

Oral History Interview

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

“The Culture of Tugs and Tugs in Culture”

Interviewee: Floyd G. Ward (F.W.) & John M. Ward (J.W.)
Helen Ward (Floyd G.’s wife) (H.W.)
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POB:

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M.Z.: This is Michelle Zacks for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. Today is Wednesday, November 16th, 2011. I'm in the home of Floyd Ward in Deltaville. This is an interview for the upcoming tug exhibit for the museum. Also, John Ward is here, as well. Good morning.

F.W.: Good morning.

M.Z.: Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. I really appreciate it.

F.W.: You're welcome.

M.Z.: You guys were just saying that you've really only been in the tug business for about twenty years, and that it all really started with your grandfather. So much of your family history is involved with the bay boats. There's been this evolution starting with that kind of industry and working up towards the tugboats. I'll get together with Jay sometime soon and talk with him more about the tug industry, but John, I was wondering if you could tell me again the story about your grandfather, and how he got started, how he headed over to Baltimore at the age of thirteen.

J.W.: Well, as stories say, he left home when he was like thirteen years old. He went to Baltimore. I think Floyd knows this story. He went to work for Vane Brothers on one of the – we called them bumboats. Bumboats, I guess. I don't know. That's what they said. He was with his brother-in-law. They were taking supplies for Vane Brothers out to the ships.

M.Z.: What was his brother-in-law's name?

J.W.: Edgar Willy (ph). I never knew him, but this is just what I've always heard from my dad. They stayed up there, and they took supplies out to the ships for Vane Brothers. Edgar Willy got tired and came back to Crisfield and left Granddaddy up there. Granddaddy stayed up there and kept hauling the supplies out to the boats. Then he hitched a ride on that sailboat back to Nanticoke, Vienna, or somewhere. Then he hitchhiked back down to Salisbury. That's all I know about that.

F.W.: Well see, a lot of that I hadn't remembered. I'd forgotten all that.

J.W.: Daddy used to talk about these stories.

F.W.: Your dad knew more than Daddy did.

M.Z.: You think when he was in Baltimore and doing that work for Vane Brothers, did that give him the idea of this other business that he could get involved with?

J.W.: His father had always been a sailboat guy, worked on the water, and he just came along I guess. It was just in him. He did anything he could do to make a dollar. When he got

back to Crisfield, he started out on his own. He bought a boat and started hauling whatever, anything he could.

F.W.: To make a dollar. That's the thing. That's the key to him. He was very dollar-oriented.

M.Z.: Well, that's a great story. I think it really shows how the business has evolved over the years, and what's led you guys to the point where you're at now. The other thing, John, that you and I were talking about last night is just some of the lingo that you guys use. I think one of the terms you were saying was scudding. You told me that's how you go with the wind and the tide.

I think in general, we're interested in how you guys in these ships have to take advantage of certain kinds of bottoms and tides and currents, and all of that. It sounds like scudding is an example of that. Can you explain how that works?

F.W.: Yes. Well, when I scudded, it's just by chance. If you're going south and you've got north winds, and a lot of times you may not be able to go north into the wind. You may be able to catch that wind and tide, sea, and everything go with it on out to Norfolk or something, or vice versa, to Baltimore, if it's southerly winds. That's pretty well – you don't look for it, but it's just a word they use for certain situations.

M.Z.: But you must be pretty happy when that happens.

F.W.: I mean, sometimes. Now the best time is when it's flat calm. That's the best time. As long as you can manage it, you know, there's not a real big sea. It can be bad that way too, now. I mean, we've been in situations with the bay boats where the sea be so big, you in a situation going with it, you couldn't do nothing but go with it. You want to turn it around, you want to get sideways, and them little boats, when they were loaded, they just – you would lose your boat if you did. So at times, that's where that would turn.

J.W.: And the same thing with the tugs and the barges. You can scud, but they can get so bad even doing that with our tugboats that they go hinging like this. The tugboat, the cables and stuff is there and she'll go hinging like that. Well, she gets hinging enough, she'll break her push cables, and then you've got a mess.

You've got to get out of pushing gear and go on a hawser, and stretch her out, and stretching out is what I mean by putting your hawse out then letting out, say, seven, eight hundred feet. That's when you're stretching her out like that. Or picking her up is when you wind it in, you say, "I'm going to pick my barge up." You're winding in and you go unhook from her and go around the other end and hook onto the stern so you can be pushing.

