

Interview with Ellis (Capt. Bill) Berridge(SR 37, Tilghman, MD 21671 886-242.5). Capt. Berridge was born and raised on Tilghman Island, going to work on his father's bugeye when he was 13. Capt. Berridge later worked on yachts, drift-netted, captained the charter boat Smoky Joe, and owned the skipjack Anna M. Rich. He also worked on the bugeye Thomas Freeman.

Present at the interview 10/14/87 were Edna Berridge, Joe Liener and R. Dodds.

see also Oral History 1-10

Interview with Ellis (Capt. Bill) Berridge on 10/14/87. Present were Mr. Berridge, Edna Berridge, Josef Liener, and Richard Dodds.

Dodds:

... For a number of years.

Captain Bill:

Oh, different ones, yes. Quite a few years.

Dodds:

Captain, why don't we start out at the beginning. Were you born on the island?

Captain Bill:

Born and raised, yes sir, right down the road here. Right down... see that lane down there with all them trees down there?

Edna:

Right across the road.

Dodds:

Ya.

Captain Bill:

Its right down to the water there. That cove down there.

Dodds:

You didn't move too far away, then.

Captain Bill:

No. Well, I left here when I was 17 years old.

Dodds:

When were you born?

Captain Bill:

Born right down in that house right there.

Dodds:

What year?

Captain Bill:

May the 4th 1903.

Dodds:

So you lived 'till you were 17 and then you. 1)

Captain Bill:

Went to yachting. Private yachts.

Dodds:
Did You?

Captain Bill:
And when I was 40 I give that up.

Dodds:
Whose boats did you sail on?

Captain Bill:
Whose? Different ones. Howard Taylor and ... M..., the White Cloud Mattress Company, Dr. Colbach, William Kaiser owned the Kaiser Building in Baltimore, fella named B.M. Overdorf he was the President of the New York Tool Company. That was the first yacht I was took as Captain of. Ya, I was 20 years old when I got my license. I sailed with a fella by the name of John Larry[?], before that for 3 years. Then I got my license. I sailed with him as Deckhand, and then I made Engineer. I was Engineer for two years before I got my Captain's license.

Dodds:
Sound like probably very nice boats. If you had a paid crew, probably very nice boats.

Captain Bill:
Oh, ya. Very nice boats.

Dodds:
What were some of the names?

Captain Bill:
Well, the first one that I went on was the Tred Avon. It was a houseboat, a Matthews houseboat.

Dodds:
Sounds nice.

Captain Bill:
Ya. It had four state rooms in it. Had a crew of six people. Had a Captain, two Deck Hands, an Engineer, and a Maid, and Cook; **six** of us. Going south every winter, and up north every summer.

Dodds:
So, you spent winters down in Florida.

Captain Bill:
Florida, ya. I was down there in that hurricane in 1926. When all them hotels, and tore up Daytona Beach, Miami, and everything else.

Edna:

Was the one that took the railway way down U.S

Captain Bill:

The ... [?] ... railway went down, yes, 1926.

Dodds:

Lotta difference between those boats and the later work boats you worked on, I guess.

Captain Bill:

Ya. Some of those skipjacks were right nice.

Dodds:

Well, how long did you work on the yachts?

Edna:

Tell him you quit.

Captain Bill:

I got married. (laughter)

Dodds:

When was that?

Captain Bill:

That was...

Edna:

...1949.

Dodds:

1949?

Captain Bill:

Ya, '49. I took her and the children. She had two children already. I'm her second husband. I took her, the two children, and my father, and a friend of my father's down Florida with me on a motorsailer. That was the last yacht I was on. I quit while I was down there, 'cause he come down, and I had the children down there to send them to school, and he came down there the boss did, he wanted to go 'round the West Coast, and I felt like I just didn't want to go around there, and I quit. That was my last job on the yachts. I've delivered some since then, but not a steady job. It was a good job. Nowadays it's not like it used to be. So many young men went in the service, and they got that experience, and they come out, and they kept those jobs for nothing. You couldn't get no money no more out of them. Now, I guess maybe its better now. I don't know. But I'm too old for it now.

Liener:

I guess they had no where else to go, and that was the best offering they could find.

Captain Bill:

That's right. I guess so. But they took the jobs for practically nothing.

Dodds:

You liked it though.

Captain Bill:

Oh, I loved it.

Edna:

It was children. You can't very well drag them all over the place, and he didn't want to be down there by himself.

Captain Bill:

That's how I got my license, with the experience I'd had on these boats. I'd got a license by going from Bar Harbor, Maine to Key West a hundred times. That's 60 mile offshore. That's how I got 'em was experience on the yachts.

Dodds:

You have to wear a uniform on some of these yachts?

Captain Bill:

Ya.

Dodds:

Must have looked pretty smart in a Captain's uniform.

Captain Bill:

Ya.

Dodds:

Well what happened after you left the yachts? You came back to Tilghman?

Captain Bill:

Came back home. I went over to the beach, to run fishing parties. Working on the water. When I come back, I drudge in the wintertime.

Edna:

Well you used to fish in the winter.

Captain Bill:

Ya, I drift net fished some. That was a lost cause, too.

Liener:

It sure is now. (laughter)

Captain Bill:
It sure is.

Liener:
And oyster almost is catching up with it.

Edna:
And then he went oystering, and there wasn't any oysters there for a few years.

Captain Bill:
That was worse than it is now. When I had that skipjack it got so bad that you couldn't even catch 25 oysters all day long. And I quit. One year I quit. I sold that boat. And I told Henry Reeser to haul her up and check her out good and take care of her until I got back. I give him the address where I'd be at. He could send me the bill. He never sent me none.

Dodds:
Is that right?

Captain Bill:
I never got no bill 'till I got back.

Dodds:
Well, when you came back to Tilghman, did you start off as a deckhand on the boats, or did you...

Captain Bill:
On the dredge boats?

Dodds:
Did you manage to buy your own boat right away?

Captain Bill:
No. I bought one later on, but I run one for another fella for a while. Then I bought one. Then I got rid of that. Then I went over there to work the Rod 'N Reel Club.

