

Interview Log

Interviewee: Ann Lee Thomas

Interviewed and transcribed: Julie Broadbent

Date: August 6, 2011

Location: Ann Lee Thomas' home

Theme: working in Rock Hall, watermen's wives, Rock Hall

Comments: Included in recording is Rick Morlock (RM) and Glenn Thomas, Ann's husband (GT)

of Cds: 1

[Dog growling]

JB: The dog is like, "I am ready to be recorded." So today is August 6, 2011 and would you just tell me who you are and where we are?

AT: I am Ann Lee Thomas, I was Ann Lee Elburn. I was an Elburn before I married Glenwood and I was born in Chestertown at the woman's hospital which is now Chester River hospital. I've lived here all my life pretty much. We moved around basically in Kent County. My father was a yacht captain and of course he wasn't home much so it was pretty much my mother, my older sister Diana, and my younger twin sisters Susan and Carol so I'm sort of the middle. We were married at St. John's Catholic Church on June 20th 1959 and I have been married for 52 years, I think 52 years, and have lived in Rock Hall. He's never lived anywhere else, I have, but he was born and raised in this house. He was born in this house and it belonged to his parents and when they died, his two sisters didn't want it so we bought it from them. We have done a lot of renovations. We have been here ten years. We have lived in several houses in Rock Hall. He has been a waterman all his life, since he was 14, with his grandfather and his father, pretty much followed in their footsteps. As we go along stop me at any time if you have a question because I don't know where I am going with this.

JB: That's great, actually I had a question about your dad what do you mean he was a yacht captain?

AT: A yacht captain, yes, he worked on the big yachts. He worked for Heineken Beer. All these big companies had these big mega yachts, 70 feet, 60 feet. They all had a captain, a boat captain. They had a butler on the yacht, someone to do the cooking, a chef so he was never home. Eventually my parents divorced and my mother raised the four of us on her own.

JB: Ok, did you go out on the water at all when you were younger?

AT: My sisters and I used to crab by foot with a dip net in what now is Rock Hall creek. It was never dredged out back then, if you have been around the creek it is full of big sailboats. We used to love crabbing with a row boat tied behind, a bushel basket floated on an inner tube and we put the crabs that we caught in the basket.

JB: Did you sell the crabs that you caught or just eat them?

AT: Sometime we ate them and sometimes we used to get a quarter for a crab. We thought that was a lot of money back then and it was.

JB: Roughly what years?

AT: I was like 11 or 12.

JB: Okay.

AT: We were very young. It was a wonder we even survived because I fell overboard at Rock Hall Marine Railway and someone grabbed me by my hair and pulled me out of the water and saved me but we had no fear of the water. We loved it.

JB: So how did you meet your husband?

AT: Well we lived directly across the street in this house, the brick house over here, across the street. And Glennie lived here.

RM: I got to eavesdrop.

AT: You have to eavesdrop. I don't know, Glennie, he was school chums with the guy who owns Rock Hall Railway, Elmer Leary and they went to school together. I was two years behind them so he graduated '56 and I graduated '58. And I don't know how we happen too meet, I was friends with Ann Leary; she Elmer Leary's girlfriend at the time but we were best friends. There weren't many places to go in Rock Hall so we just fell in with them. Stayed friends and we've been friends forever. You know once you make a friend you have them for life.

JB: Sure.

AT: So you better ask some questions.

JB: So, oh nice it is a humming bird. Sorry I have never seen a hummingbird before and there is one right there.

AT: Oh yes it is.

JB: They are beautiful.

AT: It is a male and a female.

JB: Yes, they are.

RM: Imagine that.

AT: I wonder why. [laughter]

JB: So obviously Rock Hall is known for the watermen working the water.

AT: Well it used to be of course as Rick can tell you it's pretty much going by the wayside. I mean they are weeding us out of it.

JB: How did it used to be?

AT: Well it was a watermen's town, plenty of work boats. Come on Rick add something.

RM: The whole water was processing plants.

AT: Yes, of course several, they aren't even around anymore, the rock fish, the crabbing, the oystering, the clamming. I don't think clamming is much anymore. I don't know, I don't think anybody clams anymore. The oyster business is not much I guess. Rick probably knows more about it than I do.

JB: Did you husband fish for all that?

AT: He used to winter fish whether it was icy or cold. I have movies of it you look back and wonder did he really do that and some of these young guys still do it but it's hard it's a hard life.

JB: Did you ever go out and help out?

AT: No, I never went oystering I never went winter fishing. I used to go out when he crab potted. I used to pot and help with that.

JB: What did you do out there crab potting?

AT: I culled the crabs. Do you know what I mean when I say cull? You separate the number ones, the number two, the peelers, the green peelers, and the ripe peelers. That's probably Greek to you but that's what I used to do. And I really got sick one time because we had two motors going, the motor that ran the boat and the motor that ran the...

RM: The winder-

AT: The winder and those fumes sort of got to me and so I had to throw up and that was overboard. I was really sick. The fumes just really made me sick. And Glenney was really nice at the time and said "I guess you want to go home now" and I said "Well no, just keep on going" but that's what I used to do. I went trotlining I go out once in a while now with him. Do you know what I mean when I say trotlining?

JB: Mhm [Affirmative] sure.

