

Oral History Interview

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

“The Culture of Tugs and Tugs in Culture”

Interviewee: Floyd T. Ward (F.W.) & John M. Ward (J.W.)
Jean Ward (Floyd T.'s wife) (JEAN)
DOB: Floyd T.: 6/29/28, John M.: 1/5/51, Jean: 3/22/29
POB:

Interviewer: Michelle Zacks (M.Z.)

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M.Z.: Today is Tuesday, November 15, 2011. This is Michelle Zacks for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. I'm in the home of Mr. Floyd Ward. His wife, Jean Ward, is here with us also. This is an interview for the upcoming tugs exhibit at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. We're in Deltavilla, Virginia, which, I guess, is something of a tug area. There's a lot of tugboat people in this area, or in Mathews County, near here?

F.W.: Yes, in Mathews more so than here.

M.Z.: This county is Middlesex, is that right?

F.W.: Middlesex.

M.Z.: What's the difference between the two counties? Why are there more in Mathews County than in here?

F.W.: Probably the Bay. Jean? Mathews is known for more watermen and ship captains during the war years and coming on. So I guess – but we have some, in our family mostly.

JEAN: I am from Mathews. I think more over in the Mathews area, the people work the water than it does in this area. Most of the people here are just work down in Deltaville. But everywhere in Mathews, there are people who work the water in all areas of the county. It's more widespread.

M.Z.: I see.

JEAN: That's just my opinion.

M.Z.: Well, you're from this area, so I'm sure you have a good appreciation.

J.W.: I'm going to set in this chair over here.

JEAN: No, you're not. She's recording. Come over here. Sit right here.

M.Z.: If you don't mind, we are recording. You're going to stay there for now? Okay. This is John Ward, who is Floyd's nephew who just came in. I know we've been talking over lunch a little bit, but maybe we can start by you sharing some of your family history, and how you all got involved in this industry. You were telling me at lunch that it's your father, Johnny – they called him Captain Johnny, right? But John T. Ward, is that right? He is the one who grew up in Crisfield, but moved over here to Deltaville.

F.W.: That's right.

M.Z.: I know you've told me some of the story already, but just so we have it on tape. Can you tell me how that transpired and when it was that he moved over? What inspired him to move to this area?

F.W.: Well, I guess Daddy come over here in the 19-early-20s. I think he come over in a little small boat called a – something-*Bell*. I can't think of the name. Anyway, he went through another boat called *Lagonia*, which is dead. Then he had the *Iva W* built down on the point in Deltaville.

JEAN: He met his mother, so that's incentive to stay.

F.W.: Yes. *Iva W* was my mother.

M.Z.: *Iva* was from this area? She was from Deltaville?

F.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: After that first trip, after he met her – did he meet her the very first time he came over?

F.W.: I don't think so. They was, as John and them said, collecting junk when they first came. I don't know which boat it – probably that little one that he came in. I don't know too much about it. Then he got running crabs from this side of the Bay to Crisfield. That's how he made his money, I think, a lot of it.

M.Z.: Can you say a little bit more about what it was that pushed him out of Crisfield? There just were fewer jobs over in that area, or do you know what it was that – were a lot of people making that trip from the Eastern Shore over here to the Western Shore at that point?

F.W.: I don't think so.

JEAN: He never left that area. He always worked from there to here.

F.W.: This is such a quiet area, and people didn't work too much oyster season. He just liked it over here, I guess. And he met my mother and –

JEAN: Made his home.

F.W.: That's where his home was. He bought a piece of land close to my mother's birthplace. He was just buying crabs in the summertime, running freight to Baltimore on his *Iva W*.

M.Z.: Tell me about the *Iva W*. What kind of boat was she?

F.W.: She was a, we call it a bay boat, about sixty feet. I don't know. She's still owned here.

JEAN: You want to see a picture of her?

M.Z.: Sure. I'd love to see a picture of her.

JEAN: Well, I can't show – you got to get up to see it, so –

M.Z.: Oh, maybe after this.

F.W.: It's hard to talk about her because she was in the year that – I would kind of fade it (sic) with trucks coming. That was when she just weren't in use too much. The trucks took over tomatoes, which she run to Baltimore and back.

M.Z.: So it wasn't just crabs; it was tomatoes and –

F.W.: Tomatoes and watermelons out of North Carolina.

M.Z.: Watermelons out of North Carolina?

F.W.: To Baltimore with freight, freight watermelons.

M.Z.: Would he go down to North Carolina?

F.W.: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: In the *Iva W*?

F.W.: Yup.

JEAN: In the waterway.

M.Z.: What was that like? Was that a difficult trip to make in that boat, or was it pretty easy?

F.W.: Pretty normal. Yes. He was a driver. He was hard. Went in bad weather, didn't stop him. He worked that probably a month to six weeks maybe. Then I don't know what he went into then. Running crabs, I guess, again in the fall.

M.Z.: So tomatoes and watermelon, North Carolina, that was –

F.W.: What else was it, John, he did?

J.W.: He did –

F.W.: Seed oysters, I know.

J.W.: Seed oysters.

F.W.: Yeah, he did a lot of that.

M.Z.: What was the season for seed oysters?

F.W.: What was it? October 1 to about June of the next year.

M.Z.: How did that work? Where would he go for that?

F.W.: James River. That's at Newport News, just up the river, Newport News.

M.Z.: Can you tell me anything about that process of getting the seed oysters? What that's like? I'm not from around here, so you have to assume I'm very ignorant.

F.W.: Well, when I went down in '45, it was probably 150, 200 tong boats, tonging seed. You would buy from them. We'd take them and run them up the Rappahannock, I guess twenty miles or so. We'd plant them. It's just a process. As soon as you unload it, you go back.

M.Z.: You do that during the whole oyster season, October through June?

F.W.: Well, no. In the summer months, there was a break out of that. When they close their season down in June, he would probably paint the boat up and do things like that until the fall.

M.Z.: In the fall, he'd start with the crabs?

F.W.: Yes.

J.W.: Or do oysters for a while, and then go into the crabbing.

F.W.: Yeah. It's hard to say just how it was done because things quit. We didn't have it any more. Just like running tomatoes faded out and trucks took it. I even run potatoes on the boat, and that faded out.

M.Z.: When did the trucks start taking over? I just want to get the chronology down. He started with the *Iva W*. That was in the twenties, or –

J.W.: She was built in 1929 with the *Iva W*.

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Where was she built?

F.W.: Right down the point.

J.W.: Right on that point right down there. Just down the creek of those two houses. That's a big home down there.

M.Z.: What shipyard was it, or was it just a guy who –

J.W.: It was a fellow by the name of John Wright.

M.Z.: John Wright?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: Right down there on the point. So he just had –

J.W.: On Jacksons (sic - Jackson) Creek.

M.Z.: He would just build boats in his yard, that sort of thing?

J.W.: He built a lot of boats.

M.Z.: But that sort of thing. Just in his yard, and outside and –

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: So she was one of those. That was 1929. He built the boat for your father?

F.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: And then –

F.W.: What was that, twenty-six, twenty-eight hundred?

J.W.: No more than that.

F.W.: For the whole boat, the bedding, the pilot house, everything.

J.W.: Everything, but the engine.

M.Z.: What kind of engine did he put in?

J.W.: He put a gas one in first.

F.W.: Yes. I don't know what you would call that now.

J.W.: I don't know. Then he went to a Atlas, then he went to a Caterpillar. That Caterpillar is still in her today.

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: The Caterpillar's still in her today?

J.W.: It's a D-13000 Caterpillar, still in there today.

M.Z.: She's still functioning, more or less, although I guess she's had a lot of modifications to her.

J.W.: No. The engine hasn't.

M.Z.: The engine hasn't.

J.W.: No. The engine is still going, doing a good job, as far as I know.

M.Z.: But the boat itself?

J.W.: Well, the boat's had a lot of modifications done. A man converted it to a yacht. He wanted to convert it to a bed and breakfast. Then there was something down in Florida. That didn't pan out. Then he came back here and he gave it to the Deltaville Maritime Museum. They didn't want the upkeep on it. So they, in turn, sold it to someone else. I don't know who has it now.

M.Z.: You all must really miss having that boat around here in this area.

JEAN: Not anymore. Not anymore. He made her so ugly until you don't want to look at her. Right?

J.W.: He butchered her. I mean, you know, the guy did.

JEAN: Did you like to see her?

J.W.: Not really, no. It doesn't look anything like it did when the family owned it.

M.Z.: I was just thinking, the boat itself, she was probably almost part of your family.

JEAN: She was beautiful.

M.Z.: So important to your family story, your family's history.

JEAN: She was a beautiful boat.

J.W.: I have some pictures of it with the house on it. I'm sure you all do, too.

JEAN: Yeah, we've got the one over here too. John Barbar (ph) was going to show her.

J.W.: I've got that. I've got one with the house on it that Art (ph) gave me, down in the Everglades.

JEAN: He thinks it's really pretty, doesn't he? (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Different strokes for different folks, I guess. So that was 1929 when he started with the *Iva W*. It was potatoes, tomatoes, watermelon in the summertime?

J.W.: Dredging crabs.

M.Z.: Dredging crabs in the fall and into the winter. What's the crab dredging season? What was that?

F.W.: December 1 to March 31st.

M.Z.: Then the seed oysters from October through June?

J.W.: Yeah, something like that. Yeah.

F.W.: That's pretty much. With a break for the crab dredging, in the middle.

M.Z.: I see. So it was seasonal work, and you'd shift from thing to thing. Then when the trucks came in, that interrupted that seasonal cycle. When do you think the trucks started coming in? I know it's probably hard to remember exactly, but is that a post-war thing? Like, after World War II?

J.W.: What was that crab truck? What was she? The *Miss Jean*? Forty-six?

F.W.: It'd be the late forties, I'm sure.

J.W.: So that's when it started taking over, didn't it, in the forties?

F.W.: Yeah. I guess. Not no earlier than that, 'cause the seed oyster business, that finally got the – the trucks took that, too.

M.Z.: The trucks took that, too?

F.W.: Yeah. It ended up that way. No boats run it anymore.

M.Z.: That's surprising to me. You would think the seed oysters, it would be easier to distribute that stuff by water than by truck.

F.W.: The boats, the season diminished, you know. I don't know just how it happened, but the seed kind of give up.

J.W.: Well, seed slowed up a lot. It wasn't the volume there anymore. The oystermen, the tongers in James River could come in to the land and offload at facilities. A lot of the big oyster packers and all started buying these planters, they called them. They'd take barges and they'd put conveyors on them. They could go in real shallow water, like two, three feet of water.

These things were hydraulic and they would – conveyor, no manual labor involved for offloading, shoveling. The truck would back right up, dump on the conveyor. They'd go on this planter and it was all self-contained. He could go in that real shallow water and he didn't have to have any help. His hydraulic stuff and everything would just go away.

I guess he figured that was a better deal. So all of that stopped also. Just all of it stopped when it – the more modernized the roads and the traffic and the trucks got, the less it went by boat because you could deliver from point A to point B. Like where the boat used to go down Carolina to buy watermelons, and go to Baltimore, and unload at the end of Broadway or wherever it was, people had to come down and get them off the boat, put them in a truck, and take them to their stores or facilities.

Now the truck goes right to Carolina, loads them in a truck, drives right to the man's store and offloads. You know, he cuts that step out. But that came through modernization of highways and trucks.

