or '27.

JT: And was she was built for party fishing too?

CC: That boat was personally built for a man named Bigelow (ph), not Bigelow, Branalow (ph), Branalow. He lived where Snyder lives today here in town.

JT: And it was just a boat built on the Strand.

CC: No, no, no.

LC: Where Dottie Seton (ph) lives.

CC: Yeah, he lived there and he first built *The Prize* (ph) there and he lived in Fort Eatonville (ph), a city man. He liked the water. He liked to take his little boat and ride it around. Then after he passed away Johnny Bates used her as a crab boat or working boat. Johnny Bates had it.

LC: You don't remember Johnny Bates.

JT: (Unintelligible - background noise).

CC: No, you didn't remember Johnny. You knew Thelma though, didn't you?

JT: Thelma and their son.

CC: Well he was a very, very good waterman, Johnny was a good waterman. Good tonger and good crabber.

JT: Now, where did you pull your boat out when you know, on the railway? What railway did you use? What did you have here then?

CC: They catered to you. You had a lot of little small railways that people came to (unintelligible).

JT: Did you beach them sort of in the shallows?

CC: At first yeah. You'd beach 'em, brought 'em up on the shore, yeah. Put 'em up on the shore. And you know you had more freedom if a piece of land was laying out, they made use of it. (Unintelligible). It was marshy, low, flat, level, where they could put it on high water, took their boat up, put a roller under it, pull her up, get a half dozen people around her, pull her up.

LC: But you never did that.

CC: Oh, no, I didn't do that, no. I always took it to the railway. But my father did it, that sort of thing.

RD: Nobody minded.

CC: You had more privileges around here. You would not try to do those things today (laughter).

RD: Mr. Cox, you've seen a lot of years of oystering and crabbing. Were any years better than other years or were the early years better than the present years, or has it been sort of ups and downs.

CC: I think your early years were much better than what they are now.

RD: As far as making a living on the water now.

CC: You had, more around. You had more oysters, you could catch more oysters. I think it was more plentiful. You need a lot of patience. When the hardies [hardheads]

was in here. Those Pennsylvania Dutch loved the hardies...catch hardies. Not only that, the local people liked to catch 'em and eat 'em too. Just, bring 'em up, five on a bunch for a quarter. (Laughter). Weigh 2, 3, or 4 pounds.

JT: Lots of rock?

CC: Lots of rock. I never started much with rock fishing until after the croaker season was over. I'd do that in the fall. Then after the hardies (ph) left, then you had control (ph) of the rock all day long when you would catch the fish.

JT: And then spring perch, white and yellow perch?

CC: Yeah, white perch, mostly white perch.

RD: Where would you take your groups out, I mean fishing groups?

CC: Where'd I operate from?

RD: Yeah, where did you go when you fished.

CC: Where the Valliant's Marina is, where the Mears Marina is today where I operated from.

RD: Where would you go out with your people when going fishing?

CC: In the Choptank I fished mostly in the Choptank. I would go in the Bay occasionally. I would go to Sharps Island occasionally.

LC: And he knew where the fishing sites were Cook's Point and Todd Point.

CC: Mostly in the Choptank. You didn't have to go that far to catch all the hardies you wanted. I took my marks out. I remember when I first started hardies and some of the older guys in town... "Oh he's young and he don't know what it's all about. He's got to learn the ropes a little bit." I knew one's were good and one's were bad and I kept my marks on 'em. I kept my marks on 'em and I kept those marks in my mind all through the years and I never forgot those marks. I knew those edges and I know if you got (unintelligible), you could outsmart him too. (Laughter).

JT: Yeah, I heard tales of that.

CC: Yes sir. I (unintelligible).

RD: How about your tonging areas? Did you also use the Choptank mainly.

CC: Yeah, I'd go to Broad Creek and Tred Avon most of the time.

RD: Is that right?

CC: Our area was Tred Avon mostly, but we went to Broad Creek too.

JT: What about your lease plan (ph) they call it.

CC: I always had a piece of leased bottom (ph) all through my life. My uncles had leased bottoms through their time. My father never had a leased bottom. I always had 10, 20 acres of leased bottom of the (unintelligible dialogue, background noise), shelly (ph).

RD: Shelly (ph). Was that in the Tred Avon?

CC: No, you had to get a piece of bottom that was nonproductive. It was up to you to make it productive.

LC: Tell him where it is.

CC: It was in Clayton (ph) and I would get green shells (unintelligible). If they had spats on 'em, they could survive. They'd come out. You'd be surprised what you got out.

JT: Clarence, how did you protect that acreage, so that others didn't harvest it when you weren't around? It was marked, I guess.

CC: You always had to have marks on each corner to be sure. Now when I was in service, I had a farmer steal from me (unintelligible) and the owner of my piece of leased property, he told me he found his caretaker taking from me, but as a general run, it hasn't been that bad. They respect you, most tingers respect you.

LC: Some waterman (unintelligible).

CC: No, they would have a certain amount of respect.

LC: Until a couple of years ago...

CC: Some of these younger ones, they get a little touchy on that subject.

RD: But a leased bed was more productive than the other grounds.

CC: No, no. It was more for me a place to go when things were bad outside.

RD: Yeah, I guess that's true.

CC: When things were bad outside, if I had a little catch there, I would go in there and make my day's work, for I couldn't have made it outside.

JT: Clarence, did you have as much then of what I call 'em foreign watermen coming into this area. You know, when we start the season, it seems like so many boats are way down Smith Island and all come here and scrape us clean in September and October. Do they do that now?

CC: No, no. You had your county lines. Years back you had your county lines and only the county people could go in Talbot County or Dorchester County, but actually they opened state lines, they made no lines, therefore they left...

JT: Did the Waterman's Association agree to that or did they think that was a good idea 'cause you were president of the Association.

CC: No, no.

JT: Weren't you president of the Waterman's Association?

CC: I was president of the Waterman's Association up here. We had about a membership of 100 watermen from Oxford and Bellevue who belonged to that association at that time. That was in the fifties. That was about the late forties or late fifties it was. Of course, we would stake off seed areas in the spring. The state would shell areas and would seed oysters on board (ph). (Unintelligible) It was a big help. Really a big help.

JT: How often should the state seed.