Dodds:
Oh. The old Rod 'N Reel Club.

Captain Bill:
Boy that boat was....

Edna:
Running the fishing parties.

Captain Bill:

That boat wasn't there when I first went over there. They had to build after I went up. I think it belonged to a private... someone named Gordon[?] he was the manager of the Rod 'N Reel Club. His father was part owner of the Rod 'N Reel Club. But they had a smaller one built first name of Smokey Joe I, and that's the Smokey Joe II, and I ran it as a head boat.

Dodds:

What picture do we have, the first or the second? You gave us a picture of the Smokey Joe. It should be in there.

Liener:

I think its the second....

Captain Bill:

Ya, I don't think I got any pictures of the first one.

Edna

The first one was a small boat. Well, it wasn't real small, it was a party boat, but it wasn't anything like this.

Liener:

Now that's a big head boat.

Dodds:

When was she built, the Smokey Joe II?

Liener:

Look on the back there. There's something written on the back.

Dodds:

Does it say on the back? It just says "Party boat which ran from Chesapeake Beach to the Choptank for 18 years."

Captain Bill:

Eighteen years, ya. I think she was....

Edna:

Well, when did they sell her? Do you remember...?

Captain Bill:

She was eighteen years old when they sold it.

Edna:

Ya, but do you remember what year they sold it?

Captain Bill:

I can't remember. My memory's bad.

Liener:

It hadn't been too many years ago, 'cause I remember when she was running in and out over there.

Captain Bill:

Out in the river here, ya.

Edna:

Ya, and then after they sold that boat, it went up to the Delaware Bay. And then they bought another boat named the Optimist. Then he still run that.

Captain Bill:

This boat here was large enough for 100 people, and the one-see the business would start to drop off. Fishing got bad, you know. Then they bought one like for 69 people. Then business kept up with that pretty good, I guess, for about 10 years, wasn't it Edna?

Edna:

I guess so.

Captain Bill:

Then it dropped off again. And then they bought a small one. Its still running now. So...L?1...some man had a boat and they bought it. He died and his sons run it. Its named the Optimist II. They still run it over there in the river.

Liener:

That fella that dredged out in back of there, on the other side of the road, did he make that bigger?

Captain Bill:

No, it's no bigger, but...

Liener:

Filled up more.

Captain Bill:

Filled up, ya. But they built more up there since he did that. One pair of hands built that place.

Edna:

What you talking about? The one under the bridge?

Liener:

Ya, had the one under the bridge.

Captain Bill:

Fella named Buddy Kellerman built that, two hands by himself.

Liener:

Has a store and one stuff and the other up there.

Captain Bill:

Ya, got a nice store there. Right on the side of the bridge there.
Ya, he was a fine fella. He's dead, too.

Liener:

He's gone?

Captain Bill:

Ya.

Liener:

I'll be darned

Captain Bill:

Ya. Died a young man. Nice man, too. This not the picture, isn't it? When they caught all them fish that time, no. I got a picture somewhere where all back end of this deck, and everything on the boat was full of spot and trout. Hooked 'em on a Labor Day. If there's such a day as this as wind all of Easton. Chilly as the dickens.

Dodds:

How was the rock fishing when you first started on the Choptank?

Captain Bill:

Well it was some years good, and some years bad. I'll tell you the truth, don't know whether you remember or not. You remember when they caught all those fish back of Poplar Island? Hook and line? Chumming?

Dodds:

I wasn't around, but....

Captain Bill:

You remember that?

Liener:

Ya. Well that's....

Captain Bill:

Ever since then rock have depleted. Ever since then. They fished out there day and night. People say you can't break 'em on hook and line, but you can.

Liener:

What you call 'em, up there out of Claiborne? Was fishing over in there Clark....

Captain Bill:
Clark Lednum?

Liener:
Clark Lednum.

Captain **Bill**:
Ya, he lives down in Florida now.

Liener:
Ya, he's gone now, but he in to that bunch that was fishing out there.

Captain **Bill**:
Ya, I remember... [?] ... folks line up there day and night. You almost walk on 'em. Have 'em one of them catching 5-600 or 1000 fish to a boat. Hook and line.

Liener:
Then they were haul seining over there in Hollica Snooze.

Captain **Bill**:
That's right, haul seining.

Liener:
About the same time.

Captain **Bill**:
Yes, that's right. Then there's really no rock fishing much since then out there.

Liener:
That's where they blew the duck up. I told you about that. You remember that don't you? Tying the dynamite on the duck, the darned duck flew underneath the shanty, and up went the whole business.
(laughter)

Edna:
I never heard that one before.

Captain **Bill**:
That was a lot of pleasure.

Dodds:
Ya. Nice looking boat.

Captain **Bill**:
Ya. It was a nice boat, very nice. Fella named Paul Jones built that boat, down at Hoopers Island.

Liener:

Ya. His place is down below...

Captain Bill:

Crocheron is where it is. Crocheron that's at Hoopers Island.

Edna:

Is he dead?

Liener:

I think he is.

Captain Bill:

Oh, I think he is. He been sick for a long while. He had cancer. I believe he is. I'm not sure.

Liener:

His shop was off to the left there. You'd go on through and then off to the left, back toward the Bay.

Captain Bill:

That man got an electric hammer to drive nails in that boat.

Dodds:

Ya?

Captain Bill:

He couldn't stand driving nails. Doggone monel nails that long.

Dodds:

Captain, you mentioned that you were drift net fishing for a while. How long did you do that? And when did you do that?

Captain Bill:

Not too long. I went with Red and ... [?] ... a couple seasons, I believe. Billy Cummins and I had a rig of our own. I guess I've done ten year all together. But it was a lost cause. There wasn't no fish. Couldn't make a living at it.

Dodds:

Where did you fish?

Captain Bill:

Anywheres from the head of the Bay to down to Hoopers Island. Off Solomon's Island.

Edna:

It wasn't too bad. Sometimes you had good catches. Some people made a living.

Captain Bill:

You got to catch fish every day. It's expensive running up and down the Bay.