M.Z.: I see.

F.W.: If you had to buy a boat new now, you couldn't think about making a living in it. I don't know what you'd do. A little bit of state work about all you could probably do.

J.W.: You couldn't do it. You just couldn't do it.

F.W.: There's nothing going.

J.W.: I mean, fuel oil was like five cent a gallon. Now today, it's like \$3.35, \$3.39 a gallon. So you just couldn't do it. Plus labor. You couldn't find people now that wanted to work even if they needed a job to do the manual labor that involved with the bay boats years ago. You couldn't find nobody to help shovel oysters overboard regardless of what you paid.

M.Z.: How much did that sort of thing used to pay? Do you remember?

J.W.: The state used to allow, like, ten cent a bushel to plant them by shovel. Or back, oh boy, I think it was around ten cent. So if you had 3,000 bushels, well the *Iva W* didn't carry but 1,200. Granddaddy had \$120; ten cent would be \$120 – to have those put overboard.

So you figure, if you had four men shoveling, each one of them got \$30, or somewhere thereabouts in that category. I mean, it might not have been but five cent a bushel; I can't remember. It's been a long time. If it was five cent, 1,200 bushels, you had \$60, each – that sounds more reasonable. So everybody was getting like 10 or \$15 apiece to offload the boat.

M.Z.: Would your dad hire the people to work for him, work with him?

F.W.: Sometimes it was us when we was about fifteen years old, getting ready to go to school. He would say, "Come and shovel these oysters off before you go to school." I guess we went to school with dirt on us all. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: But that's all right. You probably fit in. I mean, I'm sure a lot of other people were doing the same kind of work.

F.W.: You had to work. You had to work when you were around him. Going on a date was nothing. It'd be Saturday afternoon when you wanted to get ready to go on a date, so bad. He wanted you to stay fishing bay to work on his boat.

J.W.: Or do something. If you ever asked him to lend you \$100, he'd say, "What'd you do with yours?" (Laughter.) He was hard, but he was always kind of fair.

M.Z.: What did you think about that at the time when you were growing up? Would that kind of irritate you?

F.W.: Oh, yes. I was boiling inside.

M.Z.: But you did it.

F.W.: But a little bit later, I got a chance to let him know who was boss though. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: How was that? How did that come about?

F.W.: I better not say that.

J.W.: Like all families, it has its ups and downs.

M.Z.: Now when you think back on having grown up that way, what do you think about it now?

F.W.: Well, my mama used to beat me right often, and he did about twice. It didn't do no harm. Really.

J.W.: No.

F.W.: He'd go overboard with it sometimes.

J.W.: He just stilled (sic) – I mean, just from what I've heard everybody say, you know – he just stilled (sic) a good work ethic.

M.Z.: It sounds like he was a very disciplined man.

F.W.: Yeah.

J.W.: And his the boys have been fairly successful, so –

M.Z.: So something went right.

J.W.: I guess.

M.Z.: When he came over, that was in the teens, you think, when he came over from Crisfield?

F.W.: Probably around '20, '22, I guess.

M.Z.: Did he have brothers then who came over?

F.W.: One. One brother. My Uncle Will lives next to me on two houses.

M.Z.: Uncle Will sort of followed him over?

F.W.: Yes. He went on mostly seed oysters in his life.

J.W.: Did Jim come over first before Will?

F.W.: I think. I don't know for sure.

J.W.: I don't know, either. He was in the water business, also, with the bay boats and stuff. Will was.

F.W.: Every one, all of them were water. All of them were watermans, and they'd –

M.Z.: So there were more brothers than that? More than John and Will?

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: How many other brothers did they have?

F.W.: Two. It was four boys and – five girls?

J.W.: I believe it was.

M.Z.: Big family. Four boys, five girls –

F.W.: Four watermens and five farmers. The girls married farmers.

M.Z.: What were the other names of the brothers and the sisters?

F.W.: Morris Ward and Howard.

M.Z.: Those were the four boys. We had Captain Johnny, Morris, Howard, and Will. Then the girls, do you remember all of their names?

F.W.: It was Sarah, Nellie, Mary.

J.W.: Esther.

F.W.: Esther.

J.W.: How many have you got there?

M.Z.: I've got four: Sarah, Nellie, Mary, Esther. Well, maybe it'll come to you.

J.W.: Jean might know.

F.W.: Jean, she knows more than –

M.Z.: Isn't that funny that they married the farmers then? Do you think they intentionally, like, "Enough of that waterman world? We want to –"

J.W.: Eastern Shore. Big farming area.

F.W.: Yeah, strawberries. Well, they used to come over here and get strawberries, and carry them back.

J.W.: Yeah, but tomatoes and all that stuff was big growing on the Eastern Shore.

M.Z.: So they stayed in Crisfield, the girls?

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: All the boys came over here?

J.W.: Two. Just those two.

M.Z.: Just two. Okay. And so you said you had some family roots still over there, but most everybody at this point has passed away. Is that right?

F.W.: Mostly. Yes.

J.W.: Of the older generation. There's some nieces, and you know, it's like all families.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. So John married Iva. Then the two of them started having children, right? Are you the first?

F.W.: I was middle.

M.Z.: You were the middle?

F.W.: His dad, Melvin.

M.Z.: Melvin? He was the first?

F.W.: Right. And Milton.

J.W.: Then Floyd T. And then Milton.

M.Z.: I'm trying to get the whole genealogy here kind of mapped out. I don't know if I'll be able to interpret my notes afterwards. So all three of you boys got involved in that same business. You worked with your dad, just helping him out to start? Is that true?

F.W.: Well, pretty much. I don't think he had that much confidence in me on the water when I first started.

J.W.: Oh, yeah. (Laughter.)

F.W.: Oh, he didn't.

M.Z.: Why do you say that?

F.W.: I don't know. Mel was pretty much a favorite. You know, older. They kind of worked from that way. I'll never forget one day when I was coming in the James River and got round Old Point and he stopped me. He was coming down (indiscernible 23:51) and told me, he said, "You see Back River blinking up there?" Like I were a lost sheep. (Laughter.)

J.W.: He didn't want you to go behind Back River Lighthouse.

F.W.: That's right.

J.W.: No, Floyd was always excellent navigating captain, excellent, excellent.

M.Z.: Were you always drawn to it? I mean, you did it because your dad was doing it, but were you like, you yourself, were you attracted to that kind of work?

F.W.: I guess so, but that's all we had to do. That's all we knew.

J.W.: Same thing with Floyd, Junior and I. I mean, this is all we've ever known.

M.Z.: Did you enjoy it?

F.W.: Oh, yeah. Yeah, enjoyed it. Yeah. You see, we had the *Mary Lewis*. We didn't keep her too long, I don't think, maybe twelve, thirteen years. Always said all our boats stayed in the family for thirteen years.

J.W.: Really?

F.W.: Pretty much. But she was a pretty thing.

J.W.: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I got one picture of her.

F.W.: You got a picture of her? I don't have any.

J.W.: It's in my album, and that guy's got my album. But had a lot of boats. I don't know how many the family has owned. I mean, most of it's Granddaddy and Daddy and Milt and Floyd. But they had a lot of boats.

M.Z.: Do you think we can run through that, or would it be too hard to remember them all? We have the *Iva W* and then –

J.W.: The *Lagonia*.

M.Z.: *Lagonia*? How do you spell that?

F.W.: I don't know.

J.W.: I can barely say it, darling. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: And then after that?

F.W.: We had the *Sophie Durham*.

J.W.: That's before my time.

M.Z.: Then what was after that?

J.W.: There was a bunch of them back then.

F.W.: We had the *HH Conway*.

J.W.: Then you had them other ones here, was it the *Kent* (ph) or the *Parkins* (ph)?

F.W.: Oh, yeah. *Parkins*. That lasted one winter.

M.Z.: Lasted one winter? What happened?

F.W.: Just too rough.

J.W.: In bad shape.

F.W.: Rough-looking. He had the *Irma E*. I think she's gone. Remember?

J.W.: Barely.

F.W.: You don't? That's one – Oscar. That's one that's in the picture.

J.W.: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I got *Trailborn* off of it, and that was up in –

F.W.: You have?

J.W.: Yeah.

F.W.: Okay.

J.W.: It's just old board painted. The *Irma E*, then they had the *Linda*. Then they had the *Linda W*. They had the *Ruth S*, the *Thomas W, I*. *Thomas W, II*.

M.Z.: These are a lot of boats.

J.W.: You got *Mary S. Lewis* on there?

M.Z.: No, not yet.

J.W.: Then they had the *Muriel Eileen*.

JEAN: *Muriel Eileen*.

M.Z.: Was that named after somebody? I guess all of the –

JEAN: No, no. But you can see her. She is up at –

F.W.: Georgetown. Sassafras River, is it?

J.W.: Georgetown. Okay.

JEAN: She is absolutely gorgeous.

M.Z.: Now did you all have these boats –

J.W.: There's some more. Wait a minute.

M.Z.: Oh. Okay.

J.W.: You had the *Ward Brothers*. That's named after the three boys. The *Nora W*.

JEAN: That's after one of his grandmothers.

J.W.: Had the *John W*, *Chief*, and then they had the *Gram-Me*. That's your tug.

M.Z.: Was that the first tug?

JEAN: That's the tugboat.

J.W.: That's the first tug.

JEAN: Now that's all that they owned.

J.W.: There's a few more in there too.

F.W.: I bet.

M.Z.: I have eighteen written down there.

J.W.: There's probably more than that.

M.Z.: And there's probably more.

J.W.: Yeah, if you want to go to the *State Port* (ph) and, I mean, never did use her, but –

JEAN: But didn't use her.

M.Z.: And most of these boats stayed in the family thirteen years? Is that what you said?

JEAN: I know a couple, three of them that seemed like after thirteen years – the *John W* was about thirteen years.

M.Z.: Well, about how many boats would you have in operation at a time?

J.W.: Some of these would go away and others would take their place, but the main boats that they had was the *Muriel Eileen*, the *Ward Brothers*, the *Nora W*, and the *Chief*, and the *John W*, I would say. They were the main ones.

F.W.: That were working at one time. Yes.

M.Z.: So it was your father, Captain Johnny, and then you three boys were eventually captain in your own boats? What was your first boat that you were the captain of?

F.W.: Let me see now. It was the *Muriel Eileen*, I guess, the first one. And I run –

J.W.: *Mary Lewis*.

F.W.: And the *Mary Lewis*.

J.W.: *Ruth S* some, didn't you? Did you run –

F.W.: I didn't go – I went on with Milt sometimes.

JEAN: This is – I can't name them all to you.

J.W.: I can. There's the *Ward Brothers*, the *Nora W*, the *Muriel Eileen*, the *Iva W*, and then *Thomas W, I*.

M.Z.: That's a great photo. We're looking at a framed photo right now.

JEAN: That was taken just a little ways from here.

M.Z.: It looks like it's icy.

JEAN: It is. It is.

J.W.: They were all rigged up for crab dredging at that time.

JEAN: And the weather got bad, so they all stayed in.

J.W.: If you look back there, there's the *John W* pilot house on the other side of that point. There's the *Chief* laying alongside of her over there.

M.Z.: Wow. You had quite a fleet then. You all must have really made a name for yourselves in this area.

F.W.: I don't know, but a lot of hard work.