CC: They did most every spring. We bought sponge crabs and throw sponge crabs overboard when the crabs got scarce. I was in the Association when we bought sponge crabs from Virginia and throw 'em overboard, I think to make our crabs more productive.

RD: How many watermen are there in Oxford that work full time?

CC: Today?

RD: Yeah.

CC: I could count 'em on one hand that live right in Oxford. Now there are some local boys that had to move out. They moved to Trappe or some areas like Trappe or Easton. But these had been Oxford boys. But that's the way it is. You can't afford to stay.

JT: Tingers come here now from down Crisfield.

LC: Yes, Smith Island...

CC: It's state wide now.

LC: They go around people's docks that have planted a few oysters and they'll just wipe them out and laugh at you...

CC: Well, Louise, they had that privilege...because they don't respect (unintelligible). (Laughter).

LC: Clarence, the law's been so many feet around that dock, but they don't abide by it.

CC: But they won't abide by it. That's happened all through the years, too, Louise.

JT: It's happened to us, Tucker used to bring oysters over from the western shore, and you know they're shaped quite differently than Tred Avon, so that anyone from this area would know that he wasn't getting Tred Avon oysters and take it right from the dock and then tell me as long as you didn't touch the dock (unintelligible).

CC: Sure. You know when you're nippering around the shores, tonging around the shores, and you see some oysters where you know you'd catch a bushel or two real quick, that's a temptation. It's a temptation and if they don't respect you...

LC: And they don't...

CC: They'll take 'em. But a lot of people will respect you.

JT: I hope so. You haven't seen it, have you? (Laughter).

RD: I was admiring that beautiful carving up there.

LC: A doctor friend of ours did that and he's a plastic surgeon.

RD: It's beautiful.

JT: Dr. Large (ph)?

LC: Uh huh. He does that to keep his hands supple you know.

RD: It's beautiful.

LC: He's semi-retired now.

RD: Uh huh.

LC: He said he operated the other day for five hours and said he was exhausted.

CC: Five hours...(unintelligible).

RD: Mr. Cox, what do you remember, going back to the early years again, some of the larger boats...

CC: What, the dredge boats?

RD: Yeah, the dredge boats here in Oxford and their captains?

CC: I have a list of all of 'em.

RD: Do you?

CC: Yeah, I have a list of all of 'em.

LC: Where is it? I'll get it for you. How long is that tape running?

RD: It's 90 minutes---45 minutes each side.

JT: (Background birds singing). Isn't this a great location looking out here?

RD: I know.

JT: Because Clarence and Louise also own the house just south of us, so they have this whole front here. He's got one of those old account books. In Oxford, that's all they...I see something that says bug-eye, skipjacks. Let Richard take it...

RD: 1920 on. This is the record that you kept?

CC: Yeah, don't open it. That's my income tax book, too, (laughter), ledger...

RD: You have four bug-eyes listed here.

CC: Well I got bug-eyes and skipjacks column. I got more than that there admiral.

RD: Well I got four bug-eyes to start, although, there is another one down here. You have the *Colton*? Is that (unintelligible), *The Pines* (ph)?

CC: *The Pines* (ph).

RD: *Little Jennie* which...

CC: *Little Jennie*.
RD: Stu (ph) is still around.
JT: Did you see the article on TV about *Little Jennie* the other night?
CC: Yeah, that was good.
RD: I didn't see that unfortunately.
JT: I don't know how they did that, 'cause that was several years in the making of that film.
CC: (Pointing to picture).
JT: Oh, that's the picture I love. I wish you wouldn't show that to me. I'm going to come over and steal it one day. (Laughter).
RD: You have the *Orem* (ph), Isaacs, Elliott.
CC: I. K. Ait (ph) and Raymond Ait (ph) his son.
JT: Yeah.
CC: Oh yeah.
RD: And the *Susie Pariss*?
CC: *Susie Pariss*, that was Charlie Pope.
RD: Charlie Pope, yeah. So these were here when you were...
CC: They were here when I was...
RD: ...in the thirties.
JT: Is this Oxford?
CC: Oh yeah. They were all in the creeks. See *The Lady* here in the creek. They laid all in the creek here.
RD: Another bugeye, the *Tony C-r-o-k-r-a-n*?
LC: *Corcoran* (ph).
CC: Tony Corcoran, he had, what was her name, what was the name of her, I've forgotten.
RD: *The Doris*?
CC: *Doris*, yeah.
RD: Okay, so, *Doris* was the name of the bugeye and Will Landon? Another bugeye.
CC: Will Landon, yeah, Will Landon had the...
RD: *The Collier*?
CC: *The Collier*, yeah.
RD: That's pretty impressive. That's six bugeyes in Oxford alone.
CC: Yeah, besides skipjacks.
RD: Besides the skipjacks.
JT: And that's in the twenties you say?
CC: No, not in the twenties, no. I don't know what years they were.
RD: Yeah, these had 1920 onwards, so....
CC: Oh, 1920 on.
JT: And they used to lay down there in that town creek?
LC: Yeah, we have pictures of some of them. Yeah, I'd love Richard to see some of those pictures.
CC: You had more skipjacks than you had bugeyes.
RD: Yeah, I see you've got at least a dozen here on this page. You also have a sloop here, too. Is that *Zingara*?
CC: *Zingara*.

RD: Yeah.

CC: That was owned by the Valliant Company?

RD: Out of Bellevue.

CC: Howard Newnam (ph) could have had little bit to do with it too.

JT: I like that name *Zingara*.

RD: A brogan, too?

CC: Yeah, there was a *brogan* here.

RD: Oh, that's the *Dreadnaught*.

CC: That's the one you got over at the Museum?

RD: Yeah, the *Dreadnaught*.

CC: They put her up in the creek. John Crosby put her up here in the marsh. Let her go to pot, she got leakin' on him.

RD: And all that's left now is...

CC: Bottom hull, (unintelligible).

JT: Clarence, the Cohen (ph) that let the skipjack die off of Cemetery Cove, what was her name, that skipjack? Do you remember it died (unintelligible)?

CC: He didn't use her for (unintelligible)

JT: Then, what was her name?

CC: I don't remember her name. I don't have (unintelligible). I don't think I remember her. Not *Doris*? I don't know whether she was a skipjack or not.

JT: I just had in my head she was a skipjack.

RD: The only *Doris* you have here is the bugeye.

CC: Oh, a bugeye.