M.Z.: How do you make those decisions, when it's best to push or when it's best to pull? Is that all dependent on the weather, or the situation where you are, and how wide it is, and that kind of thing?

F.W.: It may be. The smart thing to do is do it before it gets in a jam. In other words, before it gets too rough. Knowing that it's going to get rough, you can go ahead and do it, put the barge out. But if you get in a bind, well, it breezes up on you and catches you, and then you just have to do it anywhere. It don't make no difference, you know, middle of the bay, wherever it's at. You just have to do it. You have no choice. It's dangerous too, because it's usually five-foot seas, and you're on deck trying to handle the cables, and get the hawser out on the barge. It's kind of dangerous when your situation's like that.

M.Z.: I'd love to go out on a trip sometime so I could really see how this stuff works, because it's a little hard to understand it just talking about it. You really have to be out there seeing it and doing it, I imagine. That's probably the case for learning how to operate these boats, right? I mean, you can study it in a book, but when you really learn is when you're out there actually handling the conditions.

J.W.: Yes.

F.W.: Exactly.

M.Z.: What were some of the other things that you were bringing up last night? You got your pushing gear; you got your bridles, your hawser, your wire. Do you want to explain what some of those things mean?

F.W.: Well, pushing gear, we have winches on our decks that connect. We get behind the barge like this, and then we have winches on deck with cables. You put the cable around the cleat on each corner.

M.Z.: On each –

F.W.: On each corner. There's two winches, one on each side of your tug. Then you winch them down real tight. That brings out real tight there. You may go on in it with the mainstay. That's pushing gear. It's just considered a hand winch and inch cable. Then you have towing gear bridles. They use a bridle on the (indiscernible 8:17.3) barge. Like this is the barge and you have the cleat on each corner, and you take – the bridle is like two pieces.

Each piece runs from a eye like this over here, so that when you hook your hawse up to this eye right in the middle here, it's in the center. It centers it up, what it does. We do tow sometimes right from the center of the barge, but it's not as good. A bridle kind of, it gets one way. This cable will get tight, and this one will slack up, and it makes the barge steer, go straighter.

M.Z.: Then how about wraps and layers? Can you explain what that means?

F.W.: There's wraps and layers. I don't know.

J.W.: Well, the wraps, there's wraps on your drum if you have a winch. The layers is like from port to starboard, the whole width of it is a layer. Like, you've got your winch. One wrap around the spool is a wrap. Then if you get twenty-five wraps, it becomes, the width of your spool, that's a layer. Most people know when you're letting out how many feet are in a layer, roughly.

You can say I'll let off two layers and it might be, if one layer across a drum is say, 500 feet, if you let out two layers, you had a thousand feet, roughly. That's the way a lot of big tugboats and stuff know how much cable they're letting out or what it takes to make the barge ride good. Say, maybe on a empty barge, you might be able to let out one layer. But on a loaded barge in the rough weather, you might have to let out two layers to take the slack, and the jerk out of the tug and the barge.

M.Z.: So when it's rough weather, you want no slack.

J.W.: You want more cable out or more hawser out. The worse the weather is, the further you want the barge from the tug.

M.Z.: Just for safety reasons so that you –

J.W.: Well, you don't put as much strain on all your equipment. Because like I told you, I think the word is canter. I was talking about canter, and that's the slope of the cable when it leaves the tug before it comes up back to the barge. The cable gets down in the water, and that acts as a shock absorber to take the tension out of it.

M.Z.: I would think that the further the tug and the barge are from each other, the harder it is to control the barge. That's not the case?

F.W.: No. You just forget it.

J.W.: If you're in the bay. I mean, if you're out in the bay, you let it get back from you. But as you get in to closer areas, you have to make other arrangements. But if it's real bad weather, and you slack her back as far as you can, the rest of it's up to nature.

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Can you remember any particularly dramatic situations that you've been in where you've had to deal with some really rough weather?

F.W.: Yeah, it was right smart, but a few of them. Everybody does, they all do.

M.Z.: Can you describe any particular thing that's happened?

F.W.: I don't know, just normal. It's like walking, usually. Now I guess, you know, I kind of push it a lot of times. But my boat's a push boat. I don't tow very much. I push a lot. You know, maybe like going across Tangier, and pushing almost over there and getting

rough, getting rough on the side. You've got about two miles to go, and you get around behind a little island until we knock this weather off of her, and have to get loose. You know, break loose and put on the hawser, you know. I've been real lucky, and I haven't broke many cables, busted up cables and stuff.

M.Z.: Is that the worst thing that can happen is if you break a cable?

