

Interview Log

Interviewee: Various Tape #:

Interviewer: Recorded by Skip Willits and Heather Davidson # of Tapes: 2
Organized by Tom McHugh (T.M.)

Date: 1993 # of Sides:

Location: Rock Hall, Maryland

Topic: Watermen's Day at Rock Hall Yacht Club - 1993

Theme: Stories of working on water, jokes, struggles of local watermen.

Comments: Poor audio quality which makes clear transcription difficult. There are many inaudible portions, but transcriber has done best job possible with this source.

Documentation:

Audio:
Video:
Digital Photos:
Slides:

Field Notes:

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BEGIN SIDE A

SPEAKER: There's a lot of history in these men's minds, and I know they're going to be glad to share it with us. I'll turn it over to Pie (phonetic) and Tom.

T.M.: I'm Tom McHugh, and Pie Edwards and I came up with this idea about getting some of these people together who know a whole lot about what's going on out there on the bay, and who put – I guess we must have 3 or 400 years of experience up here in front of us of working on the water. And it was – Pie and I were just saying during lunch that even if we had just stopped it now, it was worth it because all these people sitting there talking to each other, I'm sure a lot of them haven't done that together in a whole group for a long time. I'm going to depend upon Pie for the expertise. I'm a Philadelphia boy. So what we hope to do today is have these gentlemen and ladies talk to us and to each other, but there will be plenty of time for people from the audience to ask questions, and we want you to do that. And I notice a few people up here share what I have, and that's I lost my hearing in my right ear, so you might have to repeat the questions for us a half a dozen times. I'll turn it over to Pie Edwards.

P.E.: My name is Pie Edwards, and we started out, we wanted to get all the older watermen. And as you notice, all the watermen is not my age and older. We've got a lot of younger ones here. We found out we didn't have enough, the older ones, to make it just all in the 75, 80, 85, so that's why the younger ones is here. So I guess I'll start off with names, and a few nicknames here. And, the group here, when I call your name, would you just hold your hand up so everybody can see you, who you are? Harry, you hear me? When I collar your name, stick your hand up. (Laughter). That's **Harry Carter**.

SPEAKER: He ain't doing a damn thing but smoking. He did it three or four times, and he – that's it.

SPEAKER: You talking about me?

SPEAKER: I wasn't saying anything about you. (Laughter). How many times you lit that pipe since you been down here?

SPEAKER: About a dozen times. (Laughter). I don't smoke cigarettes though.

P.E.: **Captain Billy Collier**, raise your hand up. **Captain Clarence Hicks**, raise your hand up. **Billy Crayton, Jimmy Bryden, Roby Cornelius, Patsy Higgs, Charles Higgs, Frank Edwards, Butch Simms, John Edwards, John Edwards, Jr., Wayne Brady** and **Charles Crouch** and **Captain Hilton Crouch**. They all have nicknames, but I just – I should've read them all to give you the nicknames.

T.M.: Let's hear the nicknames.

P.E.: Well, okay. Like Captain Hilton Crouch is Hex is – and Captain Billy Collier, of course he calls me Bill Clinton and I call him George Bush. (Laughter). I asked him how Milly's doing but he won't tell me. And Captain Billy Scoundrel Creighton. That goes way back. His grandfather, when he called his friends, and he wasn't saying it in a dirty manner, but he'd say how you doing there, you old scoundrel? So the name just passed right on down. Billy Scoundrel, Junior here. And Jimmy Pee Wee Bryden. Pee Wee. And Roby don't have a nickname. You ever have a nickname?

MR. CANEELUS: No. I've never had one, I guess.

SPEAKER: Oh, you do.

SPEAKER: Yes, he does –

MR. CANEELUS: I don't remember that.

P.E.: And, Patsy, I don't know. Captain Knobby must have a nickname for you. What did he call you?

MS. HIGGS: He just called me Gravy.

P.E.: Okay, and Brother Frank, Barney, nickname. And Wayne, I don't know if you have a nickname.

MR. BRADY: Well they call me the Old Boy. That's – he called everybody Old Boy.

P.E.: Old Boy. And where is Charles? Is Charles Kretch here? He won't come up. His nickname is Goodie (phonetic).

SPEAKER: Get up there.

P.E.: His great-grandfather was named, nicknamed Goodie, and he didn't – he doubted everybody anything he told him unless you said somebody made a lot of money. And, oh, is that right? He'd get interested. But anything else, he didn't pay no mind. (Laughter). Also, he had two bicycles. He had a Sunday bicycle and a weekday bicycle. I think he's still got it.

SPEAKER: Do you have a question to throw out for us?

P.E.: Does anybody in the audience have questions that – we'll take questions all during the meeting here. So if anybody's got any questions –

SPEAKER: The names of their boats would be interesting.

P.E.: Oh, very good. All right. Patsy, what was the name of your boat?

MS. HIGGS: *Sinbad.*

P.E.: *Sinbad.* Wayne?

MR. BRADY: *Promise.*

P.E.: *Promise.* Clarence?

SPEAKER: *Apple.*

P.E.: Al, what was the name of your boat?

SPEAKER: *Rose Elmer.*

P.E.: *Rose Elmer.* Cliff? I know you had one. Blue Moon or something like that. Scoundrel?

SPEAKER: The old one or the new one?

P.E.: New one.