AT: The line was baited with chicken necks and you dip for the crabs. That's a lot of these modern day trotliners have winders I mean the, what do you call them?

RM: The dipper.

AT: The dipper, the dipper that you don't dip the crabs at all but the line goes through the dipper and you just pull the crabs in at the end but it's more fun when you actually dip the crabs off the line.

JB: Why is it more fun to do it that way just because its...?

AT: Well you see the crab and you are actually doing something. I mean if you have a winder you aren't watching anything except watch the line come up and over.

JB: So what did you do when he was out on the water but you weren't?

AT: Well I worked full-time.

JB: Oh what did you do?

AT: Well let's see for 18 years I worked at Kent and Queen Anne's hospital which is now Chester River hospital as a medical secretary. After that I went to school as a school secretary for 26 years and I retired from there 10 years ago. Since then I worked for a lawyer which I hated. I didn't like that business. I didn't like anything about it but I stayed there for three years.

RM: When we were sent to the office Ann Lee was the one who had to call your mom.

AT: Yes, I was the mother, the doctor, the secretary, now let's see the counselor the...

RM: She put the Band-Aids on us, called our parents.

AT: Called when they weren't in school. I didn't have any trouble with Rick though he was a good, a good student.

RM: Now you are telling stories.

AT: No I'm not. I never had any trouble with Rick. Then after I left the lawyers I went to Curves and I didn't like that either because I guess at that point in my life I could be choosey what I wanted to do but there were a lot of nice women there and then I got an opportunity to work at Shore Dermatology for the dermatologist and I am still there after three years going on four.

JB: Sorry the wind is coming through.

AT: I transcribe her dictations. She dictates and I transcribe and work the front desk. It gets me out of the house two days a week, gets with people. Otherwise I am sitting here, okay, Glenny. Taking care of the yard, the garden and the house there is a lot to do. Even though it is a small house there is still a lot to do. I am always busy. I like to keep busy.

JB: Yeah sure. How did you decide to become a secretary, recorder, at the very beginning?

AT: Actually I'm not very sure how I, as I say my friend Ann Leery said there was an opening at the hospital for somebody to work in medical records and I went to apply for it and got the job and was there for 18 years.

JB: Did you like working there?

AT: I loved it, I loved all the transcriptions. Yes, I did, for all the doctors, we did transcriptions for all the doctors.

JB: Mhm [affirmative].

AT: But then when the school opening came, our children were in school here, which was the middle school then. I thought that was an opportunity to be off in the summer and to be with them. I was there for 26 years. I don't know how sometimes when I turned 62 I thought this was a good chance to retire.

JB: Sort of retire.

AT: Sort of, I am in semi-retirement now I guess you could say.

JB: Did a lot of people, like children, skip school to go out on the water or?

AT: Not too much I think. Probably two or three when spring came the boys start getting itchy and they would skip but they were still young thirteen, fourteen that's when they started on the water. That's when Glenny started, when he was fourteen so.

JB: Did the school ever, I don't know, take students out on the water or talk about the bay?

AT: The school system has have now what we call Echo Hill which is a camp for the students, young kids. They sponsored a 5th grade trip every year. The kids spent the week there. That was nice. Did you go?

RM: No.

AT: You never went?

RM: No, I don't think that was ever...

AT: Okay.

RM: We went to Rock Hall one time as kids.

AT: They put their bags in baggage, when they left they were crying boo-hooing. They didn't want to go some of them. Some of them were glad to go, some of them didn't want to leave their parents. They are still at a young age, 5th grade. And when they came back they were filthy. They hadn't had a bath in a week. So you can imagine they were pretty grimy but it was a nice experience for them. A lot of them had never been on the water or even near the water. And if you ever lived in Rock Hall everyone should know how to swim, how to go out on the water and enjoy it. I have a granddaughter, who is going into 7th, who is petrified of the water. I don't know why but she is. We have four grandsons, they just love it, the water, just love it.

JB: How many children do you have?

AT: We have two girls.

JB: And do they both still live in the area here?

AT: No, Stephanie, our oldest, lives in Townsend, Delaware and she is 43 years old. And Jennifer lives in Millington and she is 39. One has two boys and the other has two boys and a girl. They love to come down here and they love Rock Hall.

RM: Did Ann Lee tell you about her dad?

JB: Nu-huh [negative]

AT: He was a yacht captain.

JB: Oh yeah.

AT: Well I did say that yes.

RM: Years ago Rock Hall was known for its yacht captains. Wealthy people from all over the country would come to Rock Hall to hire a captain and that was a really big thing back then.

AT: I think he worked for Heineken Beer Co; they had a super mega yacht. He also worked for Coca-Cola. He worked for Joseph Myerhoff. I don't know if you have heard that name?

RM: I've heard the name.

AT: I don't know if he was a developer or what but he worked for some pretty big companies, they had their name on the boat, they had their chef, their butler, the captain, and co-captain.

RM: Yeah.

JB: When did that end? Like about what time?

RM: In the 70s.

AT: Press Jacobs.

RM: Wayne Brady.

AT: Wayne, yes.

RM: The Rock Hall watermen were just known for being good boat handlers, navigators and captains.

AT: And knew the water.

RM: And knew the water so all the wealthy people would come to Rock Hall to buy our captains. I think it really ended, there was some period of time in the 70s where the rules changed. Where a cooperation couldn't deduct a yacht and a captain on taxes and that kind of ended that era but there was a lot of men from Rock Hall.