F.W.: Yeah, about, yeah. I mean, a lot of things can happen. You can be trying to get out of pushing gear and your tug go up on top of the barge so you're pushing against the back end of it. Then as long as your cable's holding her right there, you're fine. If things start slipping on the rubber knees, you know, you can jump and go up on top of the deck, and punch a hole in your tug or your barge.

M.Z.: Has that ever happened to you?

J.W.: No, never happened. One time, yeah. I have gotten up on top one barge and busted a cleat in the barge, but by luck didn't bust no holes in the bottom of the tug.

M.Z.: What do you do when that happens? How do you get out of that situation?

F.W.: Well, you back up and then you go and analyze. You got a hole, and you get a mattress or something, whatever it takes to – whatever hole it is, you do damage control.

M.Z.: A mattress, did you say?

F.W.: Anything you stick in there, it don't make no difference.

J.W.: A coat.

F.W.: Coat, depends on how big the hole is.

M.Z.: That sounds pretty dramatic.

F.W.: Yeah. You do what you've got to do.

M.Z.: John was telling me this morning that he, and I assume you also, Floyd, have been all up and down the bay, pretty much all over, and not so much in the open ocean. One thing that I've heard about from other people is in the wintertime, is dealing with ice and having to push through the ice. Can you describe how that works?

F.W.: Well, we never like it because it's hard on equipment. We had barges of our own, and once you run into ice, you ended up having leaking barges. You know, 'cause it always found the holes, the thin spots, thin metal in the bottoms. It's really kind of easy, but the main thing is the damages it does to your bottoms.

M.Z.: For somebody who's never been on a tug or a barge, can you just describe what it's like in the wintertime when there is ice, and what you have to do to get through it?

F.W.: You go along. If you get caught in it, then you try to get to your destination. Then the power relates to all of it. You have to slow up. Or you don't have enough power to get where you're going. She just slows right on down until where she stops. Then you've got to turn around, back up and try to go back the way you came. That's happened before. You've had that happen.

M.Z.: So there's times when you just can't get to where you need to go.

F.W.: You just can't go.

M.Z.: And you have to wait for the weather to change?

F.W.: That's right. C & D Canal, up that way. Baltimore, you're never in a bad – most winters, you won't get up that way in January, February.

M.Z.: Do you know that ahead of time, or do you have to just wait until you're up there and see?

F.W.: You know where the rivers are down here this way, like the Rappahannock and how much ice is making around this area. Then you can – or I've got a number to call. Coast Guard has a number. You can listen to other boats talking, and you find out how things are looking.

M.Z.: I've read somewhere about people trying to push through the ice. Is that ever something that you do where you have to back up and ram through it?

F.W.: Oh, yeah, you do all of that. Yeah. You do it, to a point. And then 'til it gets so that you're tearing up more than you are gaining.

J.W.: If you're doing any damage, most of the time we back off.

F.W.: Yeah. That's right. It's just not worth the money.

M.Z.: Has that sort of thing gotten easier with the new technology? Dealing with weather, do you have a better sense of what to expect ahead of time now than you used to?

F.W.: Well, I mean you know, technology, a phone number to call, or talking to this boat just came from up the bay. You meet him off here somewhere, and he just came from Philadelphia. You talk to him. They'll let you – you know, pass the word along. But they got, like I said, they've got a 800-number you call. And they'll give you the depths and the horsepower rate, and the Coast Guard rates, the thickness.

If you ain't got a certain amount of horsepower to get to the canal is 2,500 horse, you better not get caught up there with less or the Coast Guard will burn you. That's the way that works. They'll have a rating all the way down, up and down the whole bay.

J.W.: Sometimes if it gets bad enough, they'll do a convoy.

M.Z.: How does that work?

F.W.: Well, it's usually not for grain. It's oil-related. They try to keep oil moving everywhere. The grain business, they don't really care about that.

M.Z.: But oil is a high priority?

J.W.: Yeah. The Coast Guard will keep the ice broke up, and the barges and stuff will fall in behind a Coast Guard icebreaker. He'll take them on up to places like Nanticoke, or Salisbury, or something like that.

F.W.: Right. Those two rivers are really major places where you have to have oil just to move by barge, big quantities, Eastern Shore. They use the Coast Guard icebreakers to do that.

M.Z.: They'll do that with oil, but they won't do that for grain.

F.W.: Yeah. We can follow it in, but it's not for us.

M.Z.: Oh, you can?