M.Z.: A lot of hard work. It sounds like it. Looking at that ice, it must have been really challenging to just keep at it all throughout the year, and year after year.

F.W.: Fun working it, but as the season progressed, you had the sailboats, run grain. In the winter, we'd tie them up and then we –

J.W.: I think when that picture was taken, Floyd, Junior and I both, we'd gotten out of school and was involved in it.

M.Z.: I want to understand the progression a little bit better. You said sometime in the forties, probably around, I guess you said late forties, the trucks started coming in and that started changing your business. How did your father or the family business in general, how did you respond to those kind of changes?

F.W.: I guess, back to the boats again, dredging crabs was four months of the year. The seed oysters probably took three more months. What did we do from that time? Paint, I think.

J.W.: Yeah, used to be a lot of that.

JEAN: In summertime, you all stayed home and painted.

F.W.: We was home about three months, I guess.

M.Z.: Did that cause the family to change the kinds of boats you started getting into?

F.W.: I mean, somewhat. We would get the *Mary Lewis*, and get her, and run grain.

JEAN: Some of the boats were smaller, and the *Mary Lewis* was a little bit bigger. She wasn't big enough, so then it went to the –

F.W.: *Chief*.

JEAN: *Chief*? And then it went to the *John W*, which, they were bigger boats. Then from that, they weren't big enough, so it went to tugboats and barges.

M.Z.: That's what I want to try to understand, and maybe get some rough years, and when those shifts happened. The *Mary Lewis* was a bigger boat, but she was still a wooden boat?

JEAN: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: About how big was she? Do you remember?

F.W.: She was about ninety-three foot long, and 200 ton.

M.Z.: Around about when do you think you might have gotten her?

JEAN: Sixties.

J.W.: I don't know if it was the *Mary Lewis* or the *Nora W*, but I remember one of them being at the state dock when I was a little boy, so, I mean. I don't remember the fix up of it.

JEAN: I would say in the sixties. You got them in the sixties.

F.W.: I remember we were in Baltimore in the boats in summertime with grain, and Mel, myself, and Milt went to Bridgeport –

JEAN: Connecticut.

F.W.: – and bought the *Lewis*. She was a oyster dredge boat in the Long Island Sound.

M.Z.: No kidding?

F.W.: They brought her home. Outside, I think, they were coming Delaware Bay. I didn't go on that trip.

M.Z.: I'm from Connecticut, so I'm from not too far from Bridgeport. That's interesting. They went up there and got her, you think, maybe in the sixties or so. Was it the *Mary Lewis*? You started running grain with her?

F.W.: Grain.

M.Z.: What got you into that niche of the industry?

J.W.: They had been running grain before that, but you had to keep getting bigger. I mean, they started out running grain in the *Muriel Eileen*.

F.W.: That's right, and the *Ruth S*.

J.W.: And the *Ruth S*. You know, and they carried maybe 1,800 bushels.

JEAN: Which was nothing.

J.W.: Nothing. Then they bought the *Ward Brothers* and she carried 5,000 bushels, you know? She was huge in that day.

M.Z.: That was the *Ward Brothers*?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: And how big was she?

J.W.: She was about seventy-five feet long. She carried 5,000 bushels.

F.W.: Hundred-and-fifty ton, I think.

J.W.: Then they bought the *Nora W*, and she carried about fifty-three, fifty-five hundred bushels. She was a little bit bigger, somewhere in that area.

M.Z.: Would this have been, what, like the fifties?

J.W.: Fifties. I would say y'all bought the *Ward Brothers*, what, about 1950?

F.W.: Probably so. I know the *John W* came in the picture, like, '71.

J.W.: So 1950, they bought the *Ward Brothers*, and a little bit after that they bought the *Nora W*. Then a little bit after that, they bought the *Mary Lewis*. Then my dad would run the *Ward Brothers* running grain, Milt would run the *Nora W* running grain, and big Floyd

would run the *Mary Lewis* running grain. They'd run grain in those. Well then, even those boats got small. Five thousand bushels was nothing.

M.Z.: How much could the *Mary Lewis* carry?

F.W.: She was 200 ton, so you're looking at about 6,800.

J.W.: I thought she gave more than that.

F.W.: Seven thousand at the top, so –

M.Z.: When you say bushels, are they literally bushels of grain? Like –

J.W.: That goes by weight.

M.Z.: How would that be packaged and put on the vessels?

J.W.: Well, a bushel of corn weighs, what, fifty-six, fifty-seven pounds? Everything was done in weight when they unloaded, you know. That's how the bushels got measured.

M.Z.: And how would it be carried on the boat?

J.W.: Loose.

M.Z.: Loose?

J.W.: Yeah. Just fill the boat up.

JEAN: In a hold.

J.W.: I've got some, I don't have my pictures, but I've got pictures of the *Ward Brothers* loaded with grain and even being offloaded with the grain, a man standing there sucking the corn out of her. But the *Muriel Eileen* carried about 1,800 bushels, and they came and brought that down in bags. Cut the bag and dumped it in the hold of her. And then it kept on getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

Well, the *Mary Lewis* and the *Ward* – then later on, the *Ward Brothers* got small at 5,000 bushels. That's when my dad, Floyd, and Milton bought the *John W*, and fixed her up to run grain. She carried about twenty-one, twenty-two thousand, something like that. Somewhere in that area?

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Twenty-one, twenty-two thousand?

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: That was a big jump, then.

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: So was she a steel vessel?

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: And that was the first steel –

J.W.: That was their first steel boat, yes.

M.Z.: How big was she?

F.W.: She was about 600 tons.

J.W.: She was 160 feet, wasn't she?

F.W.: Hundred-and-sixty feet.

J.W.: Hundred-and-fifty, sixty feet long roughly.

M.Z.: A hundred-and-sixty feet, and how many tons did you say?

F.W.: I think 600, I think.

J.W.: I think it was.

M.Z.: Where did you get her?

F.W.: Bridgeport.

M.Z.: Bridgeport? So that was –

J.W.: No, not the *John W*. The *John W* came down Newport News.

JEAN: Norfolk.

J.W.: She was a barge that had no engine or nothing. When we brought her home, people thought we were crazy.

J.W.: I got a picture of that, too, in my book with the *Muriel Eileen* alongside of her.

M.Z.: Now she was a barge, so what did you do to kind of fix her up to do this kind of work?

F.W.: Well, the holds and everything was okay, but we built the pilothouse on her and put two engines in her. And we did it all hitched to the dock.

M.Z.: Did you all just figure out how to do that yourselves?

J.W.: Those three brothers could do about anything they wanted to do. I mean, it wasn't no problem. Floyd was a excellent carpenter, Milt's a good carpenter, Daddy was a good electrician. But they did everything their self.

F.W.: Well, we'd get the welder, see, come down. Maybe some would come down after working in shipyard all day. Work 'til 10:00 at night. You remember that?

J.W.: Yeah. That was fun. I don't remember too much about it, but I know we did a lot of things while everybody else went to bed. That's when we did it. I do know that.

M.Z.: Well, you had that work ethic from your grandfather, right?

J.W.: You did whatever it did to get it done, you know? But none of them could weld, and I can't weld, and Floyd, Junior can't weld. None of us learned to do that, you know?

M.Z.: So the things you couldn't do, you had to bring somebody else in. But most of it sounds like –

J.W.: But they would have it all set up, and like they wanted it, and everything. When a man got there to weld, all he had to do is weld it up.

F.W.: That picture of *John W*, is it in the drawer there? It's partially loaded at Kinsale, I think.

J.W.: Then after that, they got her going, then they bought the *MV Chief*.

M.Z.: *MV Chief*?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: And that was even bigger?

J.W.: No. She was a little bit smaller.

M.Z.: But it was just a second boat.

J.W.: Second steel boat. Yeah.

M.Z.: How did you start getting into the grain to begin with?

J.W.: I don't know. Started out, 1,800 bushels.

F.W.: We used to say that it made enough money to buy us what they call them popsicles or something you pop. Sometimes stayed up at twenty-five days on one trip.

M.Z.: Twenty-five days?

F.W.: We had a freight of, like, \$180, maybe \$200.

M.Z.: So you're not making anything. Where are you going? From where to where with the grain?

F.W.: Baltimore, mostly then.

M.Z.: Going to Baltimore.

F.W.: See and Baltimore's (indiscernible 41:17.5) at night. They quit (inaudible 41:19.) It's Norfolk now.

M.Z.: But where would you be getting the grain from? Can you describe the whole –

J.W.: When you came through Tappahannock, right there as you came across that little bridge, there used to be a little grain elevator right there called DeShazo Brothers. Don't ask me how to spell it.

M.Z.: I'll have to look that up.

J.W.: Wasn't that what it was? DeShazo?

F.W.: Yes. John and Charles DeShazo.

J.W.: John and Charles DeShazo had a little grain elevator right in Tappahannock. That's where they started at, and I don't know how y'all got hooked up with them hauling grain. That was before my time.

M.Z.: Yeah. How did you –

F.W.: I guess they needed just somebody to move a small amount of grain. It wasn't that much grain arriving.

J.W.: Back then.

F.W.: We'd probably make about four or five trips summertime. Wouldn't get your money until the next year. He never did pay us soybean season.

J.W.: Until the next year.

M.Z.: It was mostly corn, or –

F.W.: Corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, all the grain.

M.Z.: You would bring it to Baltimore?

F.W.: No, we'd take it to Baltimore. Tappahannock, Kinsale, Kilbarnock was the places we loaded.

M.Z.: Kilbarnock. That sounds Irish, doesn't it?

F.W.: It sounds Indian.

M.Z.: Kilbarnock?

F.W.: I don't know what it was.

M.Z.: So those: Tappahannock, Kinsale, Kilbarnock, those are the places where you go and load up with the grain?

JEAN: Urbanna.

M.Z.: Urbanna, okay.

F.W.: And it was some little place on Eastern Shore we'd go, like Trappe, Maryland. You've heard of that, I know.

M.Z.: Yes.

F.W.: We'd go in Milton. I never went in, but Milt went. Went to Baltimore mostly then.

M.Z.: You said it was corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley, did you say?

F.W.: Barley.

M.Z.: These farmers in these different places would be growing these different grains, and then they'd need to get it to Baltimore. And then where would it go from there? Do you have any idea? What was it being used for at that point? Because it wasn't the big poultry industry.

JEAN: Ships picked it up and took it to wherever ships go.

F.W.: I'll always remember the name was on some of the bags was coming out of Western Maryland, grain elevator. It said on it "Wheat for Pakistan." It was printed right on the bag.

M.Z.: So it was being exported overseas then.

JEAN: Overseas, yes.

M.Z.: And this was in the fifties, sixties, you think?

F.W.: Probably.

JEAN: You didn't do much freight in the fifties. It, basically, started in the sixties and seventies. In the fifties, you were basically dredging crabs and running seed oysters.

F.W.: That picture I was going to show her, I was going to give it to my doctor in Richmond. I thought about it. See if he wanted to put it up.

JEAN: I don't know where it's at right now. Where is it? In the desk? Or where is it?

F.W.: Yeah.

JEAN: In the desk?

F.W.: Could be.

M.Z.: So after the *MV Chief*, which was the second steel boat that you had, then you get the *Gram-Me*, the first tug?

F.W.: First tug.