AT: I remember the last boat he was on a 70 foot yacht and the only way he could actually dock it was at Brambles up at Tolchester at the end of the wharf.

RM: Right.

AT: That is the last yacht I remember him being on.

JB: So he was gone for weeks and a time?

AT: Months at the time.

JB: Months at a time.

AT: That was the end of my parent's marriage.

JB: So what did your mother do when he was gone for so long?

AT: What did my mother do? Actually back then, we were very poor, very poor but then again everybody was. Rick doesn't remember those times but I do.

RM: These jobs were like dream jobs.

AT: Yes they were.

RM: For the men around Rock Hall. It was either go on the water and maybe make it maybe not. Or get these jobs which were very affluent for the men of Rock Hall.

AT: Yes they were. But the sad part was he didn't keep us. He didn't provide for us. I don't know how we lived actually. I guess people gave us food but you know I always resented that. I did.

JB: Your mom didn't have like a job?

AT: No.

JB: She didn't work the water at all?

AT: Oh no, no, no.

JB: Now I keep hearing about women who go out and they help their husbands kind of like you do go out in the summer months trotlining but they didn't do that?

AT: We did have women in Rock Hall that had their own trotline. Rose Beck had her trotline, Patsy Higgs had one.

RM: Ann Carson worked.

AT: And some of them worked right alongside their husbands. I had a full-time job.

JB: Sure.

AT: And it is probably a good thing I did, I carried the insurance, the health insurance. I mean who can afford it if you work on the water now it is bad enough. I don't know.

RM: Hazel Downing, she worked right alongside.

AT: Yes she did, yes she did.

RM: We are going back a ways now.

AT: And you have to admire those women that did. They are old and wrinkled now but I didn't, but no it is a hard life, let me tell you. We had a hard upbringing but we appreciate everything we have now because of that.

JB: Did most women have a second job while you were growing up? Did like your friends' mothers?

AT: No, actually most women stayed home. They either worked with their husbands on the water or they actually stayed home.

JB: And that has changed a little bit now hasn't it?

AT: It has changed a whole lot. You almost need two people in the family to work now to keep everything.

RM: All the women picked crabs.

AT: Yes they did.

RM: They kept big gardens, to feed their family, they had livestock in those days. I mean they were working just as hard as the men.

AT: Our garden you can see some of it in the backyard. I still can and freeze for the winter.

JB: That's what you were doing when we came weren't you, tomatoes?

AT: On Monday, I froze corn and made spaghetti sauce and today I canned tomatoes and I canned peaches already.

JB: Where did you learn how to do the canning?

AT: My mother used to do all that but you know not many women can anymore. It is a thing of the past and I sometimes I wonder why I still do it but it is nice to go to the attic and get a can of peaches or a jar of spaghetti sauce or whatever.

RM: Strawberry jelly.

AT: Oh yes. I got some for you. In fact, I thought I got to make Rick, some biscuits. Where are you going to today when you leave here?

JB: Andrea's house.

AT: Andrea who?

RM: Jacqueline.

AT: Oh.

RM: We are going to talk to Andrea and we are going to try and catch up with Patsy.

AT: Oh okay.

RM: And Edna Marie probably.

AT: Oh she's a good one, oh yes.

RM: When you first got married, was Glenney gone a lot? Did he live on the boat away from home?

AT: When he went to Solomon's Island?

RM: Yeah.

AT: Yes he did.

RM: He was gone most of the winter then?

AT: Yes.

JB: He lived on the boat down there right?

AT: Yes, uh-huh.

JB: Because the bay up here freezes over?

AT: Right, so they would take the boats down to Solomon's, if you know where that is. It is way down the bay; Rick can tell you about that, how far down it is. It is really way down the bay and then come home not even every week. That's just how we lived back then. I mean we just kept the house going.

RM: Raised the kids.

JB: Did you ever go down to visit?

AT: Well Glennie's mother drove down one time if you can believe that, on route 301. Which now you wouldn't think about driving there. I wouldn't think of it myself. It is a busy place now but we have gone down there. Not often but if you wanted to see the men that's what we did.

RM: Now Ann Lee's sister- in- law was actually born in a fishing shanty on Kent Island.

AT: Yes she was. Betty, Glennie's sister was born in a shanty, as Rick said. And it was a shanty which is no more. That's what happened, I mean you didn't go to the hospital to have children back then. Glennie was born in this house.

JB: Oh really?

AT: Yes.

JB: You were born in a hospital you said right?

AT: Yes, I was, but Glennie was born here in this house.

JB: Did you get along with your mother-in- law?

AT: Oh yes, she was wonderful.

RM: She was an angel.

AT: She was that. I loved his family, I got along with all of them.

JB: Did he come from a big family?

AT: Yes, he had two sisters and one of them just recently died.

JB: Oh okay.

AT: He's the only boy.

JB: Are they still in the area too?

AT: His other sister lives in Delaware.

JB: Okay, people seem to be moving away, why?

AT: That's because this has become more of a retirement place for money folk.

RM: Yeah.

AT: When I say money folk people that have money come in and build all these big houses, buying up places. It has changed a lot

JB: Why didn't you move away when you got married or?

AT: Because Glenney was here.