F.W.: No, but still, it's not good on your boats. Because when a boat goes through ice, it all just wraps right around behind it. You know, the tide moves it in. Then you're still going to beat through it. You're still tied up more than it's worth. You get your wheels up and like I say, I've had a hole come in my boat. Tied behind it one day, I was just breaking ice up there with the tug. Not really putting the boat in it.

We were watching two holes come in that big around. I just happened to go down the engine room. I had all this water in the engine room. Just like that, there was nothing to it. If I'd have gone home that night, I'd have had a sunk tug.

M.Z.: I don't want to keep you guys too long because I know I've been taking up a lot of John's time, especially. One more thing I was interested in was your crews, and where you find your crew members, and if that's changed over the years from the bay boat days to the tug days. Like the kinds of people that end up working on your boats.

F.W.: It's a lot of difference. We've got a lot better crews now than then. Back then, it was just go down the road here, and pick up anybody on the street. Some of them that, you know, been with you before but there weren't much to them.

M.Z.: Would that be local people? People who live around here?

F.W.: Local. This county, Mathews County, you know. We had a lot of crews from over Mathews.

M.Z.: Would it be mostly watermen, or people with some kind of maritime experience?

F.W.: If they had any experience, they were with us, our boats and bay boats, dredge crabs or just something like that. They didn't have no experience. But people we got now has got to have licenses and all kind of paperwork.

M.Z.: Back in the day of the bay boats, would it be mostly black or white or mixed?

F.W.: Black, mostly black. Yeah. We had some white boys too that were good too. We had some black boys that were good too.

M.Z.: What made for a good or a bad worker?

F.W.: Showed up. That was the main thing. That was the main thing, and the only thing. We didn't care what they were, if they had two legs and two hands, and they come aboard. And then we worked. I did not like to miss a day's work, especially for some of my crew.

M.Z.: But it was hard to find people who were reliable?

F.W.: Well, that type was. Because depending on welfare, and all that kind of stuff.

J.W.: Mondays was a bad day.

M.Z.: Why is that? Mondays?

J.W.: If they had a big weekend, Monday was a bad day. That's on the bay boats and stuff. We don't have that no more on the tugs. It's a different –

F.W.: Part of it too, paid too much. The money, a lot of money nowadays, and they got good jobs. See, I got two brothers on my boat. That's not necessarily a good thing, but they're on there.

M.Z.: So people are more reliable –

F.W.: Don't write that, don't put that down.

M.Z.: People are more reliable now because the pay is better?

F.W.: Pay is better, and then regulations has done a lot of it.

M.Z.: Is it now mostly white, or is it mixed?

F.W.: Oh, it's white now.

M.Z.: So what's the difference been there? Why has that shift happened? Why don't you have black crews anymore?

F.W.: Because of (indiscernible 21:57.1). But I know some boys that worked for me that were black who got captain's licenses that were running up and down the bay with captain's license.

M.Z.: Working on tugs now?

F.W.: Right. And they're captains. But they just didn't – the crowd we had didn't have the education to do it. And they just want their – you know, the drinking and cutting up, and they weren't worth two cent. That's just the way it is. Some people you can do but so much for.

M.Z.: You just don't have the same problems with your white crews?

F.W.: No. And like I said, the blacks that – there's plenty of blacks into the tugboating industry now. A lot.

M.Z.: There are?

F.W.: Oh, yes. They have license, but they have gone and got the education, went to the schools, maritime schools, and they've got the stuff. You just don't get a job out here with nothing.

M.Z.: So here, do you see captains that are black right around here? Or where are they working?

F.W.: One going in Mathews. Calvin. Calvin Mason.

J.W.: Calvin Mason.

F.W.: Calvin Mason worked on the bay boat crab dredging with me, and Granddaddy and all our family. He's got his captain's license, works for McLean Construction Company. Also worked on menhaden boats, too.

J.W.: You may need to check Calvin. (Laughter.)

F.W.: Yeah. I think they should.

H.W.: Ask Calvin some questions. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Why do you say that? Why are you guys laughing?

J.W.: We're just laughing. It's a private joke, you know. I shouldn't have said that. I ain't got nothing to do with it really.

F.W.: You're going to have to edit some of this.

H.W.: Floyd likes to run a tight ship. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: And Calvin is not –

H.W.: Oh, no.

F.W.: Calvin got hisself squared –

J.W.: Calvin might be really good.

F.W.: Calvin squared hisself away.

J.W.: He did.