Edna:

That's the trouble. When he first started they had cotton nets, then they got into nylon, then they kept getting more and more...

Captain Bill:

It got so expensive to do it.

Edna:

The corks got high, and it cost a lot to get them gear and if you didn't catch a lot of fish, then you....

Captain Bill:

She used to help gear' en 'em up. I'd take women. That's a back-breaking job, too.

Edna:

I didn't mind it. I liked it.

Dodds:

Did you?

Liener:

Where did you string up your nets for gear'en 'em up?

Edna:

Up at Jean Cummins's, I mean not Cummins, Murphy. Do you remember the shop that used to have down Tilghman Days?

Liener:

Ya.

Edna:

Well we used to work up in there. When I first started doing it, I started on his nets.

Captain Bill:

In the long hallway.

Edna:

We got a long hall.

Liener:

Ya, but that was kinda short for you.

Edna:

Oh, ya.

Captain Bill:

But there wasn't much room on the side. They'd have to get ahead of the other to be in the hallway, you know what I mean?

Liener:

Ya, One is doing the cork line, the other's doing the lead line.

Edna:

My mother and father used to do it. I had seen it done ever since I was a child. I was too little to gear nets, and I felt ... [?] And when he started fishing then I thought this girl next door ... you fished with Freddy, Well, his wife and I, we geared the nets for 'em.

Liener:

Did you fish out of Flag Pond sometimes, too?

Captain Bill:

Sometimes, ya. Wherever we could find a harbor and we had a fishing net, we'd sneak in and get it.

Dodds:

Quite a few families drift netting at that time, wasn't there at Tilghman?

Captain Bill:

Oh, ya. Rock Hall and Tilghman are noted for it. There's more in Rock Hall than there was here. Plenty of them did up there.

L;

That bunch up in Rock Hall they went up there and worked the creek a lot. Buck Neck Landing.

Edna:

They used to come down this way and fish sometimes.

Captain Bill:

There was a lot of them. Tarred up, went ahead, and fished down here off of here to the harbor here.

Liener:

Follow 'em along.

Edna:

And then they would go up there and fish. Wherever the fish were, they'd all go.

Dodds:

This would be in the spring?

Captain Bill:

Ya, they'd run up the Bay in the spring.

Edna:

They would fish all winter long.

Captain Bill:

We would fish all winter, but in spring we would go up there and fish.

Edna:

Oh, ya. Up there in the spring. But all winter they would fish in the Bay. The roughest time.... You know when those boys all got drowned that time? People said "Well what in the world were they doing out there at that time?" Well, that's where they went. They always went, in ice and anytime.

Captain Bill:

They had to go.

Edna:

That's when they caught the most fish. That's a dangerous life.

Captain Bill:

Bad weather's when you catch the most fish.

Dodds:

It ~~is~~. It's a hard life, too.

Edna:

It's worse than dredging, I think, more dangerous.

Liener:

Ever catch any odd stuff in your drift net?

Captain Bill:

Oh, ya. Sometimes the ocean fish come in here. Not many. catch one or two sometimes.

Dodds:

Any sharks or bigger fish get caught up in there?

Captain Bill:

Ya, caught some sharks, and somebody here had a mackerel the other day they'd caught. Up there to... [?] I saw it. I said "Where'd the mackerel come from?" Said "I don't know ~~sir~~, somebody brought it in, I don't know who."

Liener:

Kinda a little off season, wasn't it?

Captain Bill:

I've seen them here in the summer, but you don't catch many of them. They're awful fast fish. They travel fast.

Dodds:

What was the sort of fish that you'd be catching when drift netting?

Captain Bill:

Rockfish, and we caught a lot of perch, too.

Dodds:

Once the fish were caught, how'd you sell them?

Captain Bill:

Over at Tilghman Packing Company.

Dodds:

Tilghman Packing Company? Ya. I guess that'd be a good place.

Captain Bill:

They bought 'em and shipped 'em, and fella name a Woodfield, he'd follow us up a lot. Down Solomon's Island, up to the head of the Bay. Harrison's they didn't send no truck, they just bought 'em right here. Woodfield followed the fisherman right up to where they went, he probably had a truck there.

Dodds:

Is that right?

Liener:

That gang was about the last ones that hung on, wasn't they?

Captain Bill:

Ya. They're still in business, over at the West River.

Liener:

Ya, West River.

Dodds:

When did you start on the dredge boats? What the first boat you worked on? Do you remember?

Captain Bill:

The first one? It was with my father. I was 13 years old. I quit going to school when I was 13 years old.

Dodds:

You started at 13?

Captain Bill:
Had to go to work.

Dodds:
What boat did he have?

Captain Bill:
He had two bugeyes. A man that owned this house worked one of them for him, and he worked the other. One was named the Cuvee and the other was the Thomas J. It got bad, and now they're both down in that cove down there dead, laying down there. You can still find some parts of them. That's been a long time ago. But, oysters got bad. Worse than it is right now. Every boat on Tilghman's Island laid up and died. They didn't come back for them. I guess for ten years they never come back.

Dodds:
So your father had two bugeyes?

Captain Bill:
Two of them, ya. The reason he bought two of them, was in the summertime he'd change and haul tomatoes. Run 'em over to Tilghman Packing Company. And it got so big that he couldn't it with one boat. So, he bought the other one, the small one, and I run it behind him.

Dodds:
Was that right? And you were 13? Ya? Amazing.

Liener:
They were framed up bugeyes, weren't they?

Captain Bill:
Well, the Cuvee was a frame boat, and the Thomas J. was a log boat. Built like a log canoe. They were both good sized boats. I drudged one named the Thomas Freeman. I don't know if you ever seen a picture of her....

Liener:
Oh, ya. I know the boat.

Captain Bill:
I drudged her for 5 or 6 years, I guess.

Liener:
She's up in New Jersey, in a cranberry bog.

Captain Bill:
Well, I cried the last time I seen that boat. She's sunk. Bow's sticking up in the air, and the back of her is down in the water,

and boy, that was a nice boat, I'm telling you. That's really the best boat I ever drudged in my life.