M.Z.: Did one lead to the other? Like getting into these steel boats and converting the barges, is that what pushed you towards getting into the tugs?

F.W.: That kind of got so we had to get rid of everything else. The two steel boats were sold. One of them went to Haiti, and the other one went to Colombia, South America.

JEAN: Our competition was going to bigger stuff. So you had to keep up with your competition.

F.W.: Once the boys got onto it, they just expanded it a whole lot more than we were doing.

JEAN: They'd make more money in one load than we made probably the whole year.

M.Z.: Tell me about the *Gram-Me*.

JEAN: She was bought in New Orleans.

F.W.: She was a pusher tug, about sixty feet long, twenty-four foot wide, and the name is a Louisiana name.

M.Z.: Was it you that went down there, did you say?

F.W.: I went with them. It reminded me something like the old thing on TV about mama setting on top in the rocking chair. Went down in a pickup truck. It was about four or five of us in that truck. But all the paint, rope and everything we needed. The truck was setting down like that here to New Orleans. That's a long ways.

M.Z.: Yeah. That's a long ways.

F.W.: We bought these two tugs at a auction.

M.Z.: So not just the *Gram-Me*. You bought another one too?

F.W.: What was the other one called? The *Captain Johnny* or – it had a name like that. But we sold that one later. We didn't use it.

JEAN: They sold her before they got it home in Florida. They sold it on the way, in Florida.

M.Z.: Oh, no kidding.

F.W.: We got it at a place called Banana River. It's close to Cape Canaveral. I got a call from a broker in Louisiana saying they had a sale for it. We contacted a man and he said meet me at this bridge, next morning. We had a chart of the bridges. We met there that morning, went to the custom house, he give me the money, I mean a certified check. We came home in the pickup truck which was on the back of the tug. That was on the back of the tug, we brought that as we came. Put it ashore at one of the bridges.

M.Z.: So somebody drove the truck back and somebody –

JEAN: You came back in the truck.

F.W.: All of us come back when we sold this tugboat that we didn't use. All three of us come back on that trip.

M.Z.: Oh. That was two separate trips.

F.W.: Yeah. We made several trips down at different times.

M.Z.: You would go to auctions to buy these boats?

F.W.: We just looked around until we found these that were setting up. My older brother, he didn't want anything but something that was wore out, in bad shape so we could work on it. He wouldn't have something new.

M.Z.: You get a better price that way.

J.W.: Huh?

F.W.: I was just talking about your daddy.

J.W.: Oh.

F.W.: I said he wouldn't buy anything that was brand new versus something that had to be worked on.

J.W.: He liked to work on things.

M.Z.: He liked the challenge of it?

J.W.: I don't know. He just liked to do that, you know?

F.W.: You wouldn't believe it, what it looks like now, what it was when we got it.

J.W.: The tug?

F.W.: Yeah.

J.W.: Oh, yeah.

F.W.: It's like a yacht now.

J.W.: Well, I wouldn't go that far.

F.W.: Well, it's a beautiful piece of –

M.Z.: You're talking about the *Gram-Me*?

J.W.: She's a nice boat. She turned out real –

M.Z.: You still have her?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: Wait a minute. So that was, what year do you think it was that you bought her?

J.W.: They bought her in 1985, I think it was. Then they retired in, like, '91, I think. It was '90, '91, somewhere in that area.

M.Z.: So that's when Floyd –

J.W.: That's when Floyd Gene and I took her over.

M.Z.: Okay.

J.W.: In '90, '91, something like that.

M.Z.: You're still running her?

J.W.: We hope so.

M.Z.: Is that what Jay's on right now?

J.W.: No, no. Jay's on another boat.

JEAN: They have three now. In fact, they have –

F.W.: Four.

J.W.: Four. Five.

JEAN: They have three, and one just like this red one down here that's working in this one.

J.W.: I was just talking to the *Gram-Me*. She's just leaving Seaford, Delaware.

M.Z.: Who's the captain of the *Gram-Me* now?

J.W.: Jason Damron. He's been running her for about five, six years. He's the captain on her.

M.Z.: How many boats do you guys have now?

J.W.: We have five total, but we're working four.

M.Z.: What are the names?

J.W.: Well, we have the *Gram-Me*, the *Nicki-Jo-C*. Then we have the *Captain Johnny*.

M.Z.: That's Jay's boat?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: Okay. That's three.

J.W.: Then the *Ellis*. And the *Sture*.

M.Z.: That's the one that's sitting out here. That's the one that you're not running right now.

J.W.: We're not running now, no.

M.Z.: Where do you guys operate out of here?

J.W.: Tappahannock; Kilmarnock; Kinsale; Seaford, Delaware; Baltimore and Norfolk. We still in Tappahannock where they started. Perdue came in and bought that little elevator we were talking about.

M.Z.: When did Perdue buy that? That was the DeShazo that we still have to look up how you spell that.

J.W.: Let's see. Y'all had the *John W* and the *Nora*. The *John W* was running in and out, so that's when Perdue bought it. Wasn't it somewhere in that area?

F.W.: Yeah. I think so.

J.W.: When was that?

F.W.: I don't know.

JEAN: Had to be in the nineties.

J.W.: No, way before. I'm going to say early seventies, maybe.

F.W.: Well, the *John W* got the first cargo '71 or 2.

J.W.: Well, that's about when Perdue took it over. Something like that.

F.W.: Then we left that and went up to Perdue.

J.W.: Somewhere in that area.

M.Z.: When Perdue bought DeShazo, was that a good thing for you guys? Did it give you a more steady kind of contract?

JEAN: Yes. I would say. (Laughter.)

J.W.: Yes. Yes.

F.W.: Yeah. All that volume was –

JEAN: When they worked for Perdue, and when they worked for DeShazo, they would work all summer. They would not ever get any money until maybe sometime in the winter. Then they had to go up and ask for it, and come back, and ask for it again, back and forth before they would even pay them. They had plenty of money, but they didn't pay trip for trip.

F.W.: He paid his tax for grain, and the real money was setting in banks, so much money –

JEAN: He went through the season, and then they still wouldn't pay.

M.Z.: Why did they do it that way, do you think?

JEAN: I have no clue. Why did that do that? Y'all know?

J.W.: Well, he had that money, I would assume, to buy grain from farmers. He would store it in his tanks and watch the market. If soybeans or corn went up, say, 15 cent, and he had, say, back in them days, and say he had 30,000 bushels, he would make 15 cent, probably more than that, but just for instance. You know, that would give him \$4,500.

JEAN: Of their money.

J.W.: That he used their money to buy the grain with. You know, he didn't have to go to the bank or whatever he had to do, you know. He'd take that money that he had paid in freight all year long, and turn around and buy more grain. Then he'd store it. Therefore, he didn't want to pay up until he sold. In other words, he could make enough by storing it to take care of the freight.

F.W.: Yeah. Easy.

J.W.: It's business if you can get everybody to go along with it.

JEAN: They were suckers to do that.

F.W.: We should have gotten interest on our money, but we didn't.

M.Z.: It sounds like you evolved into this whole line of work, so you probably didn't have a whole big business strategy for how to handle it.

JEAN: No.

F.W.: That's right.

J.W.: As long as you were working, that was the key right there. No matter what you were making, long as you were busy.

M.Z.: But this grain business, it sounds like it's sort of like commodities, futures, you know.

J.W.: It is. It is.

M.Z.: Almost like playing the stock market.

JEAN: You were working whether you got paid for it or not. That didn't matter. You were working. That's a family thing.

J.W.: If you dug a hole, filled it up, and then dug it out again and filled it up, that was the family motto. You know, long as you were doing – you weren't sitting in the house looking out. You know, if you didn't do nothing, but dig a hole and fill it back up –

JEAN: You did something.

J.W.: You had to be doing something all the time.

M.Z.: So when Perdue came in, how did that change things for you?

JEAN: They paid. (Laughter.)

F.W.: Well, it started with the *John W.* We made some money for a while. Then he started bringing barges in. Then he'd say –

M.Z.: Who started bringing barges in?

F.W.: Different people from the Eastern Shore. Some got old raggedy barges, and –

J.W.: He'd come in and say, "I'll do it a half a cent cheaper."

M.Z.: Who's he?

JEAN: Everybody.

J.W.: I can't think of who them people's names were back then.

JEAN: Just anybody.

M.Z.: Just other people who were in the business?

J.W.: Anybody that had something he could haul it in, you know. Perdue seemed to be a good outfit to work for, and the volume was there. They could come in and say, "I'll haul it for a nickel or a penny cheaper per bushel." We were hauling by bushel then. He come in with a barge that would carry 40,000 bushels. We were carrying 20,000 bushels. They'd come in and say, "I can do it two cent cheaper."

Then they started that, and they tried that for a while, Perdue did. But the people didn't perform. The equipment couldn't hold up, and all of it together didn't hold up. Then it wasn't long, Perdue would come back and say, he'd come to my uncle and my dad and my other uncle and he'd say, you know, "Can y'all come back and work with me?" They got back and started working with him. Well, from that day 'til today, it's never been any, nothing anymore about any of that.

M.Z.: So are you the main operators for Perdue?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: You guys are kind of it?

J.W.: Well, yeah. Other people do the overflow that we can't handle. But within our relationship, and the contract and all with Perdue, we handle all that we can handle.

M.Z.: That's pretty significant. You guys are pretty key players then.

F.W.: The volume up there is what?

J.W.: The volume has grown so much. I mean, when they first started with Perdue up there, he had a million-and-a-half bushel tank. Then they had a 500,000-bushel tank, and he had three 50,000-bushel tanks. Now they've got two more 500,000-bushel tanks, a 200,000-bushel tank, and a pad out on the ground that'll carry a million-and-a-half. So where they've gone from, say, a 2 million-bushel facility, they've gone up to around 6 million bushels. I really don't want everybody coming in your museum learning our business. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Okay. This is just so we can kind of understand how it all works, but we won't necessarily –

J.W.: Edit that.

M.Z.: Now is Perdue, I mean they're in Salisbury, right? Is that the main place that you guys deliver to now? You're still going to some of these same areas that you were before, Tappahannock?

J.W.: They're pickup points. The three offloading facilities now is Seaford, Delaware; Salisbury, Maryland; and Norfolk. Perdue acquired all of the Southern States' elevators, and they acquired the export plant in Norfolk that belonged to Cargill.

M.Z.: I don't know if it was you or Jay told me that it's the higher-quality grain that goes to Norfolk for export?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: Where is it being exported to? Do you know?

JEAN: Everywhere.

J.W.: All over the world. Wherever the market sells it. You know, Brazil, everywhere. Russia.

M.Z.: At this point, it's mostly corn and soybean?

J.W.: Wheat, barley –

M.Z.: It's all the same set of, same as it was before. Okay. Because all I see around me where I live is corn and soy. A little bit of wheat, but not that much.

J.W.: When Perdue first started, just about everything went to Salisbury. But they have picked up; the volume has increased so greatly that they got the export market when they bought Cargill down here.

M.Z.: Your pickup points are the same as what you said before? Tappahannock –

JEAN: I thought Kinsale was y'all –

M.Z.: Kinsale – yeah, what I have is Tappahannock, Kinsale, Kilmarnock, Urbanna, and then Trappe. Are those still –

J.W.: They're gone. Urbanna and Trappe are gone.

F.W.: Trappe and all of them are gone. They only went in there two or three times. That's all I remember.