JB: Oh.

AT: He wasn't going anywhere.

JB: He wanted to work the water all his life?

AT: Oh yes.

RM: And there was opportunity then.

AT: And back then it was.

RM: It wasn't always...

AT: Like it is now.

RM: Perfect but there was...

AT: You could always find something to do to make money.

RM: Yeah, sad like say the waterfront never slept.

AT: Oh no.

RM: I mean there were trucks going in and out of Rock Hall.

AT: Loaded with fish or oysters or-

RM: And I mean work, men worked all night, fished all night. Come in, in the morning and put out.

AT: Used to catch back then, tons of fish if you can imagine that.

JB: I went pound netting yesterday I can imagine that.

AT: Oh that's an experience. Yes I've done that before too.

GT: That's is hard.

JB: So you pound netted, crabbed...

GT: Oh my dad and grandfather.

RM: His grandfather was one of the first ones in the Upper Bay to ever pound net.

JB: Oh really?

RM: Yeah.

GT: One of 14 men and the rest of his family. They had heard about catching all these fish in pound nets in Virginia, Hampton Roads. So the winter time there weren't any oysters here. That's all you need to do. And it was a really cold winter the whole bay froze up, ships, nothing could go through. So they all 14 got together and decided to go to Hampton Road on the train. They walked across the bay on the ice, got on the train, went on down to Hampton Roads. And the watermen down there just took them right in just like, cause that's how they learned and then they came back home. I don't know if they walked across the ice or if it was gone. I don't remember, nobody said.

JB: So why did you go out pound netting, I thought you normally went out crabbing?

AT: Just to see how it was done.

JB: Just for fun? Did you help pull up the net?

AT: No, I thought no this is not for me. It is hard work.

JB: Yeah, it is.

AT: You know, I have been a hard worker all my life but some of it is beyond a woman's, I mean that's not a woman's job.

GT: Have you ever heard of a workaholic?

JB: Yeah.

AT: You guys over there with that.

GT: Horse shit.

JB: She's a workaholic.

GT: She is.

JB: Working at the school all the time?

GT: Everywhere.

JB: Yea tell me more about working at the school. You can start where ever you want with that one.

AT: Well, I was the secretary. So the secretary, I don't want to say runs the school, but everything is focused, that is the center of the school right there. Oh I didn't know you had I want to say all kinds of children. You remember the bad ones but you also remember the good ones and I remember telling one of the boys that was really bad. I said don't ever come and ask me for a job reference because you won't get it from me because he was so bad and he's still bad today.

GT: One of the students almost threw you out the window.

AT: Yes, yes he picked me up.

JB: What?

AT: Yes.

JB: Why did he throw you out the window?

AT: He didn't, he was going to. He was mad at me, just this little black boy. He was bad and he got mad at me and he said I am going to pick you up out of that chair and throw you out of the window. And I thought well you might try to and you might succeed but it is the last time you will do it. Oh boy some of them were so bad but then 10% were bad and but the other 90% were just wonderful.

GT: And you could follow them right to jail when they got older.

AT: Some of them were bad then and I still remember them. We had a couple of girls came by the other day and she was very vocal talking to her little boy, I guess, and I said she hasn't changed any. That's been I've been out of school 10 years and that was probably 20 years ago. So you know, I don't know, sometimes it is their upbringing. But it was a busy place, the school is very busy. It is a nice school. Things have changed, as in education everywhere not just here but everywhere.

JB: Did the kids used to play pranks on the teachers and administration?

AT: Oh yes. Oh yes.

JB: What were some of the best pranks you remember?

RM: You have to ask him about this.

GT: What's that?

AT: Pranks on teachers.

GT: What?

AT: Pranks on teachers.

GT: Oh my goodness.

RM: I know with you and Simns and then you played on some of them teachers. Troublemakers.

AT: I don't remember many pranks I know they did. I was always pretty much down to earth; I was there for a purpose and that was to work.

JB: And you were also the nurse at the school?

AT: No, but, you know, if they wanted a Band-Aid or aspirin or something like that, I had to stop my work and I gave it to them. I wrote that down. Every time you gave someone an aspirin or a Band-Aid you had to write it down. And one child had actually come to see school office one day and said he had a pain in his stomach and I let him lie down for a while and then I sent him back to class. I found out he had appendicitis. I felt really bad about that. I felt really bad.

JB: You were working then when your daughters were growing up right?

AT: Yeah.

JB: What did they think of you working in the school?

AT: They didn't mind, they didn't mind.

JB: It was just one thing that you did right? They just kind of expected since you were there for so long.

AT: Yes.

JB: And the middle school is still in Rock Hall right?

AT: No, we have a countywide middle school now. It is a combination, the entire county is together.

JB: How do you feel about that happening, the school leaving this area?

AT: Well nobody was happy about it. Some people don't like change, it is hard to change. They say it is for the better so I guess in time it will prove to be because enrollment has dropped considerably over the years.

JB: No one is raising families here anymore?

AT: Yea they are but we have the elementary school here.

JB: Yeah.

AT: So when they leave elementary school here, they go to Chestertown, which is the county wide middle school. And the ones that go there, I think our friend Carla goes there. She didn't want to go at first but she likes it, her friends, they follow their friends.

JB: Sure if you have no choice.

AT: That's it.