SPEAKER: *Erin Fall.*

P.E.: Captain Hix, what was the name of your boat?

SPEAKER: *Alice Rose.*

P.E.: *Alice Rose.* Johnny? What was yours?

SPEAKER: *Kathy Jane.* Frank?

SPEAKER: *Blizzard Lou.*

SPEAKER: Captain Harry Carter, I want to say something about Captain Harry Carter. He's one of the old time fishing party captains on the bay.

MR. CARTER: You write me up with Sims and Billy Collier now.

P.E.: What I want – Captain Harry Carter, I'm going to pick on him a lot.

MR. CARTER: I don't want to tell you the story that Sims told me, I'd like – to tell you all. He's a great guy.

P.E.: I got to tell a story on Captain Harry. We was both in the hospital same time for gall bladder. Well mine was the easy one, you know, in in the morning, out at night. And Captain Harry, he had to have this big operation, you know. He had so many stones, and beer caps and everything (laughter), that they had to do him, I think cut about two foot. So anyhow, he's so damn tough – what is this stuff knocks you out – he was so damn tough, it wouldn't knock him out, so they have to hit him in the head with a 2 by 4. (Laughter).

T.M.: I'd like to hear somebody talk about – I mean some people oystered, crabbed, fished and everything. Everybody has their favorite thing, clamming. What was the thing you liked doing best when you were out there, or doing it now? I know some of you are still doing it. How about you?

SPEAKER: Just like to catch –

T.M.: Anything you can catch.

SPEAKER: -- fine, different places.

T.M.: You have favorite places?

SPEAKER: Any place that I could find 'em at. That was the point of it, we just went around to find them. Captain Jimmy, he was one of our – one of our best hand tongers. I don't know if you know what hand tonging means, the difference between hand tonging and patent tonging and scraping, but if anybody has any questions, we'll try to straighten that one out. But Captain Jimmy, Johnny, John – Hix. All been good – Collier, been good hand tongers.

SPEAKER: Don't run me in with them. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: I'd like to tell the one about my Uncle Buck. My grandfather was a seine hauler, which I done as a child and what I remember about it. Well anywhere on the Chester River, you can go ashore and build a fire. We didn't have any sodas on the boat, and we went to shore at least once a day and usually twice a day and made our bread and cooked fish. Usually make enough bread, once a day, for the whole day. And anywhere you went, you were welcome. The farmers come down, you take their eggs and give them fish. But anyway, my uncle, as a kid, he always wanted to be captain for the seine rig. And one time, my grandfather went to Baltimore on the freight boat to take some freight over. And, mainly, they used to bring back some bootleg whiskey, and they brought gasoline back from the freights. And he was kind of making connection to make sure he had some whiskey coming all year. (Laughter).

So Uncle Buck, he got a chance to take the seine rig out on his own. And this one place he always wanted to try, he thought there'd be some rock fish there, was up **Church Creek**, which is now Maringle Point (phonetic). And he went in there, and like caught like 1,200 pounds of fish when nobody else was catching any. And, Pie, you gotta help straighten me out on this 'cause there was an Uncle Lee that come to him and asked him where he caught these fish. Said they was trying to get a lead on where to go the next day. Was Uncle – he, evidently, was standing in the bateau, and all he would say when he asked him, he was standing there kind of rolling her a little bit. He said after a while, he said the tide was high, he was – said the wind was blowing, he never would give 'em any real lead on where the fish were. (Laughter) – after a while – did you catch any fish? Well, I'll tell you, Uncle – he said never did find out. (Inaudible). Just one of them I remember. But that was, you know, years ago when, like I say, the river was pretty plentiful with everything, and you could go most anywhere and catch a few fish, but they were scarce even back then. People really get concerned today about fish being scarce. But I – well, Mr.

Stanley Vanzant, who has passed away now, his wife's got a book that his father – the shucking house. And my grandfather and Mr. **Jim Elburn**, were big-abled men that worked from sun-up to dark, they would work all day and count their oysters. And I've heard my father and them talk about – they would catch like 300 oysters a day. And they would work till they caught that quota, which was only like three bushel, three, four bushel of oysters. And environmentalists are really concerned today about the oysters not being there, but they have been scarcer than they are now, and twice in my lifetime.

SPEAKER: They'll never come back like that no more though, Wade. The water's polluted too bad.

SPEAKER: Well the water quality, again, is you know, is against them. When back then, it was supposedly pristine condition, and they were scarcer back in the late 1800's than they are now. And there aren't many – I mean we get the blame for over-fishing because we're the minority group.

SPEAKER: My grandfather made a survey with the state. Pie will tell you how many bushels, how many oysters he had to catch on the bar. And they were going to close the bar because of the scarcity of the oysters. And any oysters, any bar he caught, what was it, like –

SPEAKER: One bushel.

SPEAKER: One bushel of oysters on.

SPEAKER: They couldn't close it.

SPEAKER: They couldn't close it. And he caught a bushel on every one of the bars that –

SPEAKER: Old Man Sam Collier.

SPEAKER: Yes.

SPEAKER: But they was scarce.

SPEAKER: I can remember, Bill, the first year I was married, in '64, and oysters were like \$2 a bushel. And that winter, they went to \$5 a bushel. And I would work all day to catch my bushel, that was my goal for the day, to make \$25, and gas was like a quarter a gallon. And I was trying to clear \$20 a day. Still, today, you can go out there, and if you put in 10, 12 hours a day, you could probably catch 15 bushels.