RD: Tony Corcoran's.

CC: Yeah. I know there is one named *Doris*...however, I don't remember.

JT: Where did that boat come from?

CC: They come from down the Island somewhere. They bought it and come up here.

JT: What island, Crisfield?

CC: Harry Pope (ph) and Lesley Pope (ph) and Cohen (ph).

JT: Hershel (ph).

CC: No, no, not Hershel.

JT: They bought it together?

CC: No, no, each bought boats at that time, skipjacks along here...that was in the late years.

JT: Now what island are you talking about?

CC: They come from down the Bay, they come from down the Bay somewhere. Bought 'em and brought 'em up here.

RD: Was there a schooner here, too? You have a schooner named Hubbard Pope (ph).

CC: Yeah, he had a schooner he run freight on.

RD: Did he?

CC: Yeah, he run freight on 'em.

JT: Is that the boat he drowned on?

CC: He drowned on the eel (ph) boat I believe.

JT: How did he drown?

CC: (Unintelligible). Will Valliant had a lot of stones (ph) over there.

LC: A few years ago.

CC: He'd freight 'em.
RD: That's right. They're the one's that mostly went ashore in 1933.
CC: Yeah, well you know they get sinking, they get leaking. The railways built did too much for 'em (ph) too much for 'em and they'd put 'em ashore and that would be the end of 'em.
RD: That happened a lot I suppose in the depression time.
CC: Yeah, during the depression. Will Valliant (unintelligible), he used his schooners for canned goods for freight quite a bit.
LC: And fertilizer too.
CC: Run fertilizer too.
LC: You used to smell that fertilizer.
RD: I think the shells that were being ground up for chicken food, and so on, he used to freight those too....
CC: Yeah, Will Valliant (unintelligible) Bellevue had a big industry going on over there. He covered that. Besides the cannery, he had an oyster seafood packing place too, besides that.
RD: You probably sold oysters, did you sell oysters to Will Valliant at any time?
CC: Very seldom.
RD: I understand it was pretty hard for those buying oysters. He made a very tough bargain.
LC: They all did.
RD: They all did, huh.
CC: I could never get the right figure out of him.
RD: Is that right?
LC: If you could handle *A. B. Harris* you could handle anybody.
CC: A. B., he's the man that I give a lot of credit for him. I give A. B. a lot of credit in this town for what he did. He helped out all of the black people. He did more for the black people to employ 'em and help 'em out. And I never thought that A. B. refused 'em. If I wanted to borrow any money or had a (unintelligible) that I'd like to have a little bit of money, he might stammer a little bit, but he'd come across.
LC: He's controversial.
CC: I would always say, "Now Mr. A. B., you don't have any children, why don't you adopt me. You'll leave it to me anyhow." (Laughter). He'd laugh about it a little bit, you know.
RD: Good records.
LC: We know where it is so we'll have to copy it.
JT: Yes, that would be good.
CC: Look at that price of wheat. (Shuffling sound of papers).
LC: Doesn't have anything to do with the water.
JT: Well, that's okay 'cause you know this is general background, especially for the (unintelligible, sounds of shuffling paper).
RD: Six cents per bushel.
JT: How much?
RD: Six cents per bushel.
JT: What year is that?
LC: That's depression.

RD: Depression, yeah. (Shuffling of papers). Oh, it's 1935.

LC: It's still depression. You wouldn't know, but I do. I was still going to school.

JT: But you know, everybody else had it...we were all poor together. (Laughter).

JT: What are you looking for?

LC: Certain pages. You know, you can never find it when you are looking for it.

JT: That's right.

CC: There's a historical waterman in Oxford.

JT: You know I've never seen anything like this. Oh, Clarence, I'm going to come over here some day and can I copy, I mean, type this?

CC: Sure.

JT: See, these are members of his...see, he's got membership in here.

CC: Membership of the watermen.

JD: Now, that's interesting.

JT: Isn't it.

RD: That's a good record, yeah, 1950.

CC: You wouldn't believe the amount of watermen that worked on the water.

JT: I heard that, and that's what I wanted you to tell Richard.

LC: One nice thing about that, when they culled their oysters, Clarence, he told me this, I don't know, that they stayed right where they caught those oysters and culled those oysters. That was the law then. And now, they run up and down the river and another thing they do, they bring their oysters in and we've seen them many times, put them in the trucks and haul them out of town and therefore, we feel as though they don't get taxed.

CC: Well, they do, Louise.

LC: Somewhere maybe.

CC: They catch 'em. They go to another house, they gotta be caught.

LC: I don't know.

CC: You'd be surprised the number of people...

LC: Some I still know, Steven Pariss (ph), Neil Dobson (ph).

CC: Old (unintelligible), Pariss, Russell (ph) and Smith. I tell you who (unintelligible). Bryan (ph). Bryan, remember him. Bryan Smith.

LC: He lived down there in there in that house next to the town...

JT: No, he was Mrs. Wilson's brother.

LC: He was a fine gentleman.

CC: Yeah, he lived where Little Doug (ph) lives, uh, where he sold and the house was supposed to have been moved from Chapel Creek over here.

LC: Yeah, it was brought over on a scow, the front part of it and they added on.

CC: I don't remember.

LC: No, no, it's true. Doella (ph) always told me that.

CC: This I got from my aunt, this is from the Sun paper.

LC: And the name of the boat is still on the back.

CC: You could see the class of this boat. Are the boats on there?

LC: Yeah.

RD: It was a log boat race in 1926, at Claiborne. And the *Emma Faulkner* was there.

LC: And you know they started with the anchor down in those races. They started with the anchor down. They didn't maneuver like they do now. They anchored down and then the gun went off and then they pulled up anchor and that was a true start.

RD: It's a beautiful photograph.

JT: Isn't it?

LC: John Moore (ph) framed that for us, didn't he?

CC: I don't know, did John do that? I don't know.

LC: But it's from the air and the first time he showed me...

RD: There are many aerial photos from that period.

LC: I thought it was a Hollyday at first.

CC: I think I went to Gordon Pope and got him to name his boat. I knew who ordered (ph) this boat, but I didn't know the rest of ...you can see, look at these little things. These are crab drag skids (ph) that they used. They are crab draggers.

JT: Oh, I thought they were maybe they were those canoes.

CC: Look how slim they were.

JT: Look at this bug-eye.