Liener:

I think that was the prettiest bugeye on the Bay.

Captain Bill:

That was a pretty boat. You ever seen pictures of her?

Dodds:

Ya, I've seen pictures of her. Nice boat.

Liener:

Last time I saw her doing any dredge work, she come into Tilghman Creek up there to the county wharf.

Captain Bill:

How long ago's that been?

Liener:

I' d have to look at the pictures I took of her with the date on the back to tell you.

Captain Bill:

I'll tell you, in the spring of the year I used to spat. We used to catch the spat and re-plant 'em, and a lot of times we'd go out there in the Miles River to plant l em, and other times weather' d be bad, we'd go into Tilghman creek and tie up.

Liener:

I think that's what she was doing then, when I took the pictures.

Captain Bill:

What she was doing.... It might of been me. I don't know.

Edna:

Well, Mr. Wilson....

Captain Bill:

Mr. John Wilson drudged her after me. I don't know how long. Maybe 5 years. They sold her to the Smithsonian. No, not the Smithsonian.

Liener:

Smithville. The Smithville gang.

Captain Bill:

Smithville. you know where that place is? That's some restaurant there, isn't it?

Liener:

Ya.

Edna:

That's a nice place, if you're ever up that way. especially around Christmas time. I love it.

Liener:

That place has changed hands a couple times.

Captain Bill:

Ya, he died. The man up there died. In fact the reason that boat's sank.

Liener:

Nobody bothered with it.

Captain Bill:

No.

Liener:

It's a shame.

Captain Bill:

We were up there at Cape May once. It was around Christmas, wasn't it? We went up and had dinner? Didn't we?

Edna:

It was right after Christmas. I think it was in January.

Captain Bill:

It was cold out.

Edna:

And they still had the lights up.

Captain Bill:

The whole lake had froze up, and we sat there at the big bay window, and looked right out on that lake at the boat, and people skating all out there.

Dodds:

Is that right?

Edna:

Skating all around....

Liener:

That was a cranberry bog is what they had it in. Course that's fresh water, and it froze over right quick, and shoaled.

Edna:

It was snowing, just coming down soft. My, it was a beautiful sight.

Dodds:

So, that's where she died up there.

Liener:

That's where she is right now, as far as I know.

Captain Bill:

They took her up here, up in New York State somewhere, and put her on a flatbed, a freight flatbed, like a train, and took her up there. Then they hauled her across from wherever, up by New Jersey somewhere, and put her off. Then they hauled her off on a big trailer to that lake. He was a nice man that man that bought the boat.

Liener:

They did the same thing with a lot of old buildings, too, that they'd found. They moved them up there then, they just discarded them. It was a shame.

Captain Bill:

Ya, had little shops that they sold the stuff in. I haven't been up there in years.

Liener:

I know one place where they tore down.... Bought the old grist mill, water powered grist mill, and tore it all apart, and took it up there. Had a big old wooden water wheel and the whole works.

Edna:

It was really interesting, way they had it.

Captain Bill:

Oh, you could spend a lot of time there. Days and days, if you wanted to go through and see it all.

Edna:

I would still like that. Do they still have that anymore?

Liener:

Oh, ya. Ya. But its changed a lot now. They've added a lot of stuff, and its built up more around the outside.

Dodds:

When you started dredging down here, I imagine there were quite a few dredge boats operating out of Tilghman back then.

Captain Bill:

I'm telling you, right down here, the place they call Black Walnut?

Dodds:

Ya.

Captain Bill:

It looked just like a young city out there with lights lit.

Dodds:

Is that right.

Captain Bill:

And out here at Dogwood Harbor, the same way. In the wintertime, looked just like a young city lit up out there.

Liener:

Ya, When Faulkner had the store and stuff down there.

Captain Bill:

Down here? There's one on this side, one on the other side the cove. Faulkner owned both of 'em; he didn't, not the same one, but the same family.

Dodds:

Busy place.

Liener:

And that was the only place that those guys could buy their grub.

Captain Bill:

And we'd have to have water barrels, and bring them on a rowboat, and fill your barrel up with water, and row it back out there.

Dodds:

Did your father stay with the water until he died?

Captain Bill:

Well, my father....

Edna:

Yes, he did.

Captain Bill:

No, he went to work for Tilghman Packing Company; went to work for George Harrison; up there buying oysters for him; and buying tomatoes for him in the summertime.

Dodds:

You say that when you came off the yachts, you went into other

people's boats then.

Captain Bill:

Ya.

Dodds:

What was the first, the next boat you were working on, do you remember, when you came off the yachts?

Captain Bill:

I don't believe I went drudging right away.

Edna:

No, you didn't when you came home you were fishing.

Captain Bill:

I think I was doing mostly fishing in the wintertime.

Edna:

And then he started running parties over to the beach in the summertime. And then when he came back, then he would drift net fish in the wintertime. Then he decided to buy that Anna May Rich, that one right there. And that's the one he dredged himself. And then the oysters got so bad you couldn't catch any, couldn't make a living with that. So, he decided to sell it, and what was it, one or two years after you sold it, then that push law went in. Then you could make a living, because you could push two days a week.

Captain Bill:

If it weren't for that push law, we'd all be dead. That's the only thing that....

Liener:

Ya, if they took that out right now, that would be the end of it.

Edna:

Ya, you couldn't make a living. And then after he sold that, then somebody wanted him, it must have been the Thomas Freeman...

Captain Bill:

It was the Freeman.

Edna:

...Wanted you to dredge the Thomas Freeman. So you said, ok, you'd do that. And when pushing, he did right good with that. And then, let's see, who, what boat did you go after the Thomas Freeman?

Captain Bill:

That ... Mr. Dize's boat?

Edna:

Oh, ya. Mr. Dize's up here had a boat. What was the name of it?

Liener:

Dan Dize' s boat. Used to keep her up to Claiborne in the ferry slip.

Captain Bill:

Ya, It's just like the one you got up there now. Orville Parks built her. I mean Bronzie.

Liener:

Bronza Parks.

Dodds:

Bronza Parks.

Captain Bill:

Stanley Norman was one just like her too.