SPEAKER: 1939, I used to go in the afternoons after school, and Poony (phonetic) over there, I guess it would be his uncle, he got killed during the war. Capsized on, one of our Navy ships capsized itself. But I went with him, and they were like 35 cents a bushel. And I talked to him after school. That was in 1939. So just to tell you how things change, they were 35 cents a bushel.

SPEAKER: I can recall oysters being (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Speak up.

SPEAKER: About '49 or '50 –

SPEAKER: Speak up. I mean say it louder so everybody can hear you.

SPEAKER: Oh. I can remember oysters, about '49 or '50, 'cause I remember a lot of days, me and my father – a lot of days, didn't catch but 3 bushel all day long. But till late, we worked till just about sundown. And I thought – pretty good oysters then. I never did take oystering to be no work. I'd just take it to be play. I used to rather oyster than to play ball. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Clarence, I always thought you had good sense, but – (laughter).

SPEAKER: I had been – oysters in the past. So it got so scarce that eventually – 5 bushel, we thought we had done something. So this ain't the first time oysters really have been scarce. But after a while, they'll come on. Clamming, I thought – I've taken clamming to be – I love to clam. I love clamming. I thought it was – I was 63 years old – that was work too. (Laughter). Before, it wasn't no work.

SPEAKER: Patsy, what was it like for you working out there as a woman?

MS. HIGGS: Well, when I first started, I got married when I was 16, and I didn't have any children for a couple years, so I went oystering with Daddy then. And we would catch – Daddy did the tonging, and we would catch between 5 and 8 bushel. And I can remember getting \$8 for them. But we didn't have a truck. We had an old, I guess it was a '49 Chevy. We took the seat out of the back, and that's how we hauled the oysters out to Rock Hall. But they were beautiful oysters, big oysters. And I got two sons now, and they work on the water, and they oyster. They're hand tongers. And they talk about how scarce it is.

SPEAKER: We remember times when the seafood was scarcer than it is now. And there wasn't an environmental problem then. So that's why it upsets me when they point their finger at the catcher for over-fishing the bay. But we're the minority group, just like the pleasure boaters with serious – boats. I mean there are seven serious treatment plants right now that dump in the Chester River. And not only the sewage, the raw sewage, but the chemicals that they're putting in there to treat it, and they are getting a little bit of a handle on that, but that's really worse than raw sewage. But since we don't have a real voice – all of them down the whole East Coast, I mean even Georgia – and those places, they've evidently got in trouble with (inaudible). You know, which is the main problem. And if they'd concentrate on that instead of just trying to evade the real problem, between all of us here, same thing. I heard my dad say back in the 30's, they went over on the Delaware Bay trying to find striped bass. And they fished all, couple years, couldn't catch any striped bass, you know. And these fellows, Mr. Hilton and them, fished down that end and all. You remember Mr. Earl (phonetic), he told me one year up in the Susquehanna Flats that if somebody caught a large rockfish and you caught maybe two, you'd give one to the next guy. I mean they just had shad and herring. Had no rockfish at all back in the 30's – so things run in cycles. And as long as there's regulations, which you know, they don't really enforce that well today because I don't think they really care that much about the water, being out there, the sooner they turn the bay over to recreational boating, I think the better the state will like it because that's where the revenue comes from. It's all politics.

SPEAKER: Right.

SPEAKER: And not many people understand that.

SPEAKER: Patsy was a great crabber too – people knew about her. Crabbed all the time with her daddy when she was a little girl.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Used to carry them down to **Love Point**, didn't you, Patty?

MS. HIGGS: Oh, they were the gold old days. I tell my sons about Love Point, and they tell me I am the biggest liar.

SPEAKER: Well what do you tell them? What?

MS. HIGGS: I tell them how big the crabs were down there.

SPEAKER: Only kept the big ones. You'd go down there and catch 40 or 50 bushel.

MS. HIGGS: How many would be on a bait, and they'd be waiting for the line to come back over. (Laughter). They wanted to know, wanted to know what I was drinking that day. You would. You'd catch – you'd crab all the –

SPEAKER: Patsy, they think you're lying, but you're not lying.

MS. HIGGS: No, I'm not lying. But 50 bushel, that's all you had 'cause the bait was all gone.

SPEAKER: The water was clear, and you could ride down the line –

MS. HIGGS: Yeah, you could see them on the bottom almost.

SPEAKER: -- about 10 to 12 feet of water and see them laying down t here. And they wouldn't come up. And I often thought about going down with diving gear to pick them up, you know. Because you'd come up, and the water temperature changed, and they'd drop off before you could get it to them.

SPEAKER: Be down there trot lining in a snow storm.

SPEAKER: In a snowstorm, yup.

SPEAKER: I've got a little story I'd like to tell about Patsy's father, Captain **Knotty Glen**. Years ago, as all us good sportsmen know, you'd never shoot a duck unless – or a goose unless it's in flight. Well those days were pretty tight, and if you carried three gun shells with you, you better bring back three ducks, or geese, or something. So we had a big gunning club down in **Grayson Point**, and the **DuPonts**, they used to put a lot of food, corn out, and they fed the ducks. Well on the other side, sometimes the ducks would fly from Grayson Creek right on through to the bay. Well Patsy's grandfather, her father and another fellow named **Mike Rikovich** (phonetic) – Knobby had a real loud voice on him and they were really out there for meat. There was no pleasure there. So **Billy Culligan** helped me out on this. So anyhow, they was pretty close to Rock Hall, and when they'd come through the Narrows there, Knobby

hollered to Mike Rikovich, he said “Let ‘em sit, Mike, let ‘em sit”. (Laughter). He wanted to make sure he come back with meat.