M.Z.: Maybe you can just tell me now what it is, the pickup points. It's Tappahannock –

J.W.: Tappahannock, Kilmarnock, Kinsale, Baltimore, and Seaford.

M.Z.: That's where you pick up from?

J.W.: Right. And we offload in Seaford, Salisbury, and Norfolk.

M.Z.: You said Tappahannock, Kilmarnock, Kinsale, Baltimore, and Seaford?

J.W.: Yes. They're pickup points. And offload places are –

M.Z.: I think I got it. Seaford, Salisbury, and Norfolk.

J.W.: Right.

M.Z.: Okay.

[Begin Ward 1 FR, B.]

M.Z.: Something that's been interesting to a few of us that are working on this project is how, here you are with these tugs and barges – and I think this must be true for you guys in particular, because you're dealing with these kind of rural areas – you have, I assume, fairly large vessels that you're operating, and yet you're some of the few people that really get to go way up into these rivers. You know? You're seeing a whole different

geography that a lot of us don't ever have access to. But you're in these large industrial vessels seeing these very beautiful, very somewhat remote and very natural areas. Is that an accurate thing to say?

F.W.: Yeah, I think so.

M.Z.: Like, you're going way up the Nanticoke and the Wicomico, aren't you?

J.W.: Yes.

M.Z.: Is that making any sense what I'm saying to you, that, you know, you're kind of like an intermediary between these very rural places and more urban ports.

J.W.: We hear it from these water associations. I think they have a Maryland Waterway Association or something like that. They have a board that talks about, they monitor the Nanticoke and the Wicomico. They get a lot of grief from the landowners even though we're not the only one. The gravel barges go up these rivers. Oil barges go up these rivers. They get a lot of grief, I think, from the landowners, like everything. You know? But then on the flip side of that, they say we're destroying the river, we're disturbing the bottom and stuff like that. Well, you know, hey.

On the flip side of that, we shoved some barges out of Seaford, Delaware, that carried 230,000 bushels. Two-twenty-five, anyway, thousand bushels. If you break that into 900 bushels per tractor trailer, look at the traffic that it's going to put on the road in Seaford or Tappahannock or everywhere. It's a tradeoff, plus it's cheaper to go by water than it is by truck.

M.Z.: Sure, because you have such volume and you can transport it very efficiently.

J.W.: But as we know, you can't satisfy everybody.

M.Z.: I was just wondering what it's like for you more, like, personally, to be on these tugs and barges and to going way up in these rivers. It just must be an interesting kind of perspective.

JEAN: It gets tiresome after about three to four times.

J.W.: Yeah. I mean, yeah, it's like driving to work. I mean, it's pretty, you know, no doubt about it, it's pretty and stuff like that, but it's a lot of stress too. You've got people watching every move you make.

JEAN: With binoculars.

J.W.: You know? We even have them taking pictures and putting things on the websites and stuff saying –

M.Z.: These are the homeowners?

J.W.: Yeah, in different areas, you know. I mean every little thing. The Nanticoke is narrow when you get up around Sharptown, it starts getting narrower, you know. Somebody will say, "Oh, I think he's too close to my pier." Well, it's nothing like as wide as this here. They'll say, "I think he's getting too close to my pier on that turn." You know, and he jumps on the internet and he puts, "Oh, the tugs are at their old tricks."

I mean, it's a big thing there. I mean, we've even had them, and it might be still on the internet, where we had three tugs tied up in Seaford, Delaware, at Perdue's plant. I think it might have been Thanksgiving or some holiday. Everybody had a chance to come home. So we tied them up at Perdue's plant. A big thing comes out on the Internet: the tugs are at it again. They're blocking the waterway. We're tied up at the dock and everybody's home. You know, but other people see that and they say, "Oh, we need to do something about that."

These three tugboats are tied up, they're tied at Perdue's facility. They're not impeding traffic, they're not in the channel. The refrigerator's plugged in. Everybody's in Deltaville. So you've got people watching you all the time. I mean, we go to Seaford, Delaware, they've got some barges up there that the facility can't load both sides of barges so they load down one side of it.

Then our job is to turn that barge around and put it to the dock so they can load the other side. It's always people on the bank up there at the boat ramp in Seaford, Delaware, in the little park and stuff. You don't know if they just want pictures, or they're getting ready to go to the internet when you're turning this barge around, because the barge is 260 feet long. What do you do? You either turn it around or you say, "Hey, I can't turn that around, Frank." Like, when he was living. Then next thing you know, everybody says, "I'll do it." You know?

F.W.: You do it.

J.W.: So you do it. You know? They jump; you say how high, to a certain point. So what do you do? You do the best you can and try to be respectful for everything and try not to – but you know you're going to stir up a little bit of mud.

M.Z.: I wasn't aware that you guys were dealing with that level of hostility from people. Has that changed? Has it gotten more so?

JEAN: Yeah, it's worse.

J.W.: Has the world changed? (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Can you describe how things have changed, and do you have any ideas why that is?

J.W.: It used to be – I don't know. Floyd can tell you more about that.

F.W.: We've been out it for twenty-one years. This hostility wasn't there when we were working.

M.Z.: Was not there?

F.W.: Was not there. So it's a different ballgame altogether –

M.Z.: What was it like? Was there more respect for the kind of work that you were doing back then?

F.W.: I guess they respected us, but we didn't have anybody speaking against, or kicking mud in the creek, or stirring up mud. We didn't have that.

JEAN: We didn't have the competition that they do either.

J.W.: You know, and it's not necessarily the competition 'cause all this stuff I'm telling you about is coming from people that live in the area. I mean, the elevators have problems. People live nearby or it might be a marina next door. Years ago, nobody paid much attention to the dust from the grain. Now, Lord knows how much money's been spent on trying to control the dust. So it's like everything. I mean, it used to be, you could give your child a lickin'. You know?

JEAN: You can't spank them anymore.

J.W.: If they spit in your face, you could whack them. You can't do that no more either. So it's just –

M.Z.: Do you think the kind of hostility that you're dealing with just comes from new people moving in to the area? People who aren't from these areas and they just aren't used to this kind of industry? Or is it just a greater density?

J.W.: Well, years ago, if you wanted to put a dock down, you could put your dock down. Now, it'd take you about a year to get the permits. It's rules and regulations, and these people know that these rules and regulations are out there, and they just stir it up. I mean, you can do anything you want if you want to.

All you've got to do is put a article in the paper whether it's true or false, and it goes from there. Because it's like I tell everybody, it's almost to the point now if you don't have a job telling everybody else what to do, you're out of work.

JEAN: These people have retired and bought these wonderful pieces of land which is on the rivers, beautiful scenery. That's all they have to do is to see sometimes how much trouble they can stir.

J.W.: Well, a prime example. Just before you get up to Salisbury, it's a guy there that lives on the river. Right? He's got a real high bank. His land is slanted like this where his house is. It's a real high bank. All the water that goes up there around his yard and everywhere runs to the river, right? He didn't have anything that – just a bank right down into the water.

The water coming down the hill was washing his hill away. You could tell that's where it was, 'cause most of the damage was up top. He blamed it on the tugboats, and he went before every board in the state of Delaware fussing about the tugboats and the wakes.

Yet people could run up and down there in speedboats and jet skis and all that stuff. We don't draw as much wake 'cause we're not going but like four-and-a-half, five, six knots. But what he wanted, and he finally got it, his whole front of his yard now, his whole – his thing is stoned from one end to the other. The state did it 'cause he kept hollering.

Finally, I mean he went, I mean, we'd go up there and when you got to Seaford, Delaware, you'd look and here come the Marine Police and everybody down there, or the Coast Guard or whoever. Because he would say, "Too much wake, got too close to my pier, and you're eroding my hill." But mostly it was rainwater making it fall down. So finally, the state of Delaware ripped his shoreline.

M.Z.: What are your relationships like with some of these state agencies? I imagine Perdue must be a pretty powerful entity. Do you get support for your industry because it's a significant part of the economy?

J.W.: You get mixed, I would say, and that's with anything. I would say most people like it. They like to take pictures of the boats. A lot of times, we have people come down and come up alongside you in a yacht, taking pictures or hollering, you know, "Where you going?" Or some people, you develop a little bit of a rapport with some of these people. They see you coming and going. But it's always a few.

M.Z.: Yeah, that was my impression, that most people kind of like a tugboat. You know?

J.W.: Oh, yeah.

M.Z.: There's just some kind of appeal. There's even so many kids' books and videos and cartoons that are kind of based on tugs.

J.W.: You'll find that most people on the water, whether they're crabbing, dredging, are very friendly people. Go out of their way to do anything for you and help you. But it's just, that's the way it is.

M.Z.: What about overall just the increasing regulations in the industry? Is that something that you have seen in the course of your career? What do you think about that?

J.W.: Well, you saw a lot of change in your time. Licensing and inspections and –

F.W.: I think most of it's come though, since y'all really got into it, other than us. We could go sit to get a license, and it would just be a man there and after you got through, we'd go to lunch together. That's the type of people you met. But now, you don't have that. Even your letter that you get back from the Coast Guard makes you upset to read it.

M.Z.: It was kind of people in your community.

J.W.: But it's so many –

M.Z.: How so? What kind of correspondence do you get from the Coast Guard?

F.W.: I don't know. They just –

JEAN: Put you down.

F.W.: Just put you down and little things. I don't know, it's just hard to explain the way. When I was going, we'd go to have lunch together with the man. I cursed the Coast Guard man out one time. I didn't cuss him direct, but he got the message. Anyway, he goes back in and tells the commandant down in the Coast Guard station in Norfolk. He come up and got on me, tell him I better not – better not happen again.

JEAN: Now they're best friends with that man. They are.

F.W.: That same man, when I went to set for my license, I looked up and he was the man that I had cursed was giving me my license. I got to a part of it I didn't understand. I'd been out of high school for years. I asked him how to do some kind of a equation or something in dividends. Anyway, I didn't know how to do it, and he told me. We went out to lunch together.

J.W.: But it's gotten so many rules and regulations now, it's just getting preposterous really.

F.W.: We didn't have nothing like that.

J.W.: I mean, now it takes like, when I got my license, I went to Baltimore and took the test. You passed it; you were done. That was Coast Guard-inspected license, freight and passenger. That was around 1970, '71, somewhere in that area. Now, it'll take you two or three years. You have to start out getting this, you have to get a – it's just, I mean, the AB ticket, you have to get your deckhand. You have to get steersman classes, you have to have a radar observer thing, you have to get your captain's license.

Then you have to get your towing endorsement, you have to be a member of STCW. It's just a pile of stuff nowadays. So now, they're getting ready to implement inspection on tugboats. Jay's girlfriend went on the Internet and the whole thing, if you get it all, it's about eighty pages. Then you have to read through that to see what applies to you and what doesn't.

They had a seminar about a month ago. My son and his girlfriend went down and sat in on that seminar and listened to the Coast Guard talk. Different other tug agencies spoke. You know, 'cause they're trying to condense it, so they were getting some input from the industry. It's going to go, and it's going to be so much paperwork that's going to have to be done every day. You're almost going to need someone to take care of it.

JEAN: A secretary on the boat to ride with you.