F.W.: Of all the crowd we had, he was one that went along and improved hisself. The other ones were just never going to be worth two cent. That's just the way they are today, as far as I know.

M.Z.: I'm just surprised to hear you saying that there are black captains around here, because I understood that there just weren't.

F.W.: Oh, yeah, it's normal. A lot of them.

J.W.: There's a lot of them.

F.W.: It's a lot of them, a lot of deckhands because you can see it on deck.

J.W.: It's coming more with time.

F.W.: It's coming more all the time.

J.W.: Neither one of us are prejudiced by any means, you know, 'cause I, on them bay boats and stuff, one of them get out the bed, I'd get in. I mean, I didn't care. Everybody sit down and eat together and it was like, you know.

F.W.: That's right. You lived together for a week.

J.W.: You can see it's becoming more that area from the deck. I mean, you used to not see deckhands on tugboats or anything like that were Afro-American. But now you see a

whole lot more of that, and Calvin Mason has stepped on up in line, and got his captain's license, and stuff even though he started out swinging crab dredges and shoveling oysters for Floyd.

H.W.: Floyd had one guy that worked for him, Albert Griffin. Our children were young at the time, and Albert would come in the house and they thought that Albert was Floyd's brother. He was a black guy that worked.

F.W.: He was my buddy. He died, but he was my buddy.

H.W.: So, you know, there was a lot of closeness with a lot of the crew and became friends.

F.W.: Now some of them, I wouldn't hardly – well, I guess I would pull them out of the water if they were drowning, but – at some times, it wouldn't be too good. (Laughter.) Depends on the day. I've saved one or two of them before, drowneded (sic - drowned).

M.Z.: I'm just interested because I mostly have talked with people who work for Vane or some of these other big –

J.W.: Dann?

M.Z.: Not Dann, Moran. It sounds like they're mostly all white crews, and they have very, very few African Americans.

J.W.: Well, it is. It is. At present, we don't have any African Americans working with us.

M.Z.: For Ward, you mean?

J.W.: For Ward's tug. You know, Floyd's tug, Jay's tug, and all of them. We don't have any African Americans. Years ago, I had one guy that worked with me some. He was a good guy, he really was.

M.Z.: I just wasn't aware that there were any working as captains or deckhands around here.

F.W.: Well, we've never been approached by anybody with a license. If he come around and we're needing him, and he's got a captain's license and is legal, that's what we're mainly looking for. He can find deckhands by the million, but the licensed people is what we're looking, it's always a shortage.

M.Z.: These days, do you get people mostly through the maritime academies? Is that where people are getting licensed?

F.W.: Well, truthfully, if you want to find a ratio of black, you know how things are going, really get a little information on that, Chesapeake Maritime School down here in Gloucester.

J.W.: CMTI.

F.W.: CMTI. They'll give you an idea of how many, you know, how's the ratio of blacks to whites have increased in the last ten years or whatever.

M.Z.: But I mean, for you guys personally, I understand you don't have any black guys working for you, but how do you find your crews? Is it mostly people who are coming through the maritime academies, or no?

F.W.: No, local.

J.W.: Word of mouth. You know, we put the word out that we might be looking for someone. We might be looking for a mate, or a deckhand, or a captain, or whatever, you know. Then they just, it's like the little old ladies at the hairdresser. It spreads like wildfire through the industry. Other companies spreads through our organization just like it.

F.W.: And money. It's got to a point where I'll pay you more. It's gotten competitive, and it's really bad for the businesses.

M.Z.: You guys have to play off each other?

F.W.: The captains have got it in their ballpark at the moment, and they're getting outrageous money. You know, I just had a man quit me and went for \$425 a day. And that's good money.

M.Z.: When they quit you, are they going to Vane or Moran or something like that?

F.W.: Well, the last one went back to McAllister. I just couldn't pay it and I weren't going to pay it because then I paid it, and then every boat we got is going to end up paying it.

J.W.: Well, it's like I said, a lot of people – and I think he was a prime example of that – they want their captain's position, but they don't want to do anything else. That's not the way we operate our boats. We operate our boats where everybody does everything when it's needed, the captain, mate, deckhand.

A lot of people that come to us from other companies, they're not used to that. They want to be, "I've got my captain's license, I'm going in the wheelhouse, and when I leave the wheelhouse, I'm going to bed. And somebody fix my meal in between." You know, they just don't want to work like we work.

M.Z.: Where's that attitude coming from, that people –

J.W.: They don't have to do it with the other companies.