SPEAKER: Mr. Rikovich was hard-hearing.

SPEAKER: Yeah, right.

SPEAKER: And **Clinton Simms**, he was in the – the community blind at Windmill Point, and this has been a right good while back. And Joe – and Knobby, they had a blind just about off of where, what was the place, it was just above us. And the ducks in them days come in sometimes as high of 500 in a bunch. And, listen, I’m not kidding you, I’m telling you the truth that ducks, they baited them in the belly over there, those gun clubs did, and we didn’t bait. We didn’t have enough – we didn’t – when they were bait, at that time.

SPEAKER: It’s a habit.

SPEAKER: Well later years, we learned how to do it because we got a little more money. But at this time, that whole bunch of ducks had got up out of that – with 500 or 1,000, I don’t like to say how many, but here they were coming into Knobby. They couldn’t – they missed us. They were coming in there and he’s hollering, “Let ‘em lay, Mike, let ‘em lay, Mike”. And you could hear him. We was in a blind had to be 500 yards apart. We could hear him just plain as – (Laughter). That was a story right there.

SPEAKER: Oh, Johnny – tell that story about Mr. Johnny Glenn. Uncle – told this about him. They were shooting spring blackheads right here at Drum Point, and Mr. Clarence, I think, was with him, I think, wasn’t he down there one Sunday morning. And was Joe – the game warden?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: He caught them, and evidently hid their ducks, but they were shooting and carrying on and had decoys out – Sunday morning killing a mess of spring blackheads. And when he arrested them, he couldn’t tie them to the ducks but the guys were shooting on Sunday. (Laughter) – asked them what they were doing in the duck blind on Sunday. Mr. Glenn said he was a decoy maker, and he was just fixing his decoys there. He was taking down (laughter). They asked Clarence what his excuse was, and he said well, Mr. Glenn’s a very good friend of mine, he said, and I just love to see a pretty decoy sitting on the water. (Laughter). They were like two dogs – (laughter). But how did that – is that the way that story really went?

SPEAKER: They hid the ducks. (Laughter). Carried them up and brought them in the bushes.

Joe Watson and Mr. (indiscernible) –

SPEAKER: Well I heard that.

SPEAKER: -- up Drum Point.

SPEAKER: Yeah, but evidently had a – trap set and he was afraid to –

SPEAKER: They come up there and they couldn't arrest him because he didn't have no ducks. He had hid them. (Laughter).

T.M.: If you have any questions as we're moving along, just wave a hand out there.

SPEAKER: Other than yourselves, who's the most memorable character you've ever known on the water, and why?

T.M.: Person you would remember the most.

SPEAKER: I can remember some names, and maybe Captain Harry Carter might help me out, but I guess Captain **Joyce Thomas** was Harry Carter's uncle, and I guess Captain Joyce was one of the best fishermen at that time around here, wasn't he, Harry? Uncle Josh, Uncle Joyce Thomas?

SPEAKER: He could be.

MS. HIGGS: He was my father, and he invented the anchor net.

SPEAKER: That's right. That's right.

SPEAKER: One story about Captain Josh, even Uncle – with him as a boy. He said they got ashore one time down in – below where the Bay Bridge is now. And I think what had happened, this could've been – but the bolt sprung on his – he had an old log canoe with an old Model A engine in it, and they were just about on the beach trying to figure out what to do, you know. Blowing 30, 40 miles an hour. And he said he started his engine up and it had a lot of setscrews and stuff stuck out in the coupling. And so he took a burlap bag and just fed it right into that coupling and wound it all up together and got it all tight so he could get off the beach. But then another time, I'll never forget, and someone can verify this, but they were Seventh Day Adventists, they didn't eat any pork, which my family grew up as. And they got blew ashore and they got wet, and cold and walked up to this farmhouse. And they sit down to eat. This farmer invited them in, dry clothes and give them something to eat, something to drink, and they had ham and cabbage. And they're sitting there eating this ham and cabbage, and my uncle said, Captain Josh, he

said you know, we Seventh Day Adventist, he said according to the bible, we're not supposed to eat any pork. He said the Lord never said anything about these kind of times. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: One point – Uncle Joyce had that old round stern boat –

SPEAKER: That's – he called it.

SPEAKER: I remember it just as well as anything. And I looked down at the shaft, and the water was just as going. It was coming up that shaft. And I said, Uncle Joyce, I said your sump box is all coming – he said, son, I don't have no sump box. (Laughter). What did you do? I said here it is right here. So he had a rag and a screwdriver, and I'd say the screwdriver was about that long. He shoved this stuff all around the shaft, in that – and that was his sump box. (Laughter). Pulls out in the bay in the solid ice. He didn't realize there was any danger at all. He didn't realize – come up with fish. He was a great guy.

SPEAKER: Oh, yeah.

SPEAKER: Roby can tell you about him.