J.W.: I mean, you have to have safety meetings. You have to have fire drills. I'm not saying these are bad things, but you need to get the job done, too. You can't make this world 100 percent safe. You just can't do it. But everything on the tugboat has to be checked off every day, your towing gear, your running lights, your electrical equipment, your radar. You have to go through all this. Then you have to log your fueling procedure, you have to log your trash procedures, how you get rid of your trash. All of this has to be done every day. That's fine, but then it gets into, you've got to work too.

I would rather have a man that grew up in the business and knows what to do on the water and knows how to run that boat than I would somebody that knows how to do checks because a lot of that goes on. They get this time in in some kind of way, and they go over and they take a test, and they get their license, and they're really smart. No doubt about it. But he's a couch potato, as far as I'm concerned, when he gets on the boat. You just do not need him. He couldn't take that boat and get out the creek if his life depended on it.

M.Z.: So are you talking about these younger guys who are coming out of these academies?

J.W.: A lot of them. Yes, a lot of them.

M.Z.: Have you worked with any of them, or how does it work with your crews on your tugs? Who are your crew members?

J.W.: Well, we have a captain, a mate, and a deckhand is what we have.

M.Z.: How long are the runs that you're taking?

J.W.: I don't know, something like twenty-four, twenty-five hours.

M.Z.: So it's not big long most of the –

J.W.: No. But they're saying now, I was reading a article night before last, all this Coast Guard inspection stuff is coming into effect that we're going to have to comply with. Well, a few years ago, we put these Hiller fire safe systems on all the boats. The Coast Guard said we need them. You've got a fire alarm in the engine room, you've got one in the berthing area, one in the galley, and one in the wheelhouse.

If they see any heat on anything or whatever, they'll sound an alarm. We put them on all our boats. Got a thing from the Coast Guard yesterday, they're not accepted no more. You've got 'til 2013 to get rid of that and get something else. Two years ago or three years ago, they were okay. Now they're not good.

They weren't cheap. Plus the down time of getting them off, scheduling an appointment for the people to come in and stuff like that, that's just one thing. There's talk that, well it's in the *Professional Mariner* now, that we do a six-on, six-off stand watch. That's standard procedure for tugboats. But they're saying now, a man that steers from six to twelve, and then he's supposed to sleep from twelve to six, day and night.

M.Z.: Really?

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: That's going to be the standard on all tugs?

J.W.: Well, that's already the standard. If you go on –

M.Z.: But it's never been that way, has it?

J.W.: Yeah, it's been like that a long time. But you have a mate's watch and a captain's watch. The captain usually does from six to twelve at night. Then the mate does from twelve to six. Then the captain comes back on six to twelve. That's the way they do it. Now they're saying that that's not a good system because you don't get enough sleep.

M.Z.: Oh, I see. I misunderstood what you were saying.

J.W.: Well do you sleep twelve hours in twenty-four? Huh?

M.Z.: No.

J.W.: Nobody does. If a man steers from six to twelve in the middle of the day, he can't go down there, and flip a switch, and go to sleep. You know? He may want to read. He may want to watch TV. But all of that has to be logged too. You're supposed to log that.

JEAN: You can't look at TV?

J.W.: You're not in your sleep – you're not in your sleep thing if you signed off –

JEAN: They're going to tell you when to sleep and when to wake up?

J.W.: That's exactly right. You signed off as your duty at twelve o'clock. You signed off in the wheelhouse. By Coast Guard regulations, you're supposed to go right to bed. You're supposed to get six hours of sleep. You're supposed to log that, all of what you're doing. You're supposed to go down.

When you log off, then you know you're on your time off; Coast Guard says you're supposed to sleep six hours. Well, if you go down there and watch television, or you go down there and call your girlfriend or your wife, or you write a letter, or you read, anything like that, that is taken from your sleep period. If anything goes wrong, they'll say, "Well, Mr. Ward," and I know this for a fact –

JEAN: You only slept three hours.

J.W.: "Mr. Ward, you had here you went in sleep mode. But your phone record says you answered the phone at 2:30. So you weren't sleep. Therefore, you didn't get enough sleep." They're talking about changing that to some other thing like so many hours on, or making you have another man, a three-man wheelhouse crew. So everybody but – I can tell you. Three men on a boat, they get in the way.

M.Z.: Especially with the shorter trips that you guys are making. I would think –

J.W.: But it don't make no difference. I don't care if you're going around the world, you can't sleep but so much. You know? You sleep six hours, you can't get up for six, and go back to sleep for six. Another new rule that they're thinking about, and I don't think it's right away, but in a few years, you're going to have to have monitors in your wheelhouse at all times. It's going to be monitors in your wheelhouse with a general alarm in your boat.

M.Z.: A monitor, like a device, you mean?

J.W.: Yes, a motion detector. If that motion detector doesn't detect movement in that wheelhouse in so many seconds or so many minutes, it's going to sound a general alarm because they think you've either fell asleep or had a heart attack.

M.Z.: Wow.

F.W.: That's kind of getting into your –

J.W.: But that's what they're doing.

M.Z.: What's motivating these regulations? Where's this coming from?

J.W.: People sitting behind a desk with nothing to do but think of stuff for everybody else to do. It's like I said, if you don't have a job telling everybody else what to do, you're out of work.

F.W.: About right.

J.W.: Those are the things that's coming.

M.Z.: It sounds like you must be so frustrated with just where things are going with this industry. This kind of work must be near and dear to your heart because it's been in your family so long, and you must feel a lot of pride and a sense of accomplishment.

J.W.: It is, and I do. We do a good job at what we do. They did a good job; we do a good job.

M.Z.: Do you think that there is a viable future for this industry, or do you think these kind of regulations are going to interfere?

J.W.: I think what's going to happen, that people are going to get so limited that can fill all the criteria that the government or the Coast Guard wants. I mean, we have agencies like AW, American Waterway Organization. They are working with the Coast Guard for new rules and regulations. So they think up this stuff. I mean, it's just, they come up with this stuff.

Then the big companies get so if you're not a member of AWO, we're not going to hire you. I mean, I've run into a couple situations of that with this boat. If you're a member of American Waterway Organization – and basically that is a form of Coast Guard inspection on everything. Everything you do has to be documented. I've been reading a lot on this stuff lately.

M.Z.: Where do you read about it?

J.W.: *Professional Mariner*, Internet, getting bulletins in the mail, and stuff like that.

M.Z.: Is it insurance companies that are kind of pushing some of this stuff?

J.W.: I would assume it's a combination of all because these new inspectors that we're going to have to have for Coast Guard inspection, they're not going to actually be Coast Guard people. They're going to be outside surveyors. If I wanted to, I can apply for one of those positions, to be a surveyor for tugboats.

You can't use the same surveyor over, I don't know, like one or two years. Then you have to get another one. You know, I guess they figure that'd be crooked. You've got to rotate around. They're looking into the industry for people with knowledge of this stuff that want to be surveyors. The paperwork's going to be, you know, out of my caliber. But it's just getting –

F.W.: You're probably going to have to have somebody up in your company setting up there just to interpret the rules that you can work by.

J.W.: Yeah.

F.W.: A lot of that's in Norfolk now, right?

J.W.: A lot of that's in Norfolk. They have people hired. Well, there's a couple tugboat companies right now that have people hired that do nothing but go to these meetings, and do that. It's one guy in Norfolk that, he's made that his job to go to these meetings, and come back to you, and get you in compliance.

M.Z.: I'm thinking about you guys being one of the last, if not the last, family-owned and operated businesses. This kind of thing has to hit you guys much differently than it does Vane Brothers or Moran or these big consolidated companies where they have this big administrative office staff.

J.W.: Right. That's exactly right. They've got people. I mean, I know Vane Brothers has one girl, and I know her, that all she does is arranges transportation for the crews to and from the boats. She coordinates all of that. If they've got a boat in New Orleans, they've got to get home. The other crew got to get down, and she coordinates their airfare, their motel rooms, and all up wherever, you know.

Most of them have a van that leaves out of the Lakeright (ph) Motel down in Virginia Beach that they all meet there. Two men are designated to take care of that van and drive it. Then when you go up, the crew coming back, he keeps the van and maintains it and all that. When they getting ready to go back after their two weeks, everybody meets at Lakeright. They get in the van and they go on to Philadelphia.

F.W.: Just a big change.

J.W.: It is, and I like to go to work and do my job. It's just like someone told me, "You old boys can't hide forever." We just kind of do our thing, stay away from everybody. We don't mingle with them. We don't try to get their work. We just do our thing. It's been okay. But all of this stuff is changing a lot of it, it really is.

F.W.: You going to mingle whether you want to or not.

J.W.: Whether you want to or not.

M.Z.: I guess it's going to be up to Jay to decide how he wants to deal with all that kind of stuff, and if he wants to keep on dealing with it.

J.W.: We're hoping his girlfriend/future wife helps him a lot. She's doing a lot. She made up all these folders. She went on the Internet and printed everything out. She outlined everything in there that's going to pertain to us. She made one for Floyd, she made one for me, she made one for Jay, and she made one for Mel. Each one got the name on it and stuff. It's everything in there pertaining to this new Coast Guard inspection. Now it's up to us to get it done. But she's right sharp at it.

M.Z.: And I guess like you're saying, you need somebody like that who's pretty much just focusing on that sort of thing.

J.W.: It's getting to that point that you need somebody that is going to take care of all of that kind of stuff, and keep up with it for you, you know, different rules.

JEAN: Sounds like she's got a job.

J.W.: Yeah, she's got a job.

M.Z.: We've been talking for about an hour-and-a-half, so it might be time for us to take a little pause here. We can continue either this afternoon or tomorrow if you guys want to. I would like to get more into just some of like what it's like actually being on the tug and the daily life kind of things. I think that's a big interest to people when they come to the exhibit.

J.W.: It's testing at times. Isn't it, Floyd?

M.Z.: Also, a woman who I work with was asking me to ask you guys about – I don't even know quite how to word it, but – well, let me just tell you. One of the guys that I interviewed, he lives in St. Michaels where I am, but he's working in the Gulf. He's a young guy and he's a tankerman, and he's working like in the inland waterways down there.

He was telling me about how when you're in that shallow water, you can kind of feel the bottom, and sort of bump up against the bottom intentionally. Anyway, the woman I was working with was asking me to talk to you guys about that, whether you, when you're up in these rivers like the Nanticoke or the Wicomico, do you have that same sort of connection?

J.W.: First of all, you're not supposed to touch the bottom. That's a no-no for the Coast Guard. If you touch the bottom, you're supposed to notify them right away. You can be fined heavy duty for that. If you get aground, the fine is worse if you don't report it than it is if you do. But most times, you're watching your barge, but if you do it enough, you know where the water is.

M.Z.: I guess it's more, she was wondering like, since you deal with a range of habitats, you're in very shallow water systems, but then you're in much deeper water systems. If you're going down to Norfolk, that's almost like open ocean down there, isn't it?

J.W.: Yeah.

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: She was just curious to hear what it's like working between those two different sort of –

J.W.: Well in weather, can be a lot of work. The biggest things with the rivers is that you have to stay on your toes getting in and out of them with the fog.

F.W.: After you leave the bay boats and move into the tugs, you've got your load dock there and you're setting up in this little boat up in front of it, either towing it or pushing it. It's a difference, because the *John W*, when I went down the bay in that, when I got about maybe eight miles from Thimble, I could get up. I knew where I was at because of the rumble that the boat was making when it got in that shallow water. I mean, it's almost like a thing, idle that gas. He didn't have to call me. When I heard that she'd start rumbling a little bit, I'd get up. It's just a thing that you do.