F.W.: Yeah. The money's their thing. Everybody's put up with it.

J.W.: Now this boy, he went to work for Moran, and he would sit up there for McAllister. He would sit up in the wheelhouse here six hours waiting for a job, docking a ship or whatever. He doesn't have to go down and maybe chip on a little bit of rust, or paint, or clean, or do any of those things. He can sit up in that wheelhouse for six hours.

When his six hours is up, they've got a cook. He can go down there and get something to eat. Then he go in his bedroom and go to sleep for six hours. You don't see him no more. The boat could blow up, but he's not coming out of that bedroom until his six hours is up. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: I've got to turn this off because the batteries are low, so let me just pause this for a sec.

J.W.: And that's a big problem.

M.Z.: It sounds like it.

[Begin Ward 2 FR B:]

F.W.: Tugboats started. When they first come around with the steam and oil boats, you know. Now it's like containers on these ships, volume, and you know, do more for the cheapest price. But the way it used to be was, like I say, to the freight boats and then they had barges. There wasn't that big a thing back then. Things all went crazy with trucks.

I don't know how it really got into it. I know with the grain business, it's one thing. It was hauled by, the farmer had a little teeny truck, carried about 200 bushels in it when they started out. The boats would haul about 2,500 bushels. Then the trucks got the big six-wheelers in there, got the big ten-wheelers that carried 500 bushels.

Next thing you know, tractor trailers were dumping thousand bushels at a time. The boats that were hauling went from 5,000 bushels to 20,000 bushels to 60,000 bushels. We got barges now that's carrying 120,000 bushels at a time. That's roughly about 130 or 40 tractor trailer loads at once. Looking at it that way, that is taking a lot of trucks off the highway, a lot of trucks.

M.Z.: Not just that, but it sounds like both of you are also saying that this industry has facilitated the development of agriculture in this area.

F.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: The industry wouldn't have been able to grow the way it has if you guys weren't taking that stuff and bringing it to the ports.

J.W.: The same thing has evolved, like on the Eastern Shore, for the oil consumption. The more people, the more oil. More oil, more barges, more tugboats to get it down to the people, aggregate, as we talked about, stone, all of that progress. All of that had to grow, and therefore, you had to grow with it. It came to the tugboat and barges.

I mean, we've evolved from real small bay boats to tugboat and barges that are carrying 120,000 bushels, started out, 2,000 bushels. So we've evolved up to that. It's a cheaper mode of freight transportation. It's cheaper than truck, it's cheaper than railroad, keeps the trucks off the road, pollution, all of that stuff. Now the impact on the Chesapeake Bay, I don't know if barges has had any impact on the Chesapeake Bay or not, because look how many tugboats, look how many small boats it took to do the same job as that one tugboat.

F.W.: Yes. Small boats, you know these bay boats, it used to be – might be two, three, four hundred of them, maybe more. It was a lot. They all kind of a little coming and going, doing their business. But then everything got bigger, so instead of 100 engines, you only have two for one barge. It's just that part. Percentage, you know, I think that helped a lot. And regulations got a lot.

Because Baltimore Harbor, when I was a little boy, I used to go up with Daddy. He'd go up there in the boats and our boats were white. The sides were all white and pretty, they're looking good. They load right on down to the decks or even the water. You go up there, and you unload, and they finish unloading, and the grease just running off, just all black. I mean, terrible, unbelievable, and that was Baltimore Harbor.

J.W.: It's a lot cleaner now.

F.W.: Oh, yeah. If you go up there now, you might get a little streak around it, that'd be all. Looking at – I got a picture of that.

J.W.: Your daddy showed it to her yesterday of the *Nora*.

F.W.: Oh, yeah, of the *Nora*? You seen the one of the *Nora*?

M.Z.: Yeah.

J.W.: Yeah, your daddy gave it to her.

F.W.: Yeah. She had been in Baltimore.

M.Z.: Yeah. So I guess there's some good things about regulations.

J.W.: (Laughter.) Yes. It is. It is. Then you asked about, you asked yesterday to get Floyd's input on that, about the bottoms. I don't exactly remember the question you asked.

M.Z.: Well, just how aware you are of the bottoms in different conditions. You're going from deep water to very, very shallow water. So you must have to navigate that stuff literally, but you must have to develop a feel for those different conditions.

F.W.: Right. Well, you're in a ten-and-a-half foot draft barge, you need to stay eleven or more. That's what you run. But we know it just like I know my backyard. Going up the Rappahannock to Tappahannock, we know where every little oyster rock is. We used to plant oysters in the whole state of Virginia. So you knew where the water was, and where you could be, and where you can't be. You knew where the shortcuts was where you could sneak in to these little places.