SPEAKER: He's the one. Made it, set it and everything. And my dad, he wanted, we were going to set some, right down to the – took it up to the house. These young fellows here, three on the end, then you had (inaudible). I guess we had to put out three or four of these rails, and I said, Uncle Joyce, don't you put no weight on it? He said oh, I forgot that, son. Didn't have no weight on the rails. So he put brick – on it. (Inaudible). You don't realize the kind of rigs he used to fish with half the time.

SPEAKER: Long as he caught fish.

SPEAKER: Huh?

SPEAKER: Long as he caught fish.

SPEAKER: Of course he caught fish. Yes, sir. We worked on that rail, I think for a week almost before we ever got it right. Had it all fixed. Didn't have no ring on it. (Laughter). Take it all off. One thing or another. And one thing, had the pattern right there alongside the trees. We were too damn dumb, that's all it is. (Laughter).

T.M.: Mr. Simms, you've cut everybody's hair probably in here. Can you tell some stories about these people?

SPEAKER: Question. Will you tell that one about the old undertaker, **Tom Casey**, about the story when he was stuck during that ice, come out of his place on the corner there, hit the ice and slipped out in the road? Anyhow, this real old undertaker, it was horse and wagon days, and I'll get Captain Cliff here to tell his story, which I think is right funny.

SPEAKER: I don't remember about this.

SPEAKER: Okay. Well what happened, you can help me out, the old man, he had ice. Had some sleet that night. Had some sleet that night. In the meantime, it snowed that night. Well the old man, he didn't notice the ice on the steps. So anyhow, he come out real early that morning and looking things over, and he hit that step and slide halfway out in the middle of the street. And had a real long beard – rung that, squirted tobacco juice, and he said I'd like to see it have a shower enough to scald a hog. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Yeah, he was going out of the house, had all this rain and – and he said – that's what he said. He'd like to see a shower have him scald a hog.

SPEAKER: Be a right warm shower.

SPEAKER: One summer – I think there was a man by the name of Snoderman (phonetic).

(SIDE B.)

SPEAKER: -- I was just a boy. They called me, and got (inaudible). I stayed there with him, and he sent me up to another little building where the real (inaudible) was in the dark to get a hammer or some tool. And I didn't think much about going in there, but I wasn't going to let it back me down. And I went in. The -- laying out there, and I have to go find him. I got about this (Laughter) –

SPEAKER: Tell that one about your dad going to Baltimore with the fellow back here that played with the symphonic orchestra.

SPEAKER: Oh.

SPEAKER: Remember that?

SPEAKER: I guess you've all heard of **Reginald Stewart**. He was – Peabody Conservatory.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Anyhow, well **John Darrow**, a good friend of mine, he used to invite Pop up and I. And Pop played an Autoharp and a mouth harp to –

SPEAKER: Where he had, when he would tune up a little bit?

SPEAKER: No, he's talking about Old Man Coville.

SPEAKER: Old Man Coville. Yeah, that's the one I was talking about.

SPEAKER: Yeah, Johnny. You want to tell it?

SPEAKER: No, you can tell it. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Oh, my father and Mr. Johnny Glenn had a new neighbor moved in back in McKinleyville. And they thought it would be good and neighborly thing to do, go back and introduce their self and, you know, welcome the man to the neighborhood. So they went back that night and the Old Man Coville played a violin. And Pop was going to play, they was going to play a duet. Well, of course, he played classical stuff, and Pop and myself, we wouldn't know what a musical note looked like. But anyhow, Johnny, he – Johnny remembers a tune, Johnny went along with Pop. He won't do it now, but this old man, this old man only had four strings, and Pop, he couldn't get together, this Autoharp had 36 strings. And the old man said well, you'll have to re-tune that 36 strings to play with me. And Pop, Mr. Johnny Glenn, they said well, we got ready to leave and they fussed away. What do you think I'd say to an old fool, wanted me to change 36 strings, and only had to change 4 on that violin. (Laughter).

T.M.: There's a question in the back.

SPEAKER: Sunday afternoon, we're all being very nice and behaving ourselves. Now you have some sailors in this crowd, and we've been known to be on a long tack across the bay, thinking of crab cakes, of course, running into those damn crab pots. And we say – we would say some, well, less than nice things about those damn crab pots while we're thinking about crab cakes. I wondered if you had any little feelings you'd like to share (laughter).

SPEAKER: I don't know who would like to pick that up. Got some pretty big crabbers here.

SPEAKER: That's barking up the wrong tree, isn't it? (Laughter).

T.M.: Captain Jimmy, you're out here all the time.

SPEAKER: Huh?

T.M.: I said you see all these boats coming across.

SPEAKER: Are you a sail boater or a motor – sail boater? I can tell you something about that too. (Laughter).

T.M.: Did you ever have a run-in with any of them out there?