Liener:

Ya. Well, that one was built the same time that the Rosie was.

Captain Bill:

What was the name of that doggone boat? It's been a long while hasn't it?

Edna:

Well....

Captain Bill:

The man he owned two. I drudged one, he drudged the other.

Dodds:

How long did you own the Anna May Rich for?

Captain Bill:

Oh, I can't remember to save my life. My memory just comes and goes on me. I sat here just this morning, and she asked me the name of those Reems boys, and I couldn't think the name of either one of them, and it finally came what the names was.

Edna:

I'd say **six** or seven years, probably. I can't even say myself.

Dodds:

That would have been in the 1960s, Because this was taken in the

Edna:

Ya, it was in the 60s when he was dredging that....

Captain **Bill**:

Then I drudged two different times for ...[name?] ... one was the Ralph Webster the other was the Lorraine Rose. They're laying up there now. They done died right there.

Dodds:

The old Ralph Webster. Ya.

Captain **Bill**:

You seen 'em?

Dodds:

I haven't seen her. I've seen pictures, and we have some pieces from her. We have the rudder.

Captain **Bill**:

Now Rosie, she painted a picture of me. I think they got it up there in that store. On the Webster.

Dodds:

Is that right?

Captain **Bill**:

Picture with rain gear and a hat on, or something like that. **Billy** Cummins did that. You know **Billy** Cummins? He did that. Never took a lesson in his life.

Dodds:

It's good. Very nice.

Liener:

The one, the picture I like that Cummings painted is the picture with the pound net fisherman....

Captain **Bill**:

Ya.

Edna:

I loved that.

Captain **Bill**:

He used to work for my father, Billy did. In the 40s **Billy** used to fish with him. That's where he's mending a piece of net, him looking down....

Dodds:

Ya. 'Cause we copied a photograph of your father. Remember that?

Captain Bill:

That picture used to be on the Tilghman Packing Company, Old Salt Brand.

Liener:

What's become of that picture of the pound net fisherman, do you know?

Edna:

He's got it in his living room.

Liener:

Has he?

Edna:

Ya. I don't think he'd sell that.

Liener:

I know I wouldn't if I had it.

Edna:

I don't think he would.

Captain Bill:

I'm telling you, he's a smart boy, a good boy with it, too. Him and I drift net fished together for how many years Edna?

Edna:

Couple. Two or three years. There's been so much going on its hard to remember when you did what.

Liener:

I see you got a picture, or drawing of the old J.T. Leonard.

Captain Bill:

Ya.

Edna:

Because a waterman, they do what they can.

Dodds:

How did you like life on the dredge boats?

Captain Bill:

I loved it. I really... I loved that more than anything I did on the water all my life. I really loved it.

Dodds:

It was a tough life, wasn't it?

Captain Bill:

It was hard work, and awful cold weather, a cold job, but you didn't mind when you were out there working. You were dressed for it.

Dodds:

You were your own man.

Captain Bill:

That's right. Your own boss, and everything.

Liener:

That was the big item.

Captain Bill:

That's right. But your problem is crew. You can't get nothing but people won't do anything else. On Monday, half the time, you'd have to go short-handed, or they'd be lying down on the job.

Dodds:

Ya. It was tough getting good crews.

Liener:

What happened to the Roe; the big skipjack, the Roe?

Captain Bill:

She sank up there off of Kent Island.

Liener:

Ya?

Captain Bill:

They sold her. A man bought her for pleasure, and they lost her right off Kent Island there.

Liener:

I'll be darned.

Captain Bill:

I don't know if you know anything about Kent Island. There used to be a big house right on shore there. She's sunk right off that big house in 35-40 feet of water. Got caught in a storm out there, and couldn't get the sails off her I think. The halyard or something hung up.

Edna:

There's that boat. That's the one that's up the...

Dodds:

The Thomas Freeman. Ya.

Liener:
The Thomas M. Freeman.

Dodds:
Ya. Nice Looking boat.

Liener:
Oh, she's a beautiful boat.

Captain Bill:
I'll bet one thing; A lot of people tried to buy that before she sank. That boat was in good shape. That man kept her up while he was living, but after he went, most everything went to the dogs; but it was sold shortly after he died, I think.

Dodds:
When you were dredging, did you prefer to sail a bugeye, or prefer to sail a skipjack?

Captain Bill:
Well, these boats here are a much abler boat, I could work most any kind of weather, and it wouldn't bother me. Now skipjacks are different. A skipjack, when it gets rough, it's hard to get 'em about. So, I used to go out and work on her, I don't care how rough it got; Cause they were heavy, see, and they held their headway. In a skipjack, when you're around most the way, you almost stop. And when its rough they'll stop.

Liener:
She comes to standstill.

Captain Bill:
That's right. But them bugeyes, they keep on going.

Liener:
These would point up better than a skipjack, too. You got one up there to the museum.

Dodds:
Ya. Edna Lockwood.

Captain Bill:
I drudged alongside her many a day.

Dodds:
Here?

Captain Bill:
Ya, right out in this river here. Fella by the name of U.G. Owen, from Oxford.

Liener:
Orem, ya.

Captain Bill:
That's been a long time ago. My father was born and raised in Oxford. But after he got married, he moved over here. Right over in this house over here. They got place for sale now for \$169,000. He got \$4,500 for it when they bought it.

Dodds:
I see you have your house for sale. Moving?

Captain Bill:
Well, the thing... I love it here, but there's too much house for us, and too much yard. We just can't take care of it. Both of us are getting too old. 'Course I'm 15 years older than she is.

Edna:
And it's too much for me, too.

Captain Bill:
I do what I can, that's all. I haven't done nothing now for a week, I bet. Laid up by something. I don't know what it is.

Dodds:
Is that right?

Captain Bill:
Yes, my stomach's all tore up for some reason. I don't know what it is. I took everything the Doctor give me. I'm still taking something else and Tagamint for my stomach. It's feeling better, but I'm telling you; Saturday and Sunday I couldn't even get off to sleep at night. I was in terrible shape.

Liener:
That's a shame.