JB: You go to school.

AT: You have to go in there, that's it.

JB: So why didn't you like working at the lawyers just because of the...?

AT: That's involved.

JB: Oh okay.

AT: Yes, very involved.

JB: I imagine that is very different than working at the school.

AT: Yeah oh yes, he treated us very nice but I just didn't like the lawyer aspect of it I guess.

JB: Mhm [affirmative].

AT: I don't know what I didn't like about, I just know I didn't like it. You know, you start a job and you work for three or four month, I don't think I like it but you stick it out for a while. I wasn't one to change jobs really, I didn't like doing that.

JB: What did you do there verses the school? Like transcription obviously but what else?

AT: Helped prepare court cases, went to the court house, and searched documents.

JB: So it was very different than what you did for the school then?

AT: Oh yes very different. Yes and he was in court [unintelligible]. I don't know just one phase of my life I didn't care for so three years is enough of that.

JB: You like what you are doing now?

AT: Yes I do.

BJ: And you are doing transcriptions again?

AT: And working as a secretary.

JB: Give me like the average day at your work.

AT: At work?

JB: At work.

AT: It is crazy, every day is crazy, but it never stops. You would think at a dermatologist office you wouldn't be busy but she had her 25,000 visit just recently. She has been in business two years.

GT: Three years?

AT: Two years.

GT: Two?

AT: Going on four.

GT: Four, three.

AT: So she's very busy and she is wonderful to work for. She actually lives right back here.

JB: Oh she lives right here in Rock Hall?

AT: Yes.

JB: Is her office in Rock Hall?

AT: No, it is in Chestertown.

RM: Oh you mean Tammy?

AT: Yes.

RM: Oh okay.

AT: Yes.

JB: Did she grow up in this area?

AT: Right here in Rock Hall.

JB: Oh okay and she decided to become a dermatologist?

AT: She what?

JB: She decided to become a dermatologist?

AT: She wasn't going to be I don't know what she was going to be at first but then she figured there aren't many dermatologists around and she chose right because there aren't many and she is very busy all the time.

JB: Did you have her in school? No?

RM: Her parents live in Chestertown.

AT: I probably did because her mother and father lived half their life here. I remember that but her grandparents lived here.

GT: I remember her growing up and the boy too, Todd.

AT: And actually she had a trotline. She used to trotline herself.

JB: Everyone seems to have trotlined one time or another.

GT: There is nothing else.

AT: Yes it is fun.

JB: I am assuming that kids now days still have their trotlines right? And they go out, maybe not 5am.

GT: Oh yes they do too.

AT: Some of them do.

JB: Do they?

GT: We have two young boys sometimes they are out 2:30 in the morning.

AT: Yes.

JB: 2:30 that seems early.

GT: Depends when you go to bed.

AT: And some people are just going to bed when others are getting up. It all depends on what you do.

JB: Do any of the youth in the area go out in the winter months and fish?

AT: I don't know, do they Rick?

RM: Not like we do.

JB: Not when they are younger.

AT: They are in school now.

JB: Not a couple of years ago.

RM: I mean if something was really happening out in the bay we all went to the bay and didn't go to school.

AT: That right.

RM: We always jumped on with somebody.

JB: And that's when she had to call your parents right? To say, hey he's not in school.

AT: Where's Rick?

RM: It was probably like 9th, 10th grade that we started doing that. It wasn't middle school too much.

JB: Oh okay.

AT: I think he missed a day or two and that wasn't a big deal but then when you start missing 17, 18.

RM: I would skip school to go out on the bay with his father and every Friday night, they all, my parents and all them, went to dinner here at a place called Fin, Fur, and Feather. Well Kelly's father, now you're not going to tell on me? Oh no, I won't tell on you. And every Friday night he would spill the beans on me.

AT: Yeah, they found out.

RM: He'd tell everyone he knew.

AT: You couldn't do much in Rock Hall without the parents knowing about it. I always told Stephanie and Jennifer If you think you are going to do something and get away with it, you're not, because somebody is going to tell.

JB: Is it still like that now?

GT: No.

AT: I don't know. Some parents don't care what their kids do.

JB: So even if they're told it doesn't matter?

AT: Some them just, some parents yes.

GT: Different generation.

AT: It is. The parents are busy with their own social lives, I don't know.

GT: Not as good as we were.

AT: Not all of them.

GT: Physical [unintelligible]

JB: Why do you say that?

GT: We came from the old school, we worked. Everybody helped each other. Today they don't even know each other. They don't care.

AT: Parents aren't home.

GT: Parents all worked together when I was coming up.

JB: Moms aren't staying at home with their kids anymore? Mother's aren't?

AT: Pretty much if they can get a job they do. She is shedding all over the place. Get down. [Talking to the dog] Oh get down.

JB: It's okay.

AT: Well and things are different because people have to work now. When we grew up we didn't have electricity, we didn't have the phone, we didn't have running water. We didn't have any of those things. We tell our girls and they don't believe we lived like that. You know, it is hard for the generation now to even realize how we lived.

RM: Outhouses.

AT: That's right. We still got one. We still have one in the back yard. Do you know what an outhouse is?

JB: I do know what an outhouse is.

GT: Right back there. I filled her up with bricks and stuff and loaded her up.

AT: Someone wanted to buy it and I thought oh no, I can't sell that old falling down piece of wood.