SPEAKER: Well there wouldn't be a sailboat without any trouble if he fixed his boat where the rudder connects to the center – if he put a piece on there, he'd never catch a crab pot, he'd never know there was a crab pot in the bay. There should be a law to that effect, because you do more trouble to us than we will ever do to you. And you can sail through them as thick as people are setting in this place if the boat was properly rigged. And they've eliminated it with the power boats because the State of Maryland doesn't have a law to prevent them from having the cutters on, and 90 percent of all the outside boats that come here has the cutters on, and they can run down them pots as thick as they are here and never hit them, but just cut them off, cut them off, cut them off. So the problems is not the fishermen, it's the people that's running the boats that has the problem. They fix their boats properly, they will never have a problem. And that's a fact. I'm a crabber. I knew – this past year, just a little over about 210 pots. Now 210 pots, cheapest you can put one in the bay is \$20. Most of them run 25 to \$30 because most of us fellows have decent equipment. The guy that has decent equipment has got the most – and you just run that over. And they passed a law this year. Everybody thinks they've done something great for the people. What did they do? They raised my license fee to \$150. They ain't done anything. I only fished about 800 pots, now I can set 900, but I got to pay another \$150. So, I mean, it's all a joke. And what bills was passed down there this year has been a big joke. And our governor is going to take credit for a lot of things and he just didn't do nothing. That's a fact.

SPEAKER: One other thing. I really don't have any pots at all with (inaudible). They're marked, if you'll watch the fish net buoys, stay outside of those. And I cut across myself. I had an uncle, Uncle Buck, back years ago, he had a compass that was never adjusted, but he knew his compass. And he, with a 40-foot boat, he ran the channel all the time, which was a good lesson. He said the boat done better, and when it got foggy, he knew where the hell he was. We all cut across bars, but if you stay in the navigable channel, you won't have to worry about fishnets or crab pots 'cause none of us set there. They're all inside the line. But everybody wants to cut across the bar and get quick as – we do it our self. But, you know, there are no crab pot zones around Magothy River in Annapolis and all, and even Rock Hall Harbor, there's zones there where you can't set.

SPEAKER: Well not in Rock Hall, but in Annapolis and the Magothy River and over as you go into –

SPEAKER: I'm talking about the channel –

SPEAKER: -- they have a zone there that you're – in a green line that you're not allowed to set in. But Rock Hall doesn't, I don't think, have one.

SPEAKER: I have sailed around crab pots right in the entrance channel to Rock Hall Harbor. They were set right in the channel. Now it's not really deep or anything like that – picked up a crab pot once and dragged it about a quarter of a mile, and it came off all by itself. With most modern sailboats, that's what will happen. Come off all by itself if you give it a chance. You might not be able to find 'em. They won't be where you left them.

SPEAKER: I didn't understand. I'm sorry, I didn't understand about the cutter, that term you used.

SPEAKER: Well they have a thing that goes on your shaft. I don't want you to put one on because you'd put me out of business, (laughter), but you have one – it will cut, I think, up to 3/8 inch cable, and you don't even notice. It don't interfere with your wheel or any of that. In the State of Maine, it's illegal because the lobsters are stronger up there than what the supports are. And they don't allow it. You can't even sail through there with one. I mean you can't even run your boat through Maine with one on. That's a law in Maine, but not here. They – I set the crab, the fish line. They don't have it anymore, they took it away last year, I think, the government couldn't afford it, where we're not going to have fishing no more, and they couldn't afford to support the – or maintain the boats. But from **Poole's Island** clear down to cut-off channel as you go into Baltimore, the channel, there's fish net lines. They were yellow the last 15 or 20 years. They used to be black and white. Marked designated fishing areas. I set right on that line. I didn't set outside of it. Tug boats and everything, I set right on that line. I lost more pots setting on that line because people with them yachts was using their radar to run from one piece of that buoy to the other, afraid to go out there in that channel where the ships was, and I was losing my pots. I couldn't figure, it took me a hell of a while to figure it out. I set out 100 yards outside, never had no trouble. So, I mean, an example of what you experience. But those cutters cut them off.

T.M.: You have a question?

SPEAKER: I was just wondering, the weather on the bay sometimes changes so dramatically, and you gentlemen work it all year long. Do you have any dramatic weather stories.

SPEAKER: Well yesterday morning, it was 5 or 6 waterspouts at one time. That's as close as what I can remember, 50 mile wind. That was yesterday morning.

T.M.: Do any of you have any experiences where you almost got lost out there?

SPEAKER: I'll tell you one thing. If you get caught out in a snowstorm, don't never doubt your compass (laughter) – that snow comes at you from the south. Snow comes every direction. You think if I stay in the wind, I'll be all right. But it's not true. You stick with that compass, you'll make it.

SPEAKER: When I was fishing, I used to make – whether the weather was good, bad or in between, I – my compass. All the time. It's the only way to travel and get where you want to go safe. And I'll truthfully say, I've been out there one time so thick that the boat left a track in. I'm not lying. My father was with me. And I've never been lost yet by sticking with the compass. I never saw it before or sense that the boat still left a track in the fog it was that thick. We got down (inaudible) the ferry landing there – and come up, going down Solomon's. My father was living then. And looked up, this big ship was – I could even see the (inaudible). And she was anchored there it was so thick. Went on down to – and we run right out of that storm just the same as if we'd go out that door, just as clear as a bell.

SPEAKER: Well I think – I was clamming, and one day I did – I must've missed my mark some a little bit. I don't know. But I fooled around a while, and I picked up the buoy. I knew where I was at. And once I picked the buoy up, I said well, I can (inaudible) – 'cause right down, you see off here now. So I went to turn around so I could get the mark on that buoy, and I was looking at it, I lost sight on that buoy. (Laughter). Believe it or not, I come in, right off that buoy there – and I couldn't even see either one – the wrong cove. (Laughter). So that's how quick it was.