Dodds:
These are some nice pictures of you, Captain, very nice. We're very pleased to have them.

Captain Bill:
Thank you. This one here....

Liener:
That's your mate there on the bowsprit, isn't it? That's how I know this boat. See this bowsprit? Do you notice the way he's sitting on it?

Dodds:

Ya.

Captain Bill:

Well, that bowsprit had a crack in it, and the wood was good, but the sun had cracked it, see? So I took a thick piece of oak, I guess about that thick, see? And run it from the samson post right straight out to about where he's sitting, and bolted through it.

Liener:

That bent her up.

Captain Bill:

Ya. And I used that like that for years before I got rid of it. There's one there where I'm pulling the centerboard up.

Liener:

That's where your laying on.

Dodds:

Ya, that's you. Sort of a windless day that day, wasn't it?

Captain Bill:

No. See these other skipjacks?

Dodds:

Ya. Must have been quite a sight, with all those boats out there.

Captain Bill:

And I was pulling the centerboard up, getting ready to put the yawl boat down and come in, I'd imagine. See, y' always pull your centerboard up when you put your yawl boat down.

Liener:

You saw that picture up at the museum that was taken by Robins Hollyday in 1950 out here off of Bloody Point, With four different kind of boats in there.

Captain Bill:

Ya, that was a nice picture.

Dodds:

That's you again, right? At the wheel?

Captain Bill:

Yes.

Dodds:

You ever run into any serious problems out there? Weather or any....

Captain Bill:

Oh, plenty of times. Plenty of times you had to go with the wind.

Dodds:

You ever had to put in anywhere?

Captain Bill:

I had to go into Cambridge one time. The wind's coming out the northwest we were drudging up to Howell's point, and that's a rough place there, wind coming northwest. Golly dang. So, I believe one or two boats come into Oxford, but I'm not gonna beat myself all the way down there against this. I'm going to Cambridge, call my wife, come out here and get me. The crew called some friends, they come and got us. The next day, went drudging. Come back here that night.

Liener:

I guess you run in down there to Punch Creek, ain't y'?

Captain Bill:

Oh, Punch Island? Ya. I didn't mind having that to run into. Sooner or later.... You never know when you leave here in the morning what you're doing; whether you're drudging in the Bay or you're drift netting, or anything like that. You never know whether you are going to be home at night or not. But we all had heating on the boats in the wintertime, we had to.

Dodds:

How was the food?

Captain Bill:

What? Oh, the food was good. That's the one thing; I always made sure I had a good cook. That's the main thing. The men do that kind of work they gotta eat. But, they were all on the share basis, and I was too. I mean, the boat I didn't own.

Dodds:

That was typical down here wasn't it? Most of the boats down here were on shares, weren't they, on Tilghman?

Captain Bill:

The crew were on shares.

Liener:

Did you ever dredge up in the Delaware Bay?

Captain Bill:

Some of these boys did, but I didn't. I was yachting at the time when all these boys went up to Delaware Bay, and went up there to work. I was on a private yacht.

Liener:

You must remember the fella over in Cambridge that had the three-sail bateau. The old man over in Cambridge who had the three-sail bateau.

Captain Bill:

Oh, Ya. Ya, I remember that fella. He kept boat so long that you couldn't step on the deck, you'd go right through it. Over by that oyster house. That's how long he kept her; I forgot the name of that boat.

Liener:

Ya, she died up there t' the head of the creek.

Captain Bill:

Ya, you couldn't even step on the decks, go straight through it.

Dodds:

Is that right?

Liener:

Oh, man.

Dodds:

Where'd you have your boat hauled out?; the Anna May Rich?

Captain Bill:

I used to take her to Oxford. Crockett's Boat Yard.

Edna:

No, you did not. You took the Smokey Joe to Crockett's.

Captain Bill:

That's right, I took it over to Richardson's, that's right, ya.

Liener:

Jim Richardson.

Captain Bill:

Did you talk with him?

Dodds:

I talked to him a little bit, ya.

Captain Bill:

I'll tell you, he was a fine man, and don't you think he wasn't a boat builder, I'm telling you. One of the best. You see that bugeye?; round-stern bugeye he built? He did that himself. Him and ... when I around and watched him several times he had a woman out with him, using a broadaxe, helping him. I don't know who she

was.

Liener:

Was you over there when they were making the mast for the Constellation?

Captain Bill:

Ya, I saw 'em.

Liener:

The whole bunch of them chopping on that.

Captain Bill:

Ya. I used to go down there ... sometimes when I was in Cambridge, I would never miss going down to see him. When was I talking about him last? The other night. He's a nice old man.

Edna:

Really interesting.

Liener:

Ya, I've known him a long while.

Captain Bill:

What made us think of him; we saw a picture on the television that looked just like him.

Edna:

It did look just like him, but it wasn't him.

Dodds:

Did you do much of the repair work on the boats yourself?

Captain Bill:

Well, I tell you, not much. I'm a very poor carpenter. I'd paint it up, and such as that, but when it come to carpenter work, I'm not much at it.

Edna:

He'd just tell somebody else what to do.

Captain Bill:

I could tell 'em what to do, and how to do it, but when it comes to doing it, I'm not much at it. I was always pretty good with motors, and stuff like that.

Dodds:

That's kinda handy.

Liener:

You wasn't much for sewing a sail, either?

Captain Bill:

No, sir, I couldn't do much of that, either.

Edna:

After you stopped drudging, some of the boys got him to go to teach them how to drudge.

Dodds:

Ya?

Captain Bill:

Ya, I taught Robbie Wilson. I don't know whether you know him or not. He's got the Elsworth.

Liener:

Ya.

Captain Bill:

I taught him how to drudge, And this boy Johnny Motovillac [?] , he's got the Minnie V.; I taught both those boys how to dredge. And they really caught on quick. Both 'em good drudgers, too, very good.

Liener:

Another fella down there's pretty sharp; young Daryl.

Captain Bill:

Ya, (laughs) yes he is. Now, he can do good carpenter work. He' s done a lot of work on that boat he bought. Old man Bill Bloodsworth used to own that. Then Daryl bought her.