CC: It was a calm day, wasn't it?

LC: Yeah, it looks like the water...

CC: They didn't have a race, they had a drift (laughter).

LC: Isn't that beautiful.

JT: Let me put it back.

CC: (Unintelligible). Uncle Charlie had it. See, he was in the race. One of the boats was his, the *Elsie* and he had some (unintelligible dialogue).

RD: Mr. Cox, what was some of the other oyster houses that you remember and know about in Oxford?

CC: Well, I can just remember Bob Valliant's father, then Bob operated the business after his father passed away.

JT: Would that be down at the Point near me?

CC: That was where Mears Marina is today and then A. B. Harris, and then you had one on the Shell Point (ph) where the lighthouse is. They had one there years ago and they had A. B. Harris had one where the apartments are where the carryout is where Wilson (ph). Wilson had an oyster house and crab place and out here was John Leonard, Olley Gill (ph), Ralph Haddaway, and Bradley I believe.

RD: Were those men working...were they all part of one company or were they a separate operation?

CC: No, no, they were all separate operations, separate people.

LC: See, they were nicely located because of the railway tracks were right there and the train ran there.

CC: See all that...the railroad backed right up to Pier Street here, backed right up to the point. Of course, Mr. Ball (ph), he could pick up the other places.

RD: In Valliant's day, they would have to ship, they had to come across the water and then they would...

CC: I don't know how they did it. I guess they may have put 'em on the ferry and come across with it and put it on the train. They could have. I don't know.

RD: I suppose they could have, yeah. But, then they would have to take it off the ferry and then go up to the train.

CC: Yeah, but, he might have brought 'em to Easton, too, or to St. Michaels. Could have. See that train went through from Easton to St. Michaels. They could have gone...

RD: I think they did ship some that way and then also I believe, shipped some this way, too, through Oxford, yeah.

CC: They could have gone either way I guess, but they could have gone, since the train went right on down to Claiborne, you know.

RD: I imagine there's quite a few oysters shipped out of here in the winter months.

CC: Lots of oysters. It wasn't anything to see 'em have...A. B. would have five or six bins and see 'em packed to the ceiling in their house. Fifty to sixty shuckers, you know, operating.

RD: It was a big business.

CC: Yeah. Had a wheeler and a dumper, (unintelligible) all they could fork...

JT: Now, what did they do with all the excess shells?

CC: Oh, that went back on the bottom, they all went back on the bottom. The State bought 'em.

LC: Our roads from Oxford to Easton were shelled roads. And some of these streets today, we regret they are being made of shell because that's worse than going through rock (laughter). It really is. It's horrible.

JT: Bank Street we always called it Shell. That was all marsh down there.

LC: We didn't have names for streets then. We had two or three names and we all knew and then the others we'd call Back Street, or Shell Road, or something like that.

CC: Did you ever talk with Neil, Neil Dobson (ph)?

JT: Yes, but he, when I tried to record him, it wasn't very successful.

CC: Is that right?

JT: Uh, huh. I couldn't get him to talk.

LC: That's unusual.

RD: What boarding houses were still in operation then?

CC: Well, I guess Mrs. Mears, she ran a rooming house, a little rooming house.

JT: Where was she, on South Street?

CC: No, she was on Morris Street right across from Maurice Willis's (ph) and the Harrington House, which is now Connors (ph), and Mrs. Robeson (ph) which is Frank Harrington's (ph) house was a boarding house

JT: Well, these are very large houses.

CC: Oh, no.

LC: They would take just a couple of guests, but that's all you need.

END OF SIDE ONE

START OF SIDE 2

CC: (Missing beginning of dialogue)...take sport fisherman out fishing.
JT: Right next to me. Is that where they live?
CC: Yeah. He would cater to those people the Wilcoxes (ph). He would take 'em out fishing, Wilcox.
LC: Wilcox and Robert Morris.
CC: No, no, no.
LC: Tred Avon Inn.
CC: Where the double house that tore down on the Strand where Snyder lives today (ph). He had the big shingled house. It was a pretty good size.
LC: That was a big house.
JT: We have a picture in the museum of it.
CC: And, not modern local houses. He had one room. He had one room and he'd rent that room out to people to make a little bit more money.
JT: Now Carolyn (ph) Haddaway...was he the only one that did terrapin?
CC: Well...
LC: Clarence Dobson...
CC: Clarence Dobson.
LC: He had a pen over there where Bobby Valliant lives now.
LC: He had a pen built that he could catch turtles or terrapins.
CC: He stored them.
LC: And he'd keep them in this pen like you do crabs.
CC: Yeah, yeah. Doesn't swim around that pen.
LC: Oh, he was huge. It was in a cove.
RD: Did you ever go after terrapin or eels, or fish....
CC: I fished eels. I caught 'em for crab bait, yeah.
LC: That would be in April sort of.
CC: That was early spring for eel traps. Put 'em on flats. Wind come along, blow 'em all over creation...chase 'em down and the haul seiners come along and you'd have a string of pots out and the haul seiners would pull 'em ashore. They'd get spiteful and throw 'em up in the trees. You'd looked for your pots, and they would be hung up in the tree limbs, hung up in the tree limbs.
RD: Do they do much haul seining in this area?
CC: Oh, yes, haul seiners for croakers. I never watched 'em too much, but always in the Choptank.
RD: Many here from Oxford did that?
CC: Not too many. They were more from the Cambridge area and Tilghman. A lot of the Tilghman's owners (ph) did it. A lot of them. They made big money then. That was big money.
LC: That's when the fish started disappearing, I'm afraid, doing all that catching.
RD: Catching too many here, yeah?
RT: So each waterman got his own eel, didn't he? And then he'd set his own traps...
CC: Most time, he'd set his own trap in the spring. He provided for himself.
RT: And then he salted 'em down or whatever you do...
CC: He provided for himself.