SPEAKER: I had an uncle one time that him and this boy went out fishing in nighttime, after white perch. And come the fog, and the creek's high – you've seen that. And they went and got – they rowed and rowed and rowed. They was in a rowboat. And after a while – power from shore, hey, they could talk to each other – says, my uncle, he says where we at? He said you're at the Naply Green (phonetic). You know all where the Naply Green's at. He turned around to this boy, said Jesus Christ, we done rowed to Annapolis. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Get Mr. John to tell us a story because I know he's got some good stories and I know he's a good story teller, but he hasn't said much yet.

SPEAKER: What, about being a liar? (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Tell them about the time you brought one of the boys up there oystering.

SPEAKER: We was – oystering on the ice. We cut a big piece out – got on it. And was sinking with him all the time. We were hollering come on, Ray, come one. But damn if it didn't get off that (indiscernible). (Laughter).

SPEAKER: I'd like to add a little bit about that too. Times were awful tight in those days, and we risk our life, we went out when it froze up, we went out and we saw the track, and we stood on this ice and oystered. Right on the edge of this ice. And my brother and I, Frank, we went out on the middle ground, which was right off of Drum Point Farm. And it was 8 or 10 people out there, and the ice got so thin, one fellow dropped his ice and he just grabbed a handle and went on through. Of course, Frank and I, we stayed there a little longer. And when we pulled that sleigh ashore, 5 or 6 bushel, we pulled her uphill, all the way. She was settling down, ice was that thick. That's how desperate we were to make a dollar.

SPEAKER: Made a dollar and a half apiece.

SPEAKER: Dollar and a half apiece. And if Frank had went down, I would try to get him, he'd try to got me, we'd have got drowned. But that's how tight times were that we just – and one thing about a woman. They're very proud. They don't beg, they don't beg for welfare. They'll just – we want to work, and sometime risk our life to make a dollar.

SPEAKER: Get back to Wayne's story about the crabs. I live right across the other side of this little point here, down the other row, the other creek. That's where I was born and raised right on the other side there. First – went crabbing, trot lining, went over here to Reed's Creek (phonetic) and way down Piney Point on that sand. And I had eels on my line, and **Peaches Ashley** (phonetic) come over and laid outside of me with trout. And I made 15 runs and cost 15 barrel. Now if you don't know what a barrel is, it's the barrel between a big barrel and a small barrel and a crab pot. It's made, three baskets. We got 25 cents a bushel for them. Cost 15 barrel. And they eat the bait up, fishes were catching as many as I was behind me.

SPEAKER: Running your line.

SPEAKER: Running my line right behind me. That's how when you get to them to bite, they'll bite. And when you don't, nothing you can do. This seafood business, it's all haphazard. Maybe it will, maybe it won't. But you got to keep at it and do the best you can. And if you're lucky, you're lucky. If you're not, you'll have to do whatever way it can.

SPEAKER: We all had – never made enough money, but we always had plenty to eat.

SPEAKER: Oh, yeah. We never run a store bill in our life, never asked nobody for something to eat.

SPEAKER: We raised good up.

SPEAKER: Whatever we made, we lived accordingly. The trouble today is so many live beyond their means of what there is. And they get in debt over their head, they don't know which way to go.

T.M.: Have a question?

SPEAKER: With the predictions about the future of the watermen industry, I'd like to know, would you encourage your sons, grandsons and so forth to go into it?

SPEAKER: No way.

SPEAKER: I'd say go up the road, son. Don't do it. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: No way.

SPEAKER: My father told me 40 years ago definitely not to be a fisherman. I finally embarrassed him when I was graduating from high school with telling him I wanted to be a fisherman. And he told me to go to school so when I zipped my fly up, I got my whisker caught in. (Laughter). Of course, all I wanted was a boat. He discouraged me from doing that, and rightfully so. He sensed it 40 years ago that it was a dying industry. And he had bought his license as a fisherman 'cause I know as a kid, I used to go to Annapolis with him just to go to hearings to create numbers to get everybody that was a fisherman, and we knew someday – the day it would be turned over to recreation, which pretty much it is. And we're just there because I think what they said it was only 500 oyster license this year. And I can remember seeing 300 boats in Chester River.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Right down here on – Point, I seen 150 boats on Piney Point that Mr. Johnny and them had 5 or 6 buy boats up here. And St. Michaels, if you go up 25 bushel, the first – so-called 25 less

for some reason. You never got, you know, never got rich, but you always made a good living. There was a few oysters everywhere, but now they're in such – congregation (inaudible). Used to be you could only work if you were in county waters. But now, you know, people from down the lower bay can come up here. If there's oysters anywhere, they all come here and clean them up is one of the problems right now. And they just – where they are productive –

SPEAKER: The thing is, Wayne, they won't live down in the bay, see.

SPEAKER: That's the problem.

SPEAKER: Special water.

SPEAKER: They all move down the bay.

SPEAKER: We've done that same thing before. So it's a good thing in a way that it has opened up, you know, so people that are still into it are still making, they're still making a fair income out of it. But there's fewer people every year that are involved in it. And I guess it'll be fewer all the time until there aren't, there aren't any of us left, really, is what it's amounted to.