Edna:

Now, Daryl, he's from a family, all of them's drudgers.

Captain Bill:

Ya, all his family're drudgers. None of them are carpenters like he is.

Liener:

If Stanley keeps on he can't even get in the cabin, after a while.

Edna:

Isn't he getting big, though?

Captain Bill:

Isn't he a nice fellow, though? Most all of l em are decent fellows.

Liener:

Keep that ice cream freezer going in the summertime.

Captain **Bill**:

Wade Murphy's gonna have himself a nice boat, when he gets her finished. He bought that...

Liener:

Ya, Rebecca Ruark.

Captain **Bill**:

Ya, Rebecca Ruark. He spent a lotta money on her.

Dodds:

Ya, a lotta money.

Captain **Bill**:

Gonna be one of the best boats here on the bay.

Liener:

I'm just wondering if he's gonna be able to make it back.

Captain **Bill**:

I don't know. I'm afraid to say. If all this doggone pollution keeps up, I don't think he'll make it back, no way.

Liener:

Kind of a long gamble, isn't it?

Captain **Bill**:

'Course he's a young man. It's just when Captain John Larrimore's laying up there now, gonna die right there to the wharf.

Dodds:

Which one's that?

Captain **Bill**:

Its the Collier.

Liener:

The E.C. Collier.

Captain **Bill**:

The E.C. Collier.

Edna:

That is on.

Captain **Bill**:

What? Oh is it?

Dodds:

Well, he hasn't said anything that.

Edna:

I know, but I don't want him to.

Captain Bill:

Its a shame. Captain John kept that boat up. He took good care of her. He was a fine man. He used to live over here.

Edna:

He used to live right next door to us when he first bought that boat. He was a nice man.

Liener:

I had to laugh when he had that last yawl boat built, you know.

Captain Bill:

Ya (laughs).

Liener:

He says "I want her wide." I said "Captain John, that's gonna give you trouble getting it up on the davits, she's gonna take up a lotta room. You're gonna have to make an extension out there." You know, she's so beamy.

Captain Bill:

Those yawl boats take a beating, and if you don't got a lotta freeboard to'em, they sink easy, especially when you're going with the wind and something happens to the motor. You going with the wind, and down she goes. Just one swell comes over and....

Dodds:

Captain did you ever participate in any of the workboat races?

Captain Bill:

Ya. I sailed the Minnie V. in one of them.

Dodds:

Did you?

Captain Bill:

Finished second. There were three of us racing. I came in second. There wasn't no wind, though.

Dodds:

Ya? Where was that?

Captain Bill:

Up Sandy Point.

Dodds:

Sandy Point, ya.

Captain Bill:

They had 'em over at Chesapeake Beach, and North Beach, and all the same thing, running all the time. And don't you think that'd help Chesapeake Bay a lot, too.

Liener:

Sure.

Captain Bill:

If the state would do it, if they take a place and fence it off, and drive a well, you can drive a six-inch well you know, and plant some oysters, and just see what happens. They do everything else.

Dodds:

And it's not helping much.

Edna:

And that's fresh water....

Captain Bill:

Fresh water's what makes the oysters survive. Make 'em fat and everything.

Liener:

Keeps that salt out of the Bay.

Captain Bill:

That's right. Too much salt. I don't know. Maybe sometime go up there and talk to Krantz up there, see what he thought about it. I don't know. I guess he thought it before and thought maybe it wouldn't work. I still believe it will work.

Edna:

Well, if you think it will work, you better go talk to the ... they need some advice from somebody.

Liener:

Ya, but they won't take any of that.

Edna:

It doesn't seem like they do.

Liener:

Right away they ask you "do you have a Phd after your name."

Captain Bill:

That's right.

Edna:

You know, when you've lived on the water as long as some of these

older man have, and seen things come and go, you've got a Phd.
In....

Dodds:
Experience.

Captain Bill:
That water looks sad to me now.

Liener:
Well the same thing happened in the Delaware Bay.

Captain Bill:
That's right, and that never has come back.

Liener:
Never will.

Edna:
Its better than it was, isn't it?

Captain Bill:
Not too good. They haven't got any oyster up there now. In Florida
the same way.

Liener:
One time there were 200 schooners sailed out of Shell Pile[NJ.).

Captain Bill:
That's right.

Liener:
Now there's nothing. And that's not counting the ones that come out
over from Delaware. And on up to Greenwich and so forth.

Captain Bill:
See, what happened there, they turned everything into power.

Liener:
Ya. End of World War Two was when they cut the masts off, and sawed
the bowsprits off, and went to power.

Captain Bill:
It lasted about three years after everything went to power. The
same thing would happen here.

Liener:
Cleaned 'er right off.

Captain Bill:

You could work every day.

Edna:

They shouldn't 've let 'em done that, I guess.

Captain Bill:

Now these drudgers have been trying to get an extra day. I tell 'em boy you better be doggone satisfied with what you got. You put three days into it, you'll soon clean it up.

Liener:

I was just looking in the paper at what they had just shut off around now. My gosh there's hardly anything left in Harris Creek. Broad Creek the same way. And out here in the Choptank. Holy smoke.

Captain Bill:

There's no oysters in deep water at all. That's what the drudgers have to work in. Any worse from 20 feet to 40 feet. Tongers say they work in shallow waters. They haven't got anymore oysters in deep water at all.

Liener:

Dun Cove is cut off; that whole place.

Dodds:

How many boats are planning to dredge this season out of Tilghman; you know Captain?

Captain Bill:

Out of Tilghman? Eleven or twelve at the most.

Liener:

And last year there were only 24 all together.

Captain Bill:

All together.

Liener:

All together that took licenses.

Captain Bill:

Neither one in Cambridge now.

Dodds:

I don't think there's any left in Cambridge.

Liener:

And there's gonna be several of them drop out this year.

Captain Bill:

I can't think of that boy's name that works for DuPont. Bronzie built that boat.

Edna:
Where's he live?

Captain Bill:
He lives over in Dorchestertown. Keeps his boat down in Wingate in the summertime. In the wintertime he comes up to Cambridge and drudge out of Cambridge.