J.W.: Most of the time, we have her run slow coming out of the Nanticoke. We run slow most of the time 'til we get on down, well, below Woodland Ferry, Sharptown, somewhere in that area. Still, sometimes you don't put it on a run until you get down below Vienna, really get on a run, especially with the *Ellis*. They'd come on down the river kind of slow 'til they get below Vienna, Maryland. Then they'll put her on a run.

F.W.: And there's a place it's eleven foot.

J.W.: Yeah. Out there –

F.W.: So you're drawing eleven –

J.W.: Well, you're drawing ten-and-a-half feet. There is a draft restriction on those rivers. I think it's ten foot. I'm pretty sure it's ten foot. They load the barges before we get there. They're setting their load. So we stay on them about that, but sometimes they might be drawing a little bit more than that.

JEAN: Where did you find that?

F.W.: No, I couldn't find the one. That's the one – you've seen that one, haven't you?

J.W.: Yeah, that's the *Nora W*.

F.W.: That's the *Nora W* setting alongside of a boat, inside of it.

J.W.: That's before y'all bought her, or about the time you bought her?

F.W.: I think it was before we bought it. We're talking about the cleanness of the harbors, that's what got on this boat in Baltimore Harbor at that time, probably back in the fifties, sixties?

J.W.: Yeah. Used to get on right heavy in the fifties, but that might have been before that. That's Bunker C oil.

F.W.: Most of that comes from the Coast Guard or the Navy.

J.W.: See that black mark? That's where she been sitting in the water when they unload her. When she came out the water, it coated her. 'Cause she's supposed to be like that all over.

M.Z.: No kidding? Wow.

F.W.: Can you see the boat inside of it?

M.Z.: I think so.

F.W.: It's hard to picture it.

JEAN: A boat inside of it.

F.W.: The chase, I think.

J.W.: I ain't never noticed that.

F.W.: You hadn't?

JEAN: I can't see it either.

F.W.: Let me look at it again. Make sure I'm –

J.W.: Where is that one of granddaddy Ward's, daddy's boat loaded up? Show her that one when you turn it over. That'll amaze her.

F.W.: I think she's in there, but she's so coated with tar and stuff, that you can't hardly see it.

M.Z.: Pete Leshner, I don't know if you guys know him, he's the curator of the museum, our museum, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. He might be interested in borrowing some of your all's photos for this exhibit if that's something you'd be interested in or willing

F.W.: John's got a lot of pictures.

M.Z.: Oh, that's great. Now, what is this?

JEAN: That's his grandfather's boat, and all of that is watermelons.

M.Z.: Yeah, that's fantastic.

JEAN: Okay. Turn it over.

J.W.: I don't have any of the *Chief*.

F.W.: You don't?

J.W.: No, I gave them all away when y'all were trying to sell her.

F.W.: Yeah, that's what happened to me, a few different boats I got rid of.

M.Z.: That's incredible. The reflection.

J.W.: Isn't that something?

JEAN: You see, this is right, 'cause see how straight the mast is and you can see waders in that one.

F.W.: That was got out of the *National Geographic*. That's the one, wasn't it?

J.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Oh, I think this would be a great photo. Is this the *Iva W*?

JEAN: No, that was a boat, I don't know the name of her.

F.W.: *Louise Travers*.

M.Z.: I can see Crisfield, it says Crisfield here.

JEAN: That belonged to his grandfather, his daddy's –

J.W.: Wasn't that picture was taken in Salisbury, Maryland?

F.W.: Yeah, at Salisbury, Maryland. Now it's nothing but townhouses and condos.

M.Z.: That's a great photograph.

JEAN: This is a picture of the *Iva W* with the sail on her. And what's that other boat, Floyd?

F.W.: *Sarah May*.

JEAN: That's another boat of theirs.

F.W.: She was on the shipyard here right in Fishing Bay.

JEAN: But that's what the *Iva W* looked like except –

F.W.: And both of them had sails on them. Did you notice that?

JEAN: Except we don't know the sail. That was before –

F.W.: I know them.

JEAN: Well, I didn't. I never saw the sail.

J.W.: See, a lot of that stuff, way back, I don't know. I started around '55 on.

F.W.: Here's one that's the best one of all. I want y'all to see this. That's one of that boat we was talking about awhile ago, the old *Parkins*? That's where we put her out to die. Every year, you could see her go right on down. You can still see a little piece of her.

M.Z.: Where is that?

J.W.: That's you, ain't it, Floyd?

F.W.: That's me.

M.Z.: That's you?

F.W.: Yeah, a neighbor and my cousin.

M.Z.: Look at you. You're all wearing a jacket and a tie.

F.W.: He brought that to me. I can't remember –

JEAN: He was dressed up with a tie out racing a boat, running a boat around the creek.

F.W.: That was Mel's boat.

J.W.: Was it?

F.W.: It was Mel's boat, yes.

M.Z.: Now where did you say this is?

F.W.: It's just down further (sic). The state dock is where it was taken.

M.Z.: Before I turn the recorder off, is there anything else you want to add? Is there something that we didn't talk about that you think it's important for us to address in the interview or in the exhibit overall? We can, of course, continue tomorrow or this afternoon if you want to think about it.

JEAN: We won't be here tonight, and tomorrow he has a doctor's appointment in Newport News tomorrow in the morning. So how does that work in with you?

F.W.: Well, John will be here, or Jay will be here, and Milt will be here.

J.W.: I feel like I've said enough.

JEAN: You never know. She might ask something different.

F.W.: I've been out of this business for twenty-one years, so when you get beyond that, I don't understand it hardly because I'm ashore and I stayed ashore. I didn't, say, go on the boat the next day. Or Junior never, my son, he never asked me to come on. Maybe he done it for a reason. I think the main reason, he was smoking. He didn't want me to see him smoking. But he got cancer from it.

J.W.: My dad, he went on the boats, but he liked it. He just liked to be, you know, he went with my son a lot. Daddy never had many hobbies. Floyd was involved in other things.

M.Z.: I guess since this might be the only time we have to talk before we turn the recorder off, a lot of the people that I've talked to, they say, "Well, when you're on a tug, it's kind of like a family because it's a small space. It's just so many people working together very intensely. You have to work together well. You have to cooperate and all of that." Hopefully, you are. But for you guys, it's not only like a family, it literally is a family. Right? I guess aboard any particular tug, you're not necessarily all family because you had other people crewing for you, didn't you?

F.W.: Yeah.

J.W.: Well, they always went with their equipment. Floyd Junior and I, when we come on, we're the only two – I mean, another generation I guess – that let someone else run our equipment. Like they never let anybody do that. Floyd and I didn't do it either when we had our bay boats.

But since the tugboats have come along, we've had to change up a little bit on stuff. I had a few health issues years ago. I started letting someone else run my boat and I just kind of stayed with it because my dad was real sick. It just worked out, you know. Then Floyd had his health problems, so he started letting people take his boat also.

JEAN: See, our next son is captain on Floyd Junior's boat, and our youngest son is on his crew.

M.Z.: So it is all family? Has that been an enjoyable part of the work?

JEAN: Yes and no.

F.W.: It's like a marriage, you know?

JEAN: Good and bad.

F.W.: It's like a marriage. It has its ups and downs. But my dad always said, "What's the trouble about getting mad is getting un-mad." That's a lot harder.

JEAN: When they retired, all three of them were on the *Gram-Me* together, he and his two brothers, three of them. So they were getting along okay. He figured, well you know, we need to quit this because first thing you know, we are going to get into it. We can have arguments now and get pleased, but it might come to a point that we might have something and it might last.

J.W.: They had worked together since they got out of high school.

JEAN: So they retired.

J.W.: But they all operated their each individual boats. Well then when the tug came along, that put all three of them, three captains on one boat.

F.W.: Yeah, that was unhappy time. I didn't like that at all.

JEAN: Everybody knew a better way of doing it.

M.Z.: Can you talk about that a little bit?

F.W.: I don't know. Just things happens on boats, you know. "I want to get home, so I want my – I want to go home – I want to go to Kilmarnock." "I want to go in Jacksons Creek and tie up." It was that type of thing that would start it.

M.Z.: And everybody was used to being in charge.

F.W.: Yeah, that's right. It was just hard to adjust to. Mel, he was hardheaded at times. He was, I'd say, he liked to be boss all the time, mostly. He didn't let you have your way too damn much (laughter). But Milt was pretty easy though ordinarily until you got him going. I see him and Mel go together off in Broom's Island one day caught in same two points. Coming here and going there. They got hot. But we got along fairly well. We didn't have no big things.

J.W.: I'll tell you what they did, when they decided to retire, Milt, the youngest one, wasn't old enough to draw Social Security. I think they all kept working. I think Daddy was like, what, sixty-four, sixty-five?

F.W.: He was sixty-five, I think.

J.W.: Daddy was sixty-five, and all three of them stayed on there until all three of them could come ashore and get their Social Security, Milt could get his Social Security too when he came home.

M.Z.: They all stayed on together?

J.W.: All three of them stayed on it.

F.W.: I was sixty-three. Mel was sixty-five.

JEAN: Milt was just sixty-two.

J.W.: The day they quit, all three of them walked off and came home. When daddy was over there sick, Floyd came to see him every day. My dad was confined to a wheelchair for like, three or four years I guess. Very few days that Floyd had gone somewhere that he didn't walk over there and see Daddy. I appreciated that, I really did. Milt would come by once or twice a week, say.

F.W.: Yeah.

M.Z.: So even though sometimes the three captains could kind of butt heads, it sounds like you all really have been very close, and just really take care of each other.

J.W.: Fight amongst ourself, but don't you fight with none of them. (Laughter.)

F.W.: Yeah. That's about the way it worked.

M.Z.: Do you have any thoughts about, like if you were to sum up what has the role of this industry, the tug industry and just kind of the cargo industry, meant to the Chesapeake Bay area? What's the importance of it? What message would you give to the general public about that? I'm thinking about the exhibit, you know, and what we want to tell people about the role that this industry has played in the history of this area.

J.W.: I think it's played a very vital part in the Chesapeake Bay and the transportation of the products that the state of Virginia and Maryland produce. It's a cheaper way to transport it, you can transport more volume, and it's less fuel consumption –

JEAN: Less pollution.

J.W.: — you know, to the air and stuff. It creates a tremendous amount of jobs with the people in the industry, whether it was the seafood industry, the tugboat industry, because most people that were in the seafood industry, just about all of Tangier Island, have all switched over to tugboat work because they know that they know the water business. It's a good way to make a living. I have no complaints about that. It's been fun. It has, you know, I mean like everything else. I've enjoyed it.

JEAN: It's a good living.

J.W.: I hate to see a lot, the rules and the regulations that are almost getting to be impossible to follow between the licensing and just the things that we – I agree we need to protect the Chesapeake Bay. You can't do it all and still use it, the Chesapeake Bay, I mean. You just can't do it. I mean, you meet a lot of nice people. You hope they like you, too. I mean, tugboat people are courteous people.

I would say in an average, on a whole, they're courteous people. A lot of times, if we didn't take evasive actions, it'd be a lot of sailboats and pleasure crafts that didn't make it, you know, if it wasn't for the tugboat taking evasive action even though we're right, we have the right-of-way or we're doing what we're supposed to do and other people don't. That's a known fact.