J.W.: Yeah, like I come up sometimes, the wind blowing norwest heavy in the *Gram-Me*, fighting some heavy-duty, some heavy winds. I'll come on up right by the end of New Point. We call it a southeast buoy. I'll go right by a southeast buoy and go right on up the Eastern Shore to Wolf Trap and everywhere. All the other tugboats off there in the bay, they look at me and they think I'm crazy. I've been through there a million times.

F.W.: Yeah. We haul shells and dredge crabs.

J.W.: I know where I can go and where I can't go. I know the tugboat ain't drawing no more water. I wouldn't go through with a loaded barge, but I could if need to be, I can. Those are little things you learn, where you can go and where you can't go.

F.W.: I wouldn't necessarily go to Maryland and do that everywhere unless I have a chart. I don't care how smart you are, you go somewhere like up north, way up the bay, you don't know all of that. You learn going along, so you got to have a chart. Then you go by that. In Virginia, it's very seldom we need any charts in Virginia, and the Potomac, and Tangier Sound and all of that, we do pretty well. That's our home, born and raised. The Rappahannock River and all, that's our home.

M.Z.: Your family is so interesting, that it connects so many different parts of maritime life and culture, from the seeding oysters and drudging crabs (sic).

J.W.: Drudging. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: I'm trying to learn how to talk. And even shipbuilding. I know that your family didn't directly build ships, right? But you were in this area where there was so much backyard shipbuilding going on. You're a network that brings it all together, all these different parts of the maritime work.

J.W.: We always did, until the last couple years. We still do some of it, too. Always did most of our own work. We always did, like swapping out engines and putting in fuel tanks and all that kind of stuff, we always did it ourself. We had help, but we did it all. We do everything but weld. None of us could weld.

M.Z.: You need a welder in the family.

F.W.: We never would do it because most all of the others we knew died young.

M.Z.: Oh.

F.W.: You know, it's really not healthy, really, I don't think.

M.Z.: So it was a choice, it wasn't just an accident.

F.W.: Yeah. So we hired the welding part, but we didn't have a lot of welding though.

J.W.: I've done things just as bad, though, and I don't think it made any difference.

H.W.: (Laughter.) That's true.

M.Z.: Well, before I turn this off, is there any last thing you would like to add when you think about that we're putting this exhibit together, and hopefully we'll get a lot of visitors who will come and see it? Is there any one thing or a few things that you think is most important for people to know about this industry, or about your family's involvement in it? Anything we haven't talked about?

F.W.: No. Other than we've done what we've done because progression and money. You had to make a living. Our old way of making a living went away with the oysters and crabs and regulations and all of that. But that's what I loved. I had more fun then. Of course, maybe that was because I was twenty-five, thirty years old. I couldn't do now what I did then. I couldn't do that.

M.Z.: Even if you were allowed to.

F.W.: It worked out perfect, really. (Laughter.) The tugboat job and the captain's job is easy. There's nothing to it. That's why they all weigh 400 pounds.

J.W.: We talked about that.

M.Z.: Yeah.

F.W.: They're all overweight.

M.Z.: You eat well on the boats, and you don't get any exercise.

F.W.: Eat and sleep and steer, and I got cancer from smoking in that, too. That's what – so you're sitting there, doing nothing.

J.W.: You're either going to eat, drink, smoke, or sleep. I mean, it's just –

M.Z.: But not a lot of drinking on your boats, right?

J.W.: No, no drinking at all. But I mean, iced tea or Pepsis or whatever. But I'm not saying alcoholic, because I don't allow any of that on my boat at all. But it's all you do, you eat and sleep. The Coast Guard says you need more rest. Like I told you, they're getting

ready to swap up. I think that it's going to come to three licensed men. Because they're saying six-on, six-off, a man can't get his rest.

There's a article right in the *Professional Mariner* right now about it in there talking about it. Usually, what they talk about in there happens. They're saying you sleep six hours, you steer six hours, you sleep six hours. They're saying that's unbroken rest. They got some name for it, they call it. So it's going to come to that.

Like I was telling you also, the next thing that's coming into effect is the wheelhouse monitors. Where if it doesn't detect movement in your wheelhouse in so many seconds or a minute, that it sounds a general alarm so somebody get up and go check. That's going to be one of the other things that's going to come. The rules and regulations since he and I started in the tugboat business has just escalated.