[laughter]

GT: The only thing I never put a half moon, you know how they used to...

RM: Right, right.

GT: Never did put nothing like in.

JB: So you were born in this house right?

GT: Oh yes my sister was too, my younger sister. My older sister was born in the shanty down in Bloody Point.

JB: Okay sure.

RM: Tip end of Kent Island.

JB: Yeah.

RM: They were fishing there at the time and you pulled a shanty behind your big boat and put it on shore and to live out of it when you were fishing away from home. You didn't have the transportation like you do today.

AT: Actually there's is a shanty in Rock Hall you might want to show her.

RM: Yeah well they have one that the museum.

AT: Oh okay.

JB: Yeah.

RM: She has seen it.

AT: You have one at the museum.

GT: Down here.

JB: Right on the main county road.

GT: Oh do they?

RM: Yeah.

GT: That's great.

RM: But yeah they were away from home fishing. I assume in the wintertime.

GT: No pound net fishing.

RM: Oh were they pound net?

AT: October, Betty was born in October.

GT: Dad would take off in June, tow that old shanty and I don't know what else out there. He would take a five gallon lard can full of baked beans and that's what he lived on.

JB: Why was your mother with him at the time then?

GT: Well they went down later. Dad and them would go down in the car, and they would have a car down there to move around in. And at that time there were only three farms on Kent Island, from where the 301 is to Bloody Point, three. And it was during the depression so nobody had any money. So they would catch the fish and they could sell the fish but the farmers couldn't get their fish to eat. So they go up there and barter. That was a big thing in those days. He would give the farmers the fish. He would give him eggs, chickens, whatever they wanted and that's the way they lived. Look at Kent Island today, you would never believe it would you.

AT: Well look at any place on the water, or it doesn't have to be on the water, just all the developments.

JB: Did your mother ever go out on the water and help your dad pound nets?

GT: Oh yeah I was almost born out here at Love Point. Mom and him were down there pulling line or something and started to feel the pain had to run in real quick.

AT: How did she make it here?

GT: Huh?

AT: How did she make it here?

GT: Ooh she did come here. Miss. Lynnette, that was the midwife.

AT: But if she was out fishing how did she?

GT: No, he brought her right on home and went in the back bedroom right there. That's where I was born. We had no doctors. Miss Lynnette she delivered a lot of young guys, killed around here. She was a nurse, an old nurse.

JB: Did your mom have a job other than going on the water with your father?

AT: She never worked.

JB: She never worked. She just helped out occasionally. I heard that women used to make the nets.

GT: That was way before that.

JB: Oh okay.

GT: That was way back in the 1800s, early 1900s. All them made nets from scratch, yep.

RM: Wouldn't all the women get together?

GT: Just like a quilting bee.

RM: Yeah.

AT: One thing I never did, was gear net. And you know what I mean when I say gear net? And clean fish.

I still don't and I'm not going too.

GT: She won't help me. Won't help me take the bait off the line.

RM: You spoiled her, spoiled her right from the start.

AT: Wait a minute who spoiled who? You better take that back or I'll smack you.

RM: Yeah I'll take it back both ways.

AT: Yes.

JB: I was making this face when we were pound net fishing. Every time like a fish flopped on the deck. I had this look of like horror. Doesn't the fish, isn't it in pain, I don't know.

RM: Yeah, but they taste good.

JB: Yeah, they do taste good.

AT: Did you fry up a fish for her so she could?

RM: No we didn't, we should have.

AT: Let's do that. I'll make the short bread, you fry the fish up.

RM: There you go.

JB: Did you bring home the catch, like a couple of pounds of it, every time you went out there just have some for dinner?

GT: When I was working on the water, I bet we eat less fish then most people.

JB: Really?

GT: We do and yet we love it.

RM: Yeah.

AT: Yes we did. It's like the shoe makers son, better to sell it and make the money I guess then to eat your profit or whatever but we do buy it. I mean we'll go and buy scallops or shrimp.

GT: Oh yea something like that we can't get here.

AT: Or salmon which we love.

JB: What is the best way to cook, I don't know, rock fish or salmon?

AT: Well salmon under the broiler.

JB: Okay.

AT: Rock fish there are several way to do of course the best way...

GT: The squirrels helping you any?

Male voice: I'm sorry?

GT: The squirrels are they helping you any?

Male voice: No but they're not in the way either.

AT: She's...

GT: Oh.

JB: That's okay. I bet there are some pretty good recipes around here about on how to cook.

AT: The best cooks are in Rock Hall and you know if anything happens in Rock Hall, someone dies or get sick, food is unbelievable. You don't have to worry about food at a funeral because everybody cooks and bakes. You know, a small town, there is something to be said about a small town. And there is a lot to be said that is not so good about a small town. Everybody knows everybody else's business.

RM: Yep, and if we don't know, we make it up.

AT: What is the saying? Half of what you hear and-

RM: Half of what you see and none of what you hear.

JB: Are there certain people that like you kind of go to for information in the area. You know, like it is that one person who knows everything.

RM: Oh boy.

AT: Well maybe, I'm not really built way. I don't go out and I don't get on the phone, I'm just not that type of person. If someone says something and somebody says please don't tell anybody. I am so used to working at the lawyers and at the doctor's office you don't talk about who is in there because it is confidential.