M.Z.: You deal with that a lot with the recreational?

J.W.: Yes. Jet skis, speedboats and stuff, they don't realize the danger. They have to have no training. They don't have any license involved. In other words, they have nothing that they can be punished for where people on tugboats have license and documents and time and money invested in that that we're responsible for and can be taken from us.

The average pleasure boater, sail boater and all that kind of stuff, I mean, anybody can go up the road, if you've got the money, you can buy any yacht you want, come down and splash, go. It might be some repercussions there, but still, he's not as liable for his livelihood as we are. We're the ones that can be punished for every little thing that goes wrong.

JEAN: They can come and tie up as close to your house as they want to tie up and nobody says anything. See, we've got three or four out there now, but sometimes they come up in here real, real close to you.

F.W.: They've had as high as eighteen in here, sailboats.

JEAN: Which really doesn't matter.

F.W.: They're all good people, no trouble with them.

JEAN: We've met quite a few very personal (sic - personable) people, and liked them, and good friends with a few.

F.W.: That boy that's from Snow Hill, his parents started coming here and anchoring in the creek. My dad would row out there and talk to them. After my dad died, they inherited us, they adopted us to come. Anyway, their son, he learned – where did he go up there, in some Marines place for his license?

JEAN: He went to, up into Connecticut to a maritime school.

F.W.: Some maritime school. He's a pilot now for the state of Maryland on one of them big ships. The onliest thing, it's just a matter of a few months, he'll be licensed by any ship.

M.Z.: Master mariner?

F.W.: Yeah. See now, you start in tonnage and you work up. This one is 30,000 ton. Well then you go to a fifty. Well, he's got one more step and he'll be unlimited what he can take. They can call him anytime for anything. So he's got a good job.

M.Z.: I wonder if knowing your family, if that inspired him at all?

F.W.: No. No, we didn't have nothing to do with that. Not at all.

JEAN: No, this was long before that.

J.W.: The people on the bay that are working the tugboats and stuff perform a great service for the people that are living inland, like transporting the grain. My boat just got in Seaford, Delaware with a barge. The elevator's filled up. They need to get rid of it. I was just talking with the captain, and he said everybody over there is on the docks jumping up and down, "Where you been? Hurry up and get the barge in position. What took you so long?"

Once he gets her in position, that's room for 125,000 bushels or 130,000 bushels of soybean that if we don't get it out of there, it's in the field. The farmer wants to hurry up, and get it out of the fields. Now, I don't know if he's in a bigger rush or maybe he wants to get it out before deer hunting season starts, you know? But he wants it out.

These barges perform, I mean, all the elevators right now are waiting on these barges, so we need to get that as soon as possible. Same thing applies with the construction work, with the aggregate barges that travel from Havre de Grace, Maryland all up and down the Eastern Shore and the Western Shore with bulk materials. Progress requires aggregate for concrete and roads and everything else that they use it in.

So the interstructure (sic – infrastructure) all around the Chesapeake Bay is relying on that. Same thing applies with Vane Brothers. Everybody around the Chesapeake Bay as far as New York, on up and down and everywhere, the people inside is depending on that gas and oil to be delivered like, say, Salisbury and all of these other places so it can be distributed. Well, it depends on the tugboat and the barge industry for all of these things, plus the government depends on it a lot for transporting different things.

M.Z.: Do you mean military stuff?

J.W.: Yeah. Moving a lot of stuff, like they have boats like in shipyards and stuff. We went up one time to Curtis Bay, picked up a big Army tug that had been decommissioned, and brought it back down the Bay to a shipyard so they could get it re-commissioned and stuff like that. Tugboats play a vital thing in stuff like that.

Containers. Travelling, the ships come in and it's got containers that are bound for Baltimore and they ship in Norfolk, I think it's McAllister. They run daily trips to and from Baltimore carrying the containers that are in Norfolk that need to go to Baltimore and vice versa. Then they load here.

The James River Port Authority in Richmond, they've developed a program. It's federally funded. They've developed a program for transporting containers from Norfolk up to Richmond Deepwater Terminal. They did that to take care of the gas, the fuel oil, the pollution, and the wear and tear on the highways. So all of that revolves around the tugboat and barge industry also.

M.Z.: So really important roles in so many different aspects of the economy.

J.W.: It used to be, even with the railroad, tugboats pull – and her dad did that from Little Creek over to Cape Charles. That's where the railroad stopped at on the Eastern Shore. So tugboat transported back and forth across there with the rail cars. Of course, the Bay Bridge and modernized trucks stopped a lot of that to the point where it's almost gone now, I think, that the box cars don't go back and forth across there.

The more they do like that, modernization puts the stress on everything, back to the seed oysters, everything revolutionized on up to present day. I don't know what will be the next phase out there, years to come. We've watched the bay boats go away. We watched the middle-size boats go away. We're in the barge system now with the tugboats. What will be the next phase?

Farmers now have gotten so they're growing soybeans for China or Japan. It's a special soybean. They're loading them in containers right on their farms. There's people uptown here, and I think some of them are doing it across there, so new place getting ready to go into effect right in Norfolk not far from Perdue. They're developing it now for beans with containers to come in. And they'll load those.

The container will leave the farm, go down there, they pick the container up, put it on the ship, and go on across the ocean with it. When they get over there, they can unload it off the shipping container, put it on a truck, and go right where it's got to go. You cut that step out of offloading into an elevator and then a truck having to come get it. It's all packaged, and everything is ready to go when it gets there. So that may be the next thing. I always laughed and joked and said you'll see them filling these containers up with stuff. You'll see a helicopter come in and grab it and go on down the road with it, you know. I mean, you don't know.

F.W.: You don't.

J.W.: You don't know. I mean, that's what's happening so far. And right now, a lot of tugboats and stuff are struggling because of the economy, a lot. I mean, you can figure the aggregate business is way down. If we have a mild winter, the fuel oil system, the barge business will be way down. If we have a drought or anything like that, it affects our business major because we don't have anything else to go do. We focus solely on grain. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

F.W.: It costs y'all how much a hour to operate about?

J.W.: Well, you know, that boat right down there they say burns about seventy to eighty gallons a hour at \$3.30 a gallon. So you figure, that's about \$260 an hour in fuel.

F.W.: Daddy on the *Iva W* was running for about fifteen cents a hour. He burned about two, two-and-a-half gallons. Now he wouldn't do it much, but that's all he spent.

M.Z.: Boy, he never could have predicted all of these changes, could he?

F.W.: No.

J.W.: My dad couldn't either.

M.Z.: I guess nobody knows. You can't know what the future is going to be, but you can see what direction it's heading in, you know, towards these consolidated operations, everything streamlined.

J.W.: Most big, big companies in the past two or three years, they've done a complete revamp of their tugboats. They've built a lot of new tugboats. J.C. Dann has built new boats, I mean brand new. I mean big stuff. Vane Brothers, I think they've had like fifteen or eighteen new boats built in the last years between New Orleans and Salisbury, Maryland.

Everybody is building, but I don't know how it goes, but it's been so much grant money around. I mean, the shipyards have updated, I mean, they put in a thousand – I think it was around a thousand-ton travel lift down in Colonna's shipyard. Mr. Obama helped them all out with that. You know, all grant money. Davis Boatworks put up a great big building for sandblasting. Take that tugboat and go right in the building with it for environmental, see. But little outfits like us?

M.Z.: You don't benefit.

J.W.: If you don't make it, you don't get it.

M.Z.: Before I turn this off, do you want to add anything to what your nephew's saying about the significance of the tug industry and the Chesapeake history and culture?

F.W.: Well, see, I've been out it twenty-one years, so I don't –

M.Z.: But you were in it at the beginning.

F.W.: Well, things we did what we wanted to do when I was in it, pretty much. But now, they have to do what they want them to do. It's different. It's just different, that's all.

JEAN: He has gone and run a boat, just he and one other person. Him and our youngest son at thirteen years old were running the *John W* grain from Tappahannock to Baltimore.

F.W.: Two-and-a-half loads a week.

JEAN: All summer, and he wasn't but thirteen years old.

F.W.: That's when the barge was introduced on the bay, when he come over there and told Mr. Perdue that he would run it two-and-a-half or three cent cheaper than I would. I said, "Well, I don't have anything else to do." I went and kept right on going. We run all winter. Freddy Pruitt (ph) said one day I was going across. He said, "I'd rather have that boat than have the Bank of Crisfield." (Laughter.) But he didn't know how cheap I was running it.

JEAN: But today, if you caught him out, a thirteen-year-old kid on a boat, they'd have him in jail.

F.W.: Shoot, that boat was 150 foot long. What would the government have on that boat? At least thirty, forty people.

J.W.: We moved a boat the other day down at Associate Naval Architect, that shipyard, and they've been bought out by something-or-other engineering. And they get these big government contracts. The guy's name is Horte (ph). He's getting all this government work. It was about a sixty-five foot Coast Guard boat there. We counted like thirty-six men standing on the deck of it. They said don't put no tie marks on my boat. And Jay said, "Turn her loose." (Laughter.)

M.Z.: So, I mean, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like one thing that you're saying, that you're both saying, is that this industry was just a way to work. I mean, it was a vehicle for supporting yourself, supporting your family.

F.W.: Pretty much what it was, to make that dollar.

J.W.: Changed with times.

F.W.: But I was still making good money at them times, even at that cheaper rate, 'cause with just one boy with my son and myself.

JEAN: Gave him \$50 a week, but –

F.W.: I don't know why. That's why I'm aches and pains now.

JEAN: Tell her about one time that we were in Baltimore on the *Mary S Lewis* and we got there on a weekend. I went up with him because he was going to be gone the weekend. We were there for two weeks. His freight was, what, 320-some dollars? What was your freight?

F.W.: \$600, around 600.

JEAN: We had been there for two weeks.

M.Z.: Wow.

F.W.: Nothing we could do about it; they just wouldn't unload it.

JEAN: I left for a weekend, and stayed two weeks.

M.Z.: You just had to wait until they were ready to –

J.W.: See, most tugboats nowadays go on charters, a big oil company's charter. Like Vane Brothers and stuff like that, they go on charters where they charter that boat for so much a day for like two years, whether they use that boat or not, like Sun Oil, Exxon, something like that. They charter them out and then it's up to the company to do what they want to do with the boat. I'll furnish you the boat and the crew for whatever you want it to do, and that's how they can – big companies, big oil, big companies, big money.

M.Z.: But the old days were so different. You just had to wait on the conditions.

JEAN: Yeah, 'cause they just couldn't take the boat out. I don't know why, but they couldn't. Every day, they said, "Well, maybe tomorrow, maybe tomorrow." Then the weekend would come, and then you're there until maybe the next Monday morning, you might with luck, get the grain out. It wasn't a lot of grain. It wasn't nothing to what they carry.

F.W.: About 6,000 bushels, 7,000, in that line. So you start with \$600, roughly. If you make it in three days, you've done good. But two weeks, not much.

J.W.: Do you want to look at this boat?

M.Z.: Sure. Well, I'll go ahead and turn this off. Thank you.

J.W.: You want to go the museum?

M.Z.: Sure, yeah. I'll go ahead and turn this off. Thank you all very much for all of this.

J.W.: I don't know if you're getting the information you want.

[End of interview.]