F.W.: Big time.

M.Z.: Do you think that if you were a young man starting out now, you'd be drawn to working in this industry? Or do you think with these –

J.W.: If you'd never done it.

F.W.: Oh, if you'd never had any relation to water?

M.Z.: No, no. I mean, suppose you were a young man, you'd grown up in this area, but with the way that the industry is set up now with these kind of rules and regulations, if that was the next logical thing for you to do, do you think you'd be interested in doing it? Does that make any sense?

F.W.: Yeah, it does. I don't know. I don't think I'd want to work for somebody else. See, I can't really answer that question because I've been self-employed my whole life. If I came up a different way, like a waterman, and the way I have, I never really called myself a waterman. Because we were different. Crab pot and doing that and all that stuff.

J.W.: We were freighters all our life. That's why it evolved into the barge. We always haul something for freight other than dredging crabs in the wintertime. That's the only time we ever caught anything ourself. Anything else we did, we were just like a big truck on the water. That's how it evolved into the tugboats and stuff. As far as the question you asked Floyd, if I had never done it and all, a man can start out from scratch and how many years would you say? A deckhand, captain, and all. Give him what, four years?

F.W.: To get from deck to the pilothouse?

J.W.: Uh-huh.

F.W.: Yeah, he could do it in four years, but it'd take four years.

J.W.: Yeah. I mean, you say four to five years.

F.W.: But you've got to have men. It'd take more than that for most other companies. I guess, you get to that quicker with us than any company, really, to deckhand, if you know us and know how to get there. But go to Vane Brothers and them and just start as a deckhand, it's going to take you a long time.

M.Z.: Because there's going to be more procedures that you have to follow?

F.W.: That's right.

J.W.: I don't know about more procedures, but it's more people vying for that job. With us, we try to work like certain crew. The way we work, you can get in more hours, more days. Because we don't do shift rotations and stuff like that. But if you think about that thing, say four years. Just say he starts out on one of our boats. A deckhand can come on and make 40,000, no problem.

F.W.: I mean, yeah, to start out.

J.W.: To start out. I mean, he can start out if he really wants to work and doesn't say, "I don't want to go this trip," or "I want off this weekend," or whatever, he can start out if he really wants to devote himself and get on up the chain, he can make himself \$40,000. And it isn't long before if he keeps working that thing, that thing can turn into 60,000.

F.W.: That's right.

M.Z.: Once he becomes mate.

J.W.: Well, not even mate. Not even mate.

M.Z.: Even as deckhand?

J.W.: Yeah, like my deckhand, I think Minn's (ph) getting like \$180 a day or it might be 200 a day. But he's been with me for five years.

M.Z.: You know you can count on him.

J.W.: Right.

F.W.: I have a brother with me that has no license. He has an AB ticket, an able-bodied seaman. He can go to these big companies and get him a job and make 250, \$275 a day probably, maybe more offshore. But he works for me, and he gets 225 a day.

He's just got that – he's a deckhand. Now, my older – my other brother, the one two years younger than me, he's running, he's the captain of my boat. He's fifty-seven. He

gets 350, from the time everything gets together, he's a \$400-a-day man, time we pay all his insurance and retirement and everything. But deckhand, yeah, 175 pretty easily, a day.

J.W.: Somewhere in that area. I mean, a lot of it has to do with experience.

F.W.: But somebody working on it is going to make 50,000. That's what Tommy made.

J.W.: Well, that's what I'm saying.

F.W.: Yeah, put in 250 days a year or something like that. Add it up. Just put the time in.

M.Z.: Yeah. It's pretty decent.

F.W.: It's a good industry, it's a good job, and most everybody can go down and – if you go down here, and you don't feel like you're too smart, but you can go down to the school and get a captain's license. They're going to work you through it. They ain't going to give it to you. But they're going to work you through it.

J.W.: I mean, you might have to go back two, three times, but you keep working at it; you will eventually get your license. It isn't like they're going to fail and kick you out.

F.W.: That's right.

M.Z.: The people who go through that school are more likely to go into the tug industry?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: This has been really, really great, very helpful. Is there anything else you guys would like to add, anything that we haven't brought up that you think we should address in the exhibit? If you think of anything, I can give you my card and you can get in touch.

F.W.: Okay. Will do.

J.W.: Yeah. I want to get one of your – oh, did you give me one or not?

M.Z.: I'll give you another one. Okay. I'll turn this off. Thank you so much.

[End of interview.]