SPEAKER: Well we wouldn't be crabbing today if it wasn't for the having to have crabs for the – people that come here, for the restaurants and stuff. Without the crabs, this business is – the whole thing would just fall right apart because the steamed crabs is the backbone of Maryland's summer life. And it is. There's no question about it. Otherwise, we wouldn't be out there. We know that. That's the only thing that's keeping the crab potter in business. If they catch enough crabs trot lining that they didn't have to go crab potting, there wouldn't be a crab potter out here. But that's not the thing. And you've got to have the crab potter to keep the economy going steady around. Otherwise, it would be gone. They'd cut it up. We know that. That's the only thing that's keeping us there. All the rest of the industry is about loss. \$80 a bush this winter, every day I got \$80 a bushel for my crabs. If that don't tell you something, you think that over a little bit. \$80 a bushel in the wintertime when there's really no market for them.

SPEAKER: \$80 a bushel – an oysterman, and they're clamming on their oyster bars killing all our oysters. That's not very good. But the government blaming the oysters – but the clammers is doing us more harm than all the other things going.

SPEAKER: Well one oyster bar that hasn't been clammed on – at \$80 a bushel, that makes them at risk because that's –

SPEAKER: If they get arrested, they go to court and they catch a \$50 fine. Tell them to go back and do it over again. That's the law –

SPEAKER: But that's not what put the oyster business out of business.

SPEAKER: That's what they told me.

SPEAKER: Well listen now. I've been working on the water just about – and I worked for my father's friend, and we supplied something like 30 fishing -- with shrimp. And I shrimped everywhere in this state, I shrimped Atlantic City, I shrimped in Ocean City. We would shrimp in **Eastern Bay**, Harry Carter will back me up. The grass was so thick, and the oysters were so thick on the grass that we couldn't even wade to it. It covered our legs pushing the shrimp. The grass is all gone – and where that grass was, it was no way that anybody could have destroyed it. It just went from whatever – problem we got. And it hasn't got a damn thing to do with me over-harvesting or me stealing. It hasn't got anything to do with it. Every individual in this room participates in the deterioration of the Chesapeake Bay the same as everybody else. If you wash your clothes with your bleach and your – and you wash your body with your soap, the systems don't break that down. That goes right out there just like it is. It's enough from just us people in here to dilute this bay, and that's a fact.

SPEAKER: Better not confuse the big shrimp with the grass shrimp that you're talking about.

SPEAKER: Grass shrimp. We caught about hundreds of – every boat used 3 to 5 gallons, the ones that had the rich Jews over there, that guy over there, he'd – he bought the most from us, right there. I sold to him, he carried a lot of the rich Jewish people.

SPEAKER: How many crabs do you think that I dip off the line one morning?

SPEAKER: Twenty-nine bushel.

SPEAKER: Huh?

SPEAKER: Twenty-nine bushel – I mean 29 barrels.

SPEAKER: I don't believe that. (Laughter).

SPEAKER: Well Smokey Joe came out to Love Point – I was taking my line up, and when I got in – we barreled them up. I didn't have time to – because I was steady dipping. How many barrels you think I dipped that time of the morning?

SPEAKER: I don't know.

SPEAKER: Twenty barrels – 20 barrels.

SPEAKER: And (indiscernible) – had them up to their knees in their boat.

SPEAKER: You couldn't sell a she crab.

SPEAKER: Huh?

SPEAKER: You couldn't sell a she crab.

SPEAKER: No. When you're dipping – you dip, always dip on the outside of the line. Somebody here (inaudible) give me crabs right on that line – you couldn't keep them off. That's a hell of a lot of crabs.

SPEAKER: We used to get \$5 a bushel.

(Group discussion.)

SPEAKER: -- they caught 60 dozen. Only saved the jumbo soft crabs with the dip net. It cost 60 dozen at 5 cents a dozen is \$3, and they're \$1.50 apiece. And just say they was –

SPEAKER: Them days, we got \$5 a bushel for number ones, and two and a half for second grades. Like he said, we couldn't sell the she crabs then. But that's what – now today, you get anywhere from 50 to \$60 a bushel for crabs.

SPEAKER: We got a little surprise for you. We got a little entertainment coming up for you, and we're just about ready to end this little session here. Does anybody got any questions they want to ask any watermen up here? Don Donts (phonetic), commodore, former commodore – Commodore Brady.

SPEAKER: Some years ago, Franklin told me about an island that used to be out here in the Chester River. Now I looked at the charts to see if I could figure out just from the charts where that island might have been 'cause it's gone. And the only thing I can come up with that looked like it might've been just sort of -- out from Goose Cove. Is that about right?

SPEAKER: Yeah – (indiscernible).

SPEAKER: What happened to that?

SPEAKER: I don't remember no island there though. (Laughter).

(Group discussion.)

T.M.: Before we wind up, we want all of you fellows, everybody here, we're going to have a picture taken with me out of it, but all of you people so we can have it done for the club, but we hope for

each of you. And Captain Hilton Crouch and I are going to do just a couple tunes now. We didn't have a chance to rehearse with him yesterday and I forgot to bring my banjo with me. (Laughter). So this is the first time, that's it. So this is mainly, this is mainly he's going to play and I'm going to sit here and try to figure out what he's doing.

SPEAKER: How old are you now?

T.M.: That's what I mean. It's the first song. So any time we're ready.

(End of tape 1.)

(Only 1 of 2 tapes was provided for transcription.)