RM: Do you remember the party lines?

AT: Yes I remember the party lines. I used to listen in on them.

RM: Yeah, everybody in Rock Hall, like your phone number might be two dots and a dash. So if somebody make a phone call, then if you were talking on the phone you would hear the rest of the town pick up. Do you remember that?

AT: Yes.

RM: I don't remember it but I remember people talking.

AT: I do.

GT: Our neighbor Ray was the worst one in the world when she was alive.

RM: Was she?

GT: Miss Vi, you would all and I would hear click. Ok Miss Vi you can get off.

RM: Those party lines were bad.

AT: Well now they don't use the telephone, they just email, and text or whatever they do. Today conversations are coming to an end.

JB: Yeah, are there in evenings, so when the guys are off the water and you are off work, what did you guys do? Are there clubs? I don't know what you do.

AT: What do we do now?

JB: Yeah what do you do now?

AT: Go sit out on the water or go out on the boat.

JB: Ok just go out on the water.

AT: I like to just let the boat drift, watch the sun go down.

JB: Nice.

AT: We take our supper out. We do that. We have a good time on Labor Day and Memorial Day. We take the whole family out on the boat, take two boats out. The kids jump overboard. In fact, we all jump overboard, go swimming, eat out there.

JB: Except for the one granddaughter is scared of the water right?

AT: She jumps overboard. She does.

GT: She goes swimming overboard. She is scared. She is okay as long as you are in the creek but once you go out of the creek, she will lay down and crumple her eyes. Oh my.

JB: She doesn't like the waves?

AT: I don't know if it is that or what?

GT: She get up [unintelligible] there away from the shore. She gets worse all the time.

AT: One time we had to turn around and bring her back.

GT: Yeah we brought her back.

AT: I don't know she'll get over it maybe. I hope.

GT: Boy you're in the wrong town.

JB: That's too bad because everyone around here just grows up on the water.

AT: Oh yes.

JB: So you are always out there.

AT: It is in your blood.

JB: You just can't just not be the water. Here is a question: Have you ever gone on vacation not on the water, mountains?

AT: Yes we have been to Canada. We take a trip every year. It might be a road trip. A few years ago, on our fiftieth anniversary we took a cruise, our first cruise, to Nassau and those islands. That was wonderful so we are taking another cruise this year to Bermuda.

JB: That is a different type of boating.

AT: Yes it is, totally different. Yes. Our daughter has a house in the mountains of Western Maryland. We didn't go this year but we went out last year. That's a long drive out there but that was nice just to get away.

JB: When you two first met and started dating, did you go on the water and date out there?

AT: Date on the water?

JB: Yeah, I don't know, go on trips, see the sunset, have a picnic, like you do now.

AT: Oh no, no.

RM: Was Glennie romantic?

AT: No, no.

RM: You weren't romantic.

JB: You weren't romantic?

GT: I guess I wasn't.

RM: He didn't woo you with flowers and chocolate.

AT: No, Flowers? Chocolate?

GT: No, she enjoyed riding around in that '56 Chevrolet though.

RM: Okay.

AT: Yeah that was nice.

RM: The quarter mile?

GT: Huh?

RM: Did you take her to the quarter mile?

AT: Where is that?

GT: What is that?

RM: That's where you race them old cars.

GT: Oh no I didn't have.

AT: He raced.

GT: I tried.

AT: He raced. I was not into racing. It's a wonder we are even living today.

GT: It is.

RM: Years ago they were nuts about cars.

AT: Yes they were and he and Elmer Leary were friends. It's a wonder any of them are alive.

GT: We all had to race.

RM: Yeah.

GT: Oh yeah. Elmer and all out by the avenue racetrack.

JB: Where was the racetrack?

GT: Right outside of town.

AT: Route 20.

JB: It is Route 20.

GT: Route 20, where is a long straight stretch there with woods on both sides.

JB: Yeah, yeah sure.

GT: We were coming down. We was trying them out. Pull over there, whose car was the fastest. We would come down there one night 105 and just that quick there was a car coming you know. Just that quick, it went by you saw state police on the side of her right there. Slow down, slow down he said hell no, speed up. It was Elmer.

RM: Yeah.

JB: You didn't do the racing though, you didn't like...

AT: Oh no.

GT: You were going up there you by the Bendway he just get turned around he was way down there and just kept right on going.

RM: Went right in Elmer's house didn't he?

GT: Oh yeah that was another one.

AT: The motor was still warm on the car.

RM: The motors sitting there crackling and popping. Elmer was pretending he's asleep.

AT: Elmer was in bed.

RM: Yeah.

GT: Jumped in bed with his clothes on and messed his hair all up.

[Laughter]

RM: The state cop ran right in the house after him.

GT: Didn't even knock on the door. The door going out.

AT: His mom said he's in bed, he has been in bed.

GT: He's mom said oh he's in bed asleep. He said oh no, he isn't.

RM: The car outside going pop.

GT: She was just the ticket, a hotrod. He outran him that night he was taking Ann home. Ann lives on the road on the farm just a little way outside of Edsville and when he come around Mark Wagner's shop he see him sitting there with his parking lights on. I think he said he was doing about 90 then. He said well I slowed down. I said what.