Dodds:
Is it Ruark?

Captain Bill:
What is his first name. He work for DuPont I understand. They both belonged to DuPont at one time. I understand that DuPont gave him the boat. I don't know how true it was. Ralph.

Liener:
Ralph Ruark.

Captain Bill:
He hadn't drudged this year. He's a good drudger, too. Good boat.

Liener:
Is that the Batchelder? The name of the boat? That's the one that Dupont had, called the Batchelder.

Dodds:
Barbara Batchelder, ya. But I think he has another one. He has a new one now.

Liener:
Martha Lewis.

Captain Bill:
No. Martha Lewis, that's the name of Dan Dize's boat.

Dodds:
Oh, you did dredge on her.

Captain Bill:
Ya. I made some money on that boat. That's the one I dredged, the Martha Lewis. Oysters were good then. And I had a good crew. Tonging was bad. It wasn't no trouble getting a crew. They were all white boys. If you could get white boys, you got something you can depend on. If you got a boat full of those colored boys, they're gonna work when they feel like it, that's all.

Dodds:
Ya.

Liener:
As soon as they get paid....

Captain Bill:
Oh, they gone. Gone for a barroom.

Edna:
On Monday morning you might as well forget it.

Captain Bill:
Thrown them in jail, and everything else. That was one thing about drudging with my father, you never had to worry about a crew. Man by the name of Griff Henry was the Chief of Police in Baltimore. He was a native from down here, and he got my father's crew for him every fall. He'd put 'em in jail, and called for the Captain to come on up 'cause he got the crew for him. And he'd get the same crew. They'd stay aboard the boat until Christmas. They'd never want no money till Christmas. Pay 'em off they'd go right straight to the barroom, and they'd spend the money. Hobos they were. Mr. Griff Henry'd pick 'em up again, and call the Captain to come and get them again. You'd come aboard, the cook'd have breakfast waiting for you, 4:00. The good old days.

Liener:
Another big business that was closed up down here, and I see now that they're gonna auction off the old building again, the old fish factory.

Captain Bill:
Tilghman Inn, ya. Nobody's ever made no money in that place. That man, as I understand, is a wheeler-dealer. He gots this place down on the point here for sale for \$700,000. He bought Henry Reeser's place for \$500,000. He's got that for sale for 2 million. They got so that they are gonna auction off the whole works. The marina and ... [?]...all at the same time. He got plenty of money, sugar cane money. I think he's got the bill distributorship for the county. Probably the whole Eastern Shore. I don't know. Somebody said he did. I don't know. I know he did a lot of wheeling-dealing. I know that.

Dodds:
Well Captain, I got to be getting back to the museum.

End of Interview

Captain Bill:

I got pictures of a bunch of them boats up here.

Dodds:

Oh, ya. I can see them lined up.

Captain Bill:

That was taken up there to Sandy Point.

Dodds:

Nice picture. Nice pictures here. I like these sketches.

Captain Bill:

A friend of mine did that.

Edna:

Guess what those are. That ... a boy painted those. Now they look like they would be photographs, don't they?

Dodds: Ya, they look very nice.

Edna:

But that boy painted those.

Captain Bill:

He's a professional.

Dodds:

very nice.

Edna:

He's really good.

Captain Bill:

He was down here.

Liener:

That's down to Deal's Island.

Captain **Bill:**

Ya.

Liener:

Because no dredger up here would lay his boat up here on the shore like that.

Captain Bill:

No.

Dodds:

Are you gonna stay on the Island when you move, or move somewhere else?

Edna:

Well, we got our eye on a place over in Secretary. We'd like to go over there. We'll take it if we sell this, but so far we don't have.... You know somebody who would like to buy an old house?

End of Side 1

Edna:

...Harrison's up here, you know, Buddy Harrison. Well his father and all of his brothers were born in this house. See, he lived right there on the right. He said that he remembers when they built on the other side. Well, he's 84, and if Levin was living, he'd be 90, and his oldest brother would be 97. He was 7 years old when they left. So, that's not even 7 years, so I.... And they were all born in this house.

Liener:

As the family got bigger, they added on to the house.

Edna:

And then they started taking fishing parties. This is where it was originally started. And they used to ... a son lived on that side, and a daughter lived down this old schoolhouse, we call it down here. And they used to rent rooms, and they fed 'em here, and that's how it started, fishing partners ... got started. And then after the old man died, and his mother died, then he and Alice got married, and they run from here for a few years, but then they bought up the road.

Captain Bill:

Dodson started it first, after his father died. Then Lev' took over. Dodson didn't stay in it long.

Edna:

Well, I don't know what of those boys took it over. Then Allison left, bought that place up there. But this is really where it starts. This was their home. And for as old as it is, I don't think its in too bad a shape, but anybody... it would depend on what they want to do, but they could put \$10,000 on this house and have a nice home, I think. But, we got a new well, we just put in a new well.

Liener:

I see you just got a new well.

Captain **Bill**:

We're trying to get rid of that pile of dirt out there. It's going slowly, though.

Edna:

You see next door ... they put the well down between the two houses, and we both use it, and we didn't even know it when we bought it.

Captain **Bill**:

When we bought it nobody told us anything about it.

Edna:

And after we moved here John said something about it. Then we asked Fred, and he said yes. We used it till now, and there never were any complaints. But when the well started drying up, and I thought that maybe we shouldn't do that, cause we have a garden, and we like to water it. And we were afraid to do that, afraid that it would dry up. So, we decided that we should put in one for ourselves.

/~

Liener:

Did you know how deep the other one was?

Edna:

No, but it was a deep well.

Captain **Bill**:

All these wells around here are deep wells.

Edna:

Ours is 440 now, and I think that was about the same. We never had any trouble getting water, but I was always afraid something might happen.

Captain **Bill**:

Every one of these wells down here used to run all the time.

Liener:

Artesian.

Captain **Bill**:

Down this one place that we had down the street the water run day and night, all the time. We'd have to go down with a bucket and bring it up to the house.

Liener:

You remember the one on Chicken Point, the same way.