RT: And that would keep you mostly during the summer season?
CC: If we'd catch enough, even (unintelligible).
LC: Do you know it's good eating...eels?
RD: Yeah, I understand they were. In fact, didn't they ship some to Europe from here?
CC: To Japan.
RD: To Japan.
CC: I understand that they got as high as \$1.80 a pound for 'em.
LC: And the Dutch like them.
CC: I think (unintelligible) to catch 'em.
LC: Well, but they liked these.
CC: Sure. It's the whitest meat you ever saw.
JT: Never had it, but I guess because unless somebody fixed it, I'm sure I'd enjoy it.
CC: ...and real fine, and it's sweet.
LC: It's delicious. Now, also muskrat used to be a good favorite.
CC: Oh, absolutely.
JT: I have some in my freezer now.
RD: Is that right?
JT: Love it.
LC: Have you ever had it?
RD: Never had muskrat. We have a number of the old eel pots in the Museum, the woven split oak.
CC: The gum, split gum.
RD: I think ours is split oak, woven around...
CC: I thought they were gum.
RD: Did they use those gum type of (unintelligible).
CC: Yeah, then they got to the wire trap and the cloth funnels.
RD: Yeah. When did those start coming in?
CC: In the thirties.
RD: It was as early as that.
CC: Back in the thirties or late thirties.
RD: Hmm.
CC: That was a winter chore. Sideline you had to get prepared for the spring supply for your crab bait.
LC: Each one of those traps had three funnels you know.
RD: Are you talking about the wire traps.
CC: The wire traps had to have three. The entrance funnel...they funneled the trap...the middle funnel was a trap. They went on through that. It was pulled tight and then the other end was just something that you opened and tied, and opened (ph) and dump 'em.
LC: So we had to sew all those.
RD: How many traps did you normally have?
CC: I had anywhere from 200 traps.
RD: Is that right, 200? Yeah, that's quite a lot to maintain.
CC: Yeah.
JT: Did you leave them out there for say a month? Yeah, I know you had fish them for about a month

CC: Oh, yeah. We'd fish for them for about a month, yeah, until we figured it was enough.

LC: Depends how they run.

CC: Yeah, how they run and then did you have enough for you to supply you for your crabs.

JT: Do they come in from the Atlantic Ocean?

CC: I don't know where they come from. They were out here in the Chesapeake when I caught 'em.

LC: But they're mostly in the spring.

JT: Clarence, how long was your average trot line when you were crabbing?

CC: Usually I had in two pieces. I have always had a crab trot line in two pieces. It's I'd say $\frac{3}{4}$ (ph) long.

LC: And you would tie the eel on every 12 inches or something.

CC: You'd loop it anywhere. You didn't measure. You just looped it anywhere. You had to have a piece of paper (unintelligible) and you'd loop another line right along the side of it or close to it.

LC: Well, you had to give yourself enough time...

CC: Some use snood and some don't use snood, and some just loop the line.

LC: Yours weren't as close as 12 inches apart though.

CC: Years back, you didn't have to knot a line. They used more for grass (ph) line. You used a grass rope and you had to have snoods on that.

LC: Did you know a snood is a corn high in rummage (ph) that's attached to that and at the end you tie the eel. It hangs down and the crabs will hang on to it better.

CC: You see, you got the nylon today is a stronger rope. You didn't have that nylon rope years ago.

LC: Yeah, because if he started eating, he could go right through your rope.

CC: No. He knew what he was eating on (laughter), don't you worry. (Laughter). If you stuck your finger down there, he might have grabbed it.

RD: Do you also get involved with soft crabs too.

CC: Did that too. My uncle was a floater. He floated with a bark peeler (ph) and floated it, packed 'em and shipped 'em.

RD: Were you selling them or keeping them for yourself?

CC: No I always sell 'em to my crab buyer. I sell 'em to him. I don't bother floating 'em.

LC: You wouldn't float them up here?

CC: That's almost a 24 hour job that is, floatin' crabs -- soft crabs. You gotta be no where near fluffin (ph) (unintelligible).

JT: Did you in the wintertime do your own nets and things like that like the Duncans (ph) over here, you know their dip nets (ph).

CC: Oh, Layton (ph) or Denton (ph). My father laid nets...

(Unintelligible – overlapping dialogue).

LC: ...because got one in the Museum that your father (unintelligible).

CC: Yeah, he laid nets (ph).

JT: It's like crocheting almost.

LC: Yeah, or tatting.

CC: If Sam (ph) can do it, too, he can lay some nets and his father used to do too.

JT: Did you do it?

LC: No, I always thought I would have Mr. Cox teach me, but I never did.

CC: He would pull that thing a certain way and make a (unintelligible – overlapping dialogue)...tied a knot. He started out with a ring, a small ring and (unintelligible – overlapping dialogue).

LC: Of course, Mr. Duncan had nets too, he'd pull around the western shore (unintelligible) put those nets in too.

JT: I didn't want to insult him, but I was going to ask you what he did all winter?

LC: You can't go out oystering all the time, though. You had frozen rivers and you can be frozen out. I remember seeing Neil Dobson off my shore cut a nice size hole with a saw and then I saw another waterman come along (multiple voices)

CC: I've got more of 'em. These were papa's, these were my father's (pointing to pictures).

JT: You call them shuttles?

LC: Yes, they're little shuttles.

CC: I call them needles.

JT: Just needles. Okay.

LC: A different size. Look they're a different size.

CC: Some of 'em use 'em for patching eel nets, too, you know.

JT: Oh, I see.

JT: Aren't they pretty? Now what is that made out of?

CC: I don't know what that is. Might be ash. These are old ones, I know.

LC: They used to use dogwood a lot.

CC: I've got some more of 'em of papa's, but I know that these are old.

JT: Look at this. See how that (unintelligible).

LC: There has to be a reason why it's shaped like this.

CC: Yeah, it has the lines (unintelligible).

RD: All one smooth....

JT: We don't have any of those in the Museum, do we?

CC: I don't know whether it's ash, or what it is.

LC: Clarence?

CC: What?

LC: We ought to give those to the Museum.

CC: Would she take a thing like that?

LC: Clarence, it could be near where your father made that crab net (ph).

CC: (Unintelligible dialogue).

JT: It could be that she's afraid that they'll be taken, but she could exhibit those so they couldn't be lifted.

CC: Well, she is welcome to 'em.

LC: I'll ask her, because you know after a while the kids might just throw them away.

CC: No, no, when we go, they'll be probably thrown out.

LC: You know that is true.

JT: So you're still using *Lady Lancaster* every day. I see you out there.

CC: I take the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren out on it.

JT: I can recognize her, she is so pretty. I like her. How many people could you take out?

LC: Well, maybe it's how many the law allows us.
CC: The law is six now.
LC: You used to load the boat.
CC: Between eight and 10, but six now.
LC: Well, he can take all of his friends he wants to. He can drown them, but you can't do it if you're being paid.
JT: Oh. (Laughter).
LC: That's true. As long as you have life preservers for each.
CC: (Unintelligible conversation.)
JT: And I like them because they're different woods and different sizes. I think Betty would be...
CC: I got a bit more up there in the attic, I think.
LC: Find some more, and then you can give them to the Maritime, but see, I have to think of Oxford Museum first.
JT: Okay. I don't know that we've got any.
RD: We have a few, but not quite as...does have a lot of character to them.
JT: I've gotta get another chair.
LC: Would you like to sit in this one?
JT: Yeah, thanks a lot, I got a crick in my back.
LC: That's my favorite chair.
JT: I should have gone for a straight back chair.
LC: Yeah.
JT: You know how I said I wanted Clarence to come over and go behind the scenes over there to see what we have.
CC: I can come over.
LC: He's been over to the Museum, but I mean...
RD: We would like to show you around one day.
CC: I sold a skiff over there. I don't know whether they ever fixed it up or not, cause it had a name plate on it---is the reason why they wanted it---where it was made.
RD: What was the skiff? Do you remember it?
CC: It was about a 14 foot teaky (ph) type skiff. It needed work, a lot of (unintelligible) and he said it was a project for him.
LC: Who's he?
JT: Christopher Holt (ph).
LC: This was quite a few years ago.
CC: That was quite a few years ago.
RD: I can check.
LC: You're having lovely little music over there on that bandstand.
JT: Have you seen that Tolchester bandstand we restored? We made it awfully fancy.
LC: Did you?
CC: Tolchester bandstand.
JT: Tolchester didn't have the brick that we got in it, etc., but it's lovely.
LC: I remember that very well.
CC: I remember one time going in the *Miss Oxford* was Uncle Willie, Will Myers (ph), (Bill Myers) and myself and Cat Buff (ph), I believe Cat Buff (ph) went all over Bay Shore Park somewhere way up in the Bay...

LC: Yeah that's on the Baltimore side.

CC: ...Yeah, and there with some guys walking the railroad track...(unintelligible) back to the boat (unintelligible) I think somebody went fishing (laughter) (unintelligible).

JT: The train went over the trestle?

CC: Yeah, with Billy Myers and Cat (unintelligible) and Uncle Willie.

LC: He's talking about Bill Myers who was out here....

CC: And Uncle Willie. Bill Morris and myself were young, real young, I'm a bit older Billie, but bout the same age, not many years difference, that's all, and somebody that knew us, allowed us all kinds of things to play up there in the park area.

JC: That was a nice picture.

CC: That was a big tree.

JT: So the steamships, let's see, I'm going back in time.

LC: The steamships had stopped calling here.

CC: I can remember when I was young (unintelligible).

LC: I can just barely remember .

CC: I can remember. I can remember when they had pens down here for cattle.

LC: I guess you can, since you're older than I am.

JT: Okay, tell me more about that period.

CC: I don't know too much about that. But I know they had pens and they loaded cattle and they stopped at Bellevue, Oxford, Double Mills, Easton...

JT: On the steamboats.

CC: On the steamboats. There was four stops (unintelligible).

LC: And then they used to go over where Old Trinity, up that way, you know Dorchester.

JT: Do you remember the names of any of them?

LC: *Talbot* was one of them. I remember that one.

CC: I was up to almost Easton Point crabbing one day and I was above, what's that old place?

LC: (Unintelligible) Point?

CC: No, no, above Water(unintelligible) Point.

LC: Ratcliffe Manor?

CC: I was above Ratcliffe Manor and I was going down the shore with my trot line out and all at once a run ashore and where I was about, there was no water at all. The steamboat had run ashore and kicked all that mud up. If I'd run ashore before that, I'd be dead (laughter).

LC: He'd been dredging a little bit.

CC: I didn't know where the pilot boat (ph) was. (Laughter).

JT: How about that?

CC: She stopped and I went ashore.

JT: Clarence, how many markers did they have in the river then?

LC: I guess they had to have some for the steamboats. They went to Easton Point.

CC: I don't remember too many markers.

LC: They didn't have many. They would have the nuns and the black cans, but not many.

CC: But they didn't have many to tell you the truth. Not like they do today. They did improve with time, marking things. But I remember years back, they didn't have too many.

JT: Now what about the geese, the waterfowl. When we first came here, there weren't many mallards that stayed all year. Now they do. When you were young, do you remember...you just had the regular canvasbacks, golden eyes, etc., that come in in season.

CC: I wasn't a dover. I never shot a gun in my life until I went into the service.

LC: But the waterfowl only came in in season. They didn't stay here.

CC: I remember Johnnie Stewart. They'd hunt all night to get a goose. Stayed out all night to try to get to shoot a goose.

LC: I don't think you ought to tell that.

CC: No? (laughter).

JT: Did we have huge flocks of Canada geese, as we have now. Maybe they don't stay too long...

CC: I don't remember being big flocks.

LC: For a while, they were going to Carolinas, and then they came back here, Bill Myers said because of the corn.

CC: I don't remember that many.

LC: No, because my father and brothers used to hunt and they were very scarce... more ducks than geese. We had the ducks.

CC: Had the doves, but you didn't see too many Canadian geese.

LC: Of course, that put food on our table, you know.

JT: Yes, of course. Well, because the river should have been pretty clean, to what they are now and you'd had a lot of grasses, so they could have fed.

LC: You had all kinds of grass all around.

CC: You had loads of doves around and a lot of ducks.

LC: I remember the grass getting caught in our propellers and you'd have to stop and clean out the propellers there was so much grass.

JT: It was good grass, not that seaweed stuff---awful stuff that washes up on shore now, comes around on the Strand. I don't know how people live there sometimes in the summertime.

(Unintelligible conversation).

RD: Jane, you reminded me of something I was going to ask you Clarence. We have some photographs of men tonging through the ice. Did you ever do that?

CC: Oh yeah, tonging through the ice. I've got some photographs around somewhere.

LC: Tell them when you first started, that's when I remember.

CC: The year I came back out of service, there was a freeze up and Neil Thompson (ph) and I went together...

LC: And Bill Colburn (ph).

CC: And Bill Colburn (ph), absolutely. We'd take our skiffs, come out on Tilghman's at first. It would be the first place to open right around Tilghman and we used to lay our skiffs over on First Tilghman's, skiff out on the ice and get in the hole, tong hole. Then we used to (unintelligible) so he couldn't do that, we'd cut holes in the ice. You remember when you'd come out of the service, then they'd give you \$52.20 or something

or other (unintelligible). Neil and I said we didn't want it, we'd bankroll it...we could collect that \$52.20 and the oysters too (laughter). That's how dumb and stupid we were.

JT: Obviously, you weren't used to taking money.

CC: No, we weren't used to taking money.

LC: First Tilghman's he's talking about is a little point that's just beyond where the where (unintelligible) by the Town Creek is, northerly.

CC: Yeah, oyster bar. One of the biggest oyster bars.

LC: But, Clarence, I remember you guys cutting the hole right off the Island.

CC: Oh, yeah.

LC: That's where you have the pictures. So, you got out of the service in '45, so that was '46. Because you got out of the service in March of '45.

JT: So this was in '46.

RD: Makes it a little tougher, though, because first you first gotta cut through the ice before you could even tong.

CC: Yeah, if a little tough shove it back under it (unintelligible).

LC: I have to show you that picture that I have Richard...Neil Dobson cutting that hole.

CC: (Unintelligible).

LC: (Whispering) So I had taken a picture of Neil cutting this hole, cause I had never seen anything like that. Neil went home for lunch because he was cold. Here comes (whispering) and he goes down in the hole...(unintelligible). "I think that's Neil (unintelligible). It was right off my bulkhead.

JT: Did he chase him when he came back.

LC: No I took a picture...(unintelligible). I got it to this day, showing Neil cutting it and the other one using it. He would do that today, too.

CC: I've seen ice boats out on the river and where they were sailing and the next day would be all (unintelligible).

LC: Because it was tidal water. Because I've seen them out ice skating toward Bellevue and always been worried that out in the channel it would be a sheet.

JT: Yeah, it would be ice where the tide would cut through and the ice get jammed.

LC: But sometimes, didn't in the town, perhaps you didn't, but if it was a bad winter, didn't some of the men work in the boatyards as carpenters for houses to earn a little.

CC: Yeah, I went after Christmas most of the time I went into the boatyard. I went there either to the Oxford Boat Yard to Wye, mostly at the Wye and worked there until spring. Then I'd leave them in the spring when spring come.

RD: What were you doing in the boatyards?

CC: Carpentry.

RD: Carpentry work?

CC: Uh huh. Yep. Strip planking, working it down, putting it (unintelligible).

RD: That would be all inside working.

CC: Inside working. It was a little cold. (Unintelligible). The wind kept (unintelligible). Boy they were cold. (Unintelligible).

JT: Now most of the houses were heated with those space heaters and they caused a lot of fires. They gave off a lot of heat in a small area.

CC: If you kept your chimney clean, you didn't have much trouble.

LC: The space heaters were mostly wood or coal and then the kerosene came in later. There wasn't as many fires from that and there wouldn't be the sparks going up the chimney because they didn't have liners in chimneys then. It would be the crack in the brick that drew into the wood. Of course we burned down quite a few stores here too. Up where the town office is, was a huge store up there---there was a grocery store, and a pharmacy, a drug store, barbershop, everything you wanted.

JT: And a jail.

LC: And a jail.

CC: Just think the number of stores that were in Oxford.

LC: You needed them because it was a big deal to get to Easton.

JT: Baltimore or Wilmington, they went to Wilmington mostly, didn't they.

LC: It was easier to get to Wilmington on the train.

CC: When you stop to think about it, it was a store right where Bill Benson, right there off the left, that burnt down. There was a store there between his store out there on that lot there. That was a huge fire. I can remember that. Boy, that was a wicked fire.

LC: Even the ice house down at the yacht club burned down.

JT: Yes, we have a picture of that burning in the museum.

LC: We had many fires.

CC: And the biggest one that I'll remember was the one in that block where the town municipal building is. That was one of Oxford's biggest one.

LC: That was Mr. Nimm's (ph).

CC: Brian (ph).

LC: Well, most of them had a lot of headaches in this town because every time they dredged, they have found a million Alka Seltzer bottles (laughter). Mr. Everson (ph) of Baltimore, no wonder he made a lot of money.

CC: I never took Alka Seltzer in my life that I know of.

LC: Those bottles...

RD: Those blue bottles.

CC: Just think, where that municipal building is, was a big store, Brian's (ph) store. It was a good size building. Then Stevens (ph) had the barber shop. Then it was a drug store and then a telephone office over it and a doctor's office. There was a doctor's office here too.

JT: We had a lot of people and they were working in the shucking houses.

LC: Well where the Mews is, there was a big store there. It was a department store.

JT: Was that Judge Needham's (ph).

LC: No that was Charles Selcone (ph), Singleton (ph). And then Mr. Fox had one down where next to, I don't know what those people's name is, next to where Benny Cone (ph) lives, that brick building there.

CC: Schroeder (ph).

LC: It was Schroeder, yes.

JT: Then we had a hosiery factory. What was it that Martin had, a hosiery factory?

LC: That was a hosiery factory.

CC: That was in later years.

JT: That was after World War II, wasn't it?

LC: Yeah, but it was during World War II. They had a shirt factory first there, and then Martin's came in and they came down from Pennsylvania and started this hosiery

mill and then during the war, of course, it was hard to get the nylon hose, so they'd come to Oxford and line up, you know, trying to get the hose from that factory. That's when the Martins came in.

CC: Who did you talk with on Tilghman's.

RD: Well, I haven't been up there in about a year, but the last person I spoke to was Holly Jenkins. Actually, I talked to her about three or four times.

CC: You didn't to any watermen there?

RD: No, just Ben Harrison, there was a young blacksmith there, forgotten his name. I talked with him.

CC: Tilghman. Tilghman is a good source.

RD: Tilghman is a good seafood source in town and the Neavitt area too. All of the Neavitt-Bozman area.

RD: Yeah.

LC: Where they put the storage (unintelligible).

JT: Yeah, we were talking about that because Captain Bill (ph) then remembered that shipyard (unintelligible – overlapping dialogue).

CC: Jane, were you here when you could remember the grasses, how thick the grasses were around.

JT: In the water?

CC: I've seen it so thick (unintelligible) that those skiffs that (unintelligible) and then ran out. There was no way they could start an engine up, so he had to paddle out to the edge of the flats.

LC: I remember the ducks out there feeding and making a funny noise when they were doing it, just when the tide is just letting a few of the reeds show and they're eating among the top of the reeds and they'd make that funny little noise and yes, to get fresh in the water down their ladder (ph), I pulled, can you imagine, I pulled weeds so that in case there was a crab, I'd see him maybe. (Unintelligible).

CC: Today I saw them on the water. There's a lot of them, reddish, brownish, silky, saucy looking stuff. Looked like scum, you know. You look at your grasses, eel grass and all that stuff in there, the water was so fresh flowing by where today you see this gunk.

LC: And I'd go out and pick soft crabs off of the rocks here.

JT: Can you see any now?

LC: I can't even catch a hard crab out there in the water.

CC: I'm sure there are some (unintelligible) but you don't see where the water is clear like it used to be in the cove.

LC: Oh, it used to be so clear. Go swimming and you could see everything just like when you go down in the islands, you could see everything.

JT: You know, I couldn't even do very well when I drop this crab pot. I finally gave 'em up and gave 'em away. Now I use those funny little things and I can't catch anything today.

CC: When you sailed with Ernie [Tucker], did you ever get caught in a thunderstorm, electrical storm?

JT: Many.

CC: Did it bother you?

JT: You don't want me to tell (unintelligible).

CC: When it was hard enough, it bothers you I'm sure.

JT: (Unintelligible) be alone a little bit to bother me, because that mast got higher and higher you know and we were out there always it seems by ourselves. There weren't many others.

CC: I can remember one time in my life out there that I got caught, that I felt when got ashore, whether I want to go back out again or not and do the same thing over.

RD: Was that in an electrical storm?

CC: Electrical storm. It was in August. Lightening, clouds black.

JT: You know, our storms used to be worse.

LC: Listen, we might have one this evening, being it's humid like this, there's a good chance for it.

CC: I always aimed to be somewhere pretty close where I weren't too far from shelter but you can always get caught if you kept going out there.

RD: Was that the worst experience you had on the water.

CC: That's the worst experience I ever had was a hard thunder squall. You couldn't see anywhere.

JT: Did you ever see a water spout?

CC: A water spout? Yeah.

LC: (Unintelligible) said they used to be off of Tilghman.

CC: I never even pulled my anchor. I started up with anchor overboard to boot (ph). He was coming for me. And picked (unintelligible) somebody in the boat and said, "Oh my, I wouldn't miss this for anything in this world." (Laughter).

LC: Sounds like Tucker (ph).

CC: (Unintelligible). He could stand close to that.

LC: (Unintelligible) won an (unintelligible) award once off of Cambridge and the storm came up as usual around four o'clock and we tried to beat it into Trappe Creek. But, that was the year that Plink's (ph) brother was trying to get the motor started and it wouldn't start and lightening struck and struck him and killed him.

JT: Did you have a middle man?

LC: No, wouldn't. Tucker wouldn't put an electrical rod over until later years. He thought it might help me.

JT: I would think so, I would want one.

CC: Got any other questions?

RD: I'd like to have a look at your boat in a minute, if that's all right?

CC: You're perfectly welcome. I haven't had her pulled out yet this year. I did some top (ph), painted.

LC: Odds and ends.

CC: I'll get around to it in the next week or two when I get a little bit of time. I never get caught up it seems like.

JT: Did he ever get caught out and you were here when you were home and wondered where he was.

LC: Never worried.

JT: Never worried.

LC: No, because he always would go under shelter in a harbor somewhere. I never worried about him. You were smart. You were smart.

CC: I always aimed to get some protection...

LC: I knew that.

CC: Because I had not only myself, I had other people to be responsible for.

JT: I asked Captain Bill when he didn't seem to remember...remember that white squall that came up off of Cambridge that turned over some skipjacks and many of the crews were lost.

CC: Oh yeah.

JT: When was that? Was that in the twenties, or later?

CC: It was later.

JT: It was much later wasn't it?

CC: It was much later than that.

LC: After the war.

JT: Was that after World War II?

CC: I think so, I think so.

LC: Well, it was just one of those sudden white squalls.

CC: I think it was three boats sank in almost one spot. There was one up in the calm where push boats push it, I believe, and just one sail up.

LC: That's in no wind, so they had the push boats.

CC: Yeah, no wind. They came right out of the fog right on the edge of middle ground (ph).

JT: I guess that's what happened to the *Pride of Baltimore*.

LC: Yes, all of a sudden, it just came up.

CC: She was just like dead wood sittin' there.

JT: You must have known some of the people who drowned.

CC: Yeah, it's been so long, I forgot who that was, yeah. But, Uncle Willie was gone I believe at that time frame. One boat went ashore at Tory (ph) Point, too, I believe, a bugeye. I remember going up there and you could look down and you could see their sails still up, you know, on the bottom, way under at the bottom. It was in 20 to 30 feet of water where they sank. If he'd been back a little bit further, he'd been in that 90 foot bottom up there. Yeah, that would have been really deep water just beyond that.

JT: Did they ever raise the boat.

CC: (Unintelligible).

LC: I remember all that.

CC: They had oysters on them (unintelligible).

LC: (Unintelligible).

CC: I was out with Uncle Willie one night chasing and scraping.

LC: You know what he's talking about?

RD: Uh huh.

CC: Chasing (unintelligible) drudgers, you know drudging at night.

RD: Hmm.

CC: And uh, where they thought they'd be, they eluded the police and got away from 'em, but they finally found him and they found (unintelligible). Uncle Willie and the police captain out on Broad Creek met in Higgins (ph) and they boarded those boats, (unintelligible) winders were still hot, warm, and they saw the oysters down in the hold. They arrested 'em on the evidence that they were drudging at night. That was the only time that Uncle Willie (unintelligible) for some reason or other.

JT: Cause it could be dangerous.

CC: Yeah. And the few police boat captains met (unintelligible) where they were. But they eluded them.

LC: (Laughter). They knew they were going to be out there when you're sneaking something, you know.

CC: Would you like to look at the boat?

RD: Sure, I would like to.

JT: Well, it was sure awfully nice of both of you to let us...

END OF TAPE