AT: Now we got a 14 year old grandson coming up. So I can see and he's been driving since, on the farm. So he knows how to drive everything: tractors, trucks, everything. So I can see him being just like him in a car.

GT: No, we have to talk to him. [Laughter]

AT: It has been an interesting life.

RM: Now you can't walk across the road without getting a ticket.

AT: You know I owned this place in Rock Hall. This is the busiest street and I'm just waiting for someone to come out of the Harbor Shack and plow into one of these houses one night because they come [unintelligible] you can probably hear the music?

RM: Yeah I can hear the music.

AT: Not like we do.

JB: What do you think about next weekend the pirate whatever weekend?

AT: Actually I work with the auxiliary at the firehouse and we are providing breakfast and I'm going to be up there at like 4 o'clock.

GT: Is that next weekend? Is that next weekend?

AT: It is kind of nice to see the pirates and wenches walking around Rock Hall all dressed up.

GT: Especially those women, they don't have much on some of them.

JB: Uh-oh.

GT: They are the real wenches. It is good for us old men.

RM: They all made up those little pirate boats.

GT: Yeah I was kidding yeah.

AT: That is cute.

RM: Buffalo Strong had one in the back of his pick-up truck and all the people were over by the Harbor Shack. You know where that boat ramp is?

AT: Yes. I was over there.

RM: Did you see him launch her?

AT: No.

GT: No.

RM: He was pretty sauced up he wheeled in there with his truck back right up towards the ramp straight right over and slammed the brakes on.
AT: Slid right off.

RM: And the boat shot out.

AT: Did he really?

RM: And he jumped out of his truck and he was drunker than a skunk. I think he fell down in the water.

AT: I missed that part of it.

RM: They said it was really a show.

AT: That would be Buffalo.

JB: What's Buffalo's real name?

AT: Albert.

JB: Albert.

AT: Everybody in Rock Hall has a nickname.

JB: What is your nickname?

AT: Well I had tiddlywinks and he used to be muskrat and I was...

GT: You were too. Larry Simns called you that.

AT: No, Martin Legg.

GT: Oh Martin.

AT: I think he still calls me muskrat. He never says Ann Lee, he always says muskrat. What is your nickname?

JB: I don't have one.

RM: I lost mine.

AT: He is trapper. Oh he was trapper and I was muskrat.

JB: How did you get those nicknames?

AT: Well because he used to hunt when he was...

GT: I trapped for a living.

JB: Oh ok. How did you get tiddlywinks?

AT: I don't know you have to ask Mr. Lon Hubbard; he's been dead a long time, I used to work in the restaurant and that was something else I did. I worked as a waitress.

RM: You worked at Hubbard's?

AT: Yes

RM: Hubbard's was like the center focus of Rock Hall.

AT: Yes.

RM: For what like 40, 50 years.

GT: All the watermen went there, all the fishermen.

AT: All the party boats left from there, came in there.

RM: People all over the country, if they identified with Rock Hall they would always go to Hubbard's.

AT: Yes.

JB: I bet you have some interesting waitressing stories then from that time.

AT: Yes, I fell through the ceiling at the Hubbard's Pier. I went up to get cups, or plates, or napkins and my one leg went through and I was up there dangling and there were people sitting in the restaurant wondering what the. Wait a minute I will be out of the ceiling in a minute. Oh gosh. That was the last time I went up there. Edna Marie sent me up there for something we needed in the restaurant. I fell through. Met some nice people though.

JB: Did the watermen eat there after they went out on the water for the day and came back in.

AT: They ate before they went out on the water.

JB: Oh so it was open 24-7 then?

AT: No open about 3 or 4 and then didn't close probably until midnight. So it wasn't closed for long but enough time to get the next shift on.

JB: Did you work at 3 am? Did you ever open?

AT: Oh yes 4 o'clock or whatever time it was.

GT: 4 o'clock.

RM: It was a big hangout for your retire watermen as well.

AT: Oh okay.

RM: They used to sit around down there and tell stories.

AT: One think I always wanted to do and I regretted not having done it, is probably in the 50s, go around and interview the older watermen and actually write how they talked, if you know what I mean.

JB: Yeah sure.

AT: They had...

GT: Still understand.

AT: Well you know I can't think of any now but Glennie always said war for wire. You know that's just his way of saying it. Change my tar, tire, you know I always wanted to that but I never did it.

JB: Do a little linguistic study.

GT: I always call it ripple, ripple.

RM: Right, right.

GT: That was a ripple. I am going up that the other way.

AT: And how do you say buoy?

GT: Buoy, buoy.

AT: Yes see.

JB: You should have said no, that's not how you say it.

AT: Buoy, it is actually buoy.

JB: Why don't you have the accent 'cause like you grew up a little bit further from here?

AT: Well, no.

JB: You lost it along the way.

AT: I never really.

RM: What were you three miles north of here?

JB: Three miles from the water you lose the accent I don't know

.

AT: Well, you had to speak right in school or be corrected I guess.

GT: Used to have pancakes and syrup not syrup, syrup.

RM: Used to go turkeling.

GT: Go turkeling, yeah turtles.

JB: Well thank you I think I am going to stop recording. We have been talking for almost an hour and I don't want to take up any more of your time. So thank you, I appreciate it.

AT: Well you're welcome. Thank you for stopping by.

JB: I know, jumping in on you like this, no